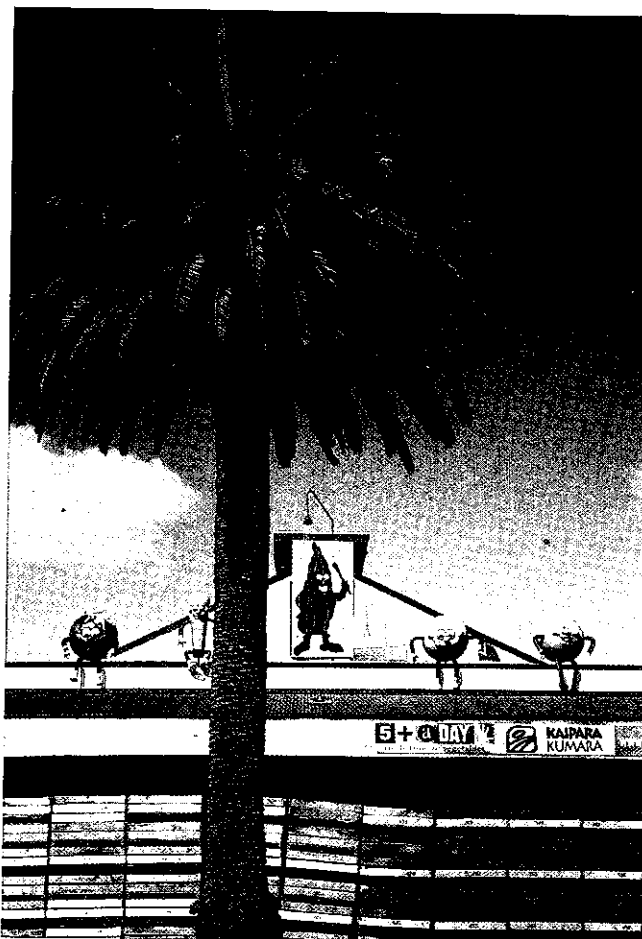
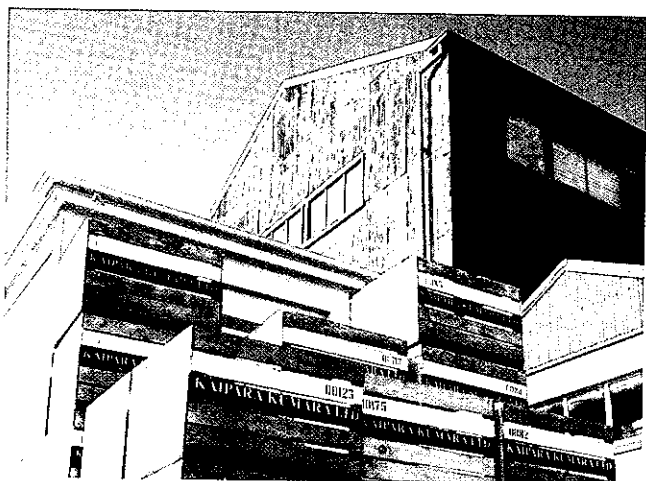


Laurie Oliver



to go to catch up to Jill, but you never know," Gary jokes.

The factory operates under strict guidelines, from the "seed" programme that maintains and improves the quality of the crop to annual independent auditing to ensure that the in-house processing systems meet exacting standards.

And, when it comes to eating kumara, Anthony reckons that it is so yummy when freshly harvested that it can be grated and eaten raw. Roasted with herbs and in a curry are other favourites.

Small kumara used to be considered unsuitable for marketing but the fact that they were the sweetest was not lost on the Blundells and now bags of Kumara Sweeties are gaining such popularity

that they can't get enough of them to satisfy demand. They also supply the Freshzone range of larger gourmet-sized, pre-packed kumara.

Years ago, when the Big Fresh chain closed, Gary purchased some of the supermarket instore decorations and now the colourful fruit and vegetables figures prance along the roofline of the factory. Centre stage is a kumara happily taking a shower. The fun façade is a traffic stopper and is a favourite with groups of passing tourists.

People love it and often take photographs. It's easy to imagine the laughing kumara being appreciated all around the globe, and the real-life version being enjoyed at dining tables all over New Zealand.

Fact file

- Kumara are fat-free, cholesterol-free and are low in sodium.
- They are a good source of potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C.
- Other nutrients include vitamin B6, calcium and iron.
- They are a great source of dietary fibre and have more fibre than oatmeal.
- The main harvest period is over the months of February, March and April.