

Mālama Maui – From Generation to Generation release

When the waves of immigration to Maui's sugarcane fields began in the late 19th Century, the term "local culture" was redefined to encompass not just native Hawaiians but the Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese contract laborers who became the Island's newest residents. Immigrants from Europe, Korea, and the Philippines arrived soon after. Many of these people harbored – perhaps without even knowing it themselves – what we now call the "entrepreneurial spirit." And so when their contracts were up – or when they had saved enough money – they started their own businesses. These multi-ethnic and now multi-generational "mom-and-pops" have, perhaps more than anywhere else, defined Maui's character. Before the arrival of jet planes and big Mainland chains, Maui's local economy was driven, in large part, by hard-working, small-business-owning Island families. Today, many of these unique businesses live on and continue to serve the community. Local people are proud of them. When one of these businesses is forced to close – for whatever reasons – it is front-page news on Maui. For, in truth, Maui is still, at its heart, a small town.

Many of these businesses make up Maui's local food industry. They are essential to Maui's identity and, happily, more and more visitors are finding them, enjoying them, embracing them and, most important, supporting them to ensure they pass to yet another generation.

At the top of the list, surely, are the small grocery stores, stubbornly refusing to surrender to the impersonal Mainland-based mega-markets. Maui is blessed with many of these, their friendly reach extends from Wailuku to Kula, Ke'anae to Hāna. And, if you're a neighborhood regular, every single one of them is a place where "everyone knows your name." ‘

In Central Maui, Takamiya Market (in the Happy Valley section of Wailuku) probably has the largest variety of delicious bentos anywhere on the island – perfect to pick up for a picnic in 'Īao Valley or other scenic spot. Owner Jimmy Takamiya, by the way, is one of Maui's most philanthropic citizens and has succeeded for many, many years by doing things "the old-fashioned local way."

Upcountry has a plethora of great small markets. Pukalani Superette's chili chicken is sublime, just one of more than a dozen hot prepared food items "on the menu" each day. The Superette also boasts the biggest and best selection – at the best prices – of Maui's own Roselani Ice Cream (more about that delicious stuff later!). Although not technically still owned by the

Morihara family, Kula residents would be lost without Morihara Store, so much friendlier – and closer – than any of the big supermarkets. Ha‘ikū residents feel the same way about their markets – Fukushima’s (don’t miss the red Maui hot dogs!) and Hanzawa’s.

Nagata Store in Pā‘ia is the place to stop for provisions for the long drive to Hāna. And in Hāna town is the most famous multi-ethnic, multi-generational market in all of Hawai‘i – so famous it has been preserved for perpetuity in song. “You just name it/They’ve got it there/At the Hasegawa General Store.” What else can we say?!

Local folks love their sweets, especially those that come fresh from the ovens of family-owned and operated island bakeries. In Wailuku, Home Maid Bakery is generally acknowledged as having the very best malassadas (Portuguese donuts) on the Island. They’re also well known for their mochi and manju – the manju with traditional fillings ranging from red azuki beans to white limas.

The paniolo town of Makawao is home to what is arguably Maui’s best known AND best loved bakery – Komoda’s. The donuts – and the skewers of donut holes affectionately known to locals as “sticks” – are, many folks think, the best in the world. And the cream puffs travel far and wide, including to Honolulu’s Washington Place, most notably when it was occupied by former governor John Waihe‘e.

Get thee to Kula’s stunningly restored Holy Ghost Church for what local folks know is absolutely the best Portuguese sweet bread money can buy. Soft, luscious, golden brown loaves are lovingly baked every other Sunday by a group of women – and one man who happens to be the keeper of the recipe! – known as (what else?!) the Holy Ghost Portuguese Sweet Bread Ladies. This bread isn’t only baked with dough, it EARNs dough – half-a-million dollars, to be exact, for the restoration of the church several years ago.

On Moloka‘i, Kanemitsu Bakery is a must-stop for Hawaiian-style breads. There’s an “excellent adventure” surrounding shopping for bread at Kanemitsu’s. We can’t spell out the details here, however, ‘cause it really IS a local secret. You’ll just have to make a friend over on the Friendly Isle and get him or her to share the special – and specific! – instructions with you. We promise it will be worth it.

Second and third generation food manufacturers abound, too. Maui’s Own Roselani Ice Cream is owned and operated by the Nobriga family – the youngest members of which are now SIXTH generation Mauians! Cathy Nobriga Kim is the third-generation ice cream maker who

continues to make many of her father's and grandfather's delicious tropical flavors, including best-selling Haupia, while expressing her own creativity with such exotic delights as Pumpkin Pecan ice cream for Thanksgiving season every year and Mango Lavender Sherbet.

Also in Central Maui, Aloha Poi and Teruya Tofu manufacture two staples of the local culture – from both the Hawaiian and Japanese branches of the Maui family tree. In addition to their highly nutritious attributes, both kalo and tofu have spiritual and emotional significance for virtually every Island family.

Last but certainly not least are the restaurants. If you want to rub elbows with paniolo (Hawaiian cowboys), Kitada's Kau Kau Korner in Makawao is the place to do it. A steaming hot bowl of saimin is the perfect thing on a chilly upcountry morning.

Two of the oldest family-owned and operated restaurants are in Wailuku. Sam Sato's in the town's Millyard area serves breakfast and lunch seven days a week as it has for decades. There are no better noodles on Maui than those set out in the bowls of saimin and dry mein at this landmark café. Other "signature" dishes are the beef sticks and the absolutely incredible homemade turnovers – the pineapple, by the way, are our personal favorite!

Eunice Kitagawa is the third-generation owner of Tokyo Tei – a local-style Japanese restaurant that is nothing short of a Maui institution. There is no place on the Island that serves fresher, more melt-in-your-mouth, more reasonably priced ahi sashimi. Every single dish on the menu is delicious – the teriyaki salmon is a particularly excellent choice. Her family, by the way, has been buying Teruya Tofu for more than SIXTY years!

So, have we got your taste buds working overtime? We think that experiencing these multi-ethnic, multi-generational Maui small businesses will provide you with a deeper understanding of our Island way of life...deliciously.