

The HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Kaua'i • O'ahu • Moloka'i • Lāna'i • Maui • Hawai'i



CULINARY

how does Hawai'i *eat*

For thousands of years, Native Hawaiians lived throughout the Islands in sustainable land divisions called *abupua'a*. Roughly triangular in shape, and often narrow *ma uka*, or at higher elevations in the mountains, the boundaries of an *abupua'a* typically widened down through the valleys and out *ma kai*, or toward the beaches and sea, extending to the outer edge of the coral reef.

These traditional land divisions provided Hawaiian communities with access to critical resources – such as *i'a* (fish) and *pa'akai* (salt from the ocean), as well as agricultural land for *kalo* (taro) farming and upcountry forests for timber.

In pre-Western contact Hawai'i, people living in the mountains shared with those living closer to the ocean, fostering a balance within the *abupua'a* and responsible management of the Islands' limited resources. *Mālama* – a word meaning to care for and protect – described a concept equally crucial to that balance because without actively caring for and nurturing the land, the sea and the people of the community, the delicate harmony



within each *abupua'a* was threatened, imperiling the food supply for all.

Those concepts of *mālama* and balance remain essential to Hawai'i's culinary culture today. A Hawaiian proverb "*E 'ai i kekahi e kāpī i kekahi,*" insinuates the importance of gathering food to eat only what is needed so that there is enough for another meal at another time, including another generation.

Hawai'i's bounty of locally grown fruits and vegetables; fresh fish and seafood; grass-fed cattle and even its macadamia-nut-fed pigs provides an exceptional foundation. But combine those rich source products with the tapestry of Hawai'i's diverse ethnic heritage – a story enriched by immigrants journeying from around the globe to work the Islands' plantations – and you introduce a matchless assembly of technique and culinary tradition with which to reimagine and showcase all of these wonderful raw ingredients and flavors.

The end result, of course, is a farm-to-fork experience, cultivated by Hawai'i's next generation of innovative chefs and farmers, unlike anything you'll find anywhere else.



DID YOU KNOW?



chocolate

Hawai'i is the only state in the U.S. that grows cacao – the beloved bean native to South America from which chocolate is created – largely because the tree doesn't do well in colder climates. Those seeking chocolate nirvana will most certainly want to visit one of the many chocolate farms and retailers across the Hawaiian Islands to see firsthand how cacao is harvested, the beans are roasted and blended and what really goes into crafting the rich treat. Hawai'i's main Islands are also home to their own clever takes on chocolate, including *liliko'i* (passion fruit) infused varietals or mango chocolate and other surprising artisanal concoctions certain to please the cacao-curious.



DID YOU KNOW?



poke bowls

Long before they were widespread on the U.S. mainland, *poke* (pronounced poh-kay, not poh-kee) bowls were a favorite comfort food throughout the Islands. Poke is the Hawaiian term for cutting fish into cubes. Traditionally made of raw, cubed *ahi* – or tuna – often mixed with *‘inamona* – or finely chopped *kukui* nuts, *pa‘akai* (sea salt) and *limu* (seaweed), *poke* has been enjoyed by Hawaiians for hundreds of years. Serving the traditional dish over rice with the additions of sesame oil and soy sauce came later as Hawai‘i’s population diversified with the arrival of Asian immigrants, who first came to work in the Islands’ sugar and pineapple plantations. Today, you can find contemporary twists on *poke* bowls in high-end restaurants, neighborhood eateries or even just at the grocery store deli counter throughout the Islands, with each option offering foodies something decidedly different to enjoy.



TO MARKET

Hawai‘i is bustling with terrific farmers markets across the state. Here are some local favorites on each Island.

ISLAND OF HAWAI‘I:

Hilo Farmers Market: Featuring as many as 200 vendors, this popular market has been around for more than three decades. Situated in Downtown Hilo, the daily market, includes everything from locally grown fruit, vegetables, and flowers as well as baked goods, prepared food and craft items. Big market days – or those featuring more vendors – are Wednesday and Saturday. hilofarmersmarket.com

O‘AHU:

Kapi‘olani Community College Farmers Market: This hugely popular market opens early Saturday morning on the backside of Lē‘ahi, (“Diamond Head”) not far outside Waikiki. Arriving early is smart, as crowds fill in quickly. Visitors will find a wonderful gathering of O‘ahu grown fruits, vegetables, flowers and Island-made products, as well as expertly prepared food from a host of local vendors cooking up the fragrant, delicious dishes. Saturdays. hfbf.org/farmers-markets/kcc

MAUI:

Upcountry Farmers Market: The Saturday morning market in Pukalani has been around for three decades and offers visitors a chance to connect with local folks in upcountry Maui, a region home to a number of farms and agricultural businesses. Highlights include, of course, fresh fruits and veggies along with pastries and baked goods and even Maui-made cheese and kombucha. Saturdays. upcountryfarmersmarket.com

KAUAI‘I:

Grove Farm Market: On Saturday mornings, travelers will find one of Kauai‘i’s most popular weekly markets in Lihu‘e at the Puhi Park. Highlights include fresh produce, baked goods and treats, food vendors and flowers. Saturdays. grovefarm.com/grovefarmmarket





FARM TO TABLE

Blessed with an unrivaled bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables, an impressive assembly of upland cattle and pig farms – all thriving not far from the Pacific Ocean teeming with vibrant, fresh fish – Hawai‘i’s chefs and kitchens have an astonishing supply of wonderful produce and flavors with which to create. And epicures looking to sample for themselves can enjoy chef-driven restaurant experiences on each of the Hawaiian Islands.

O‘ahu, the most populated and urban of the Hawaiian Islands, certainly offers the most culinary diversity and range, including acclaimed chef Andrew Le’s The Pig and The Lady in Honolulu’s Chinatown district. But restaurants like Māla Ocean Tavern or Star Noodle on Maui, The Plantation House by Gaylord’s on Kaua‘i or Merriman’s on the island of Hawai‘i, Maui and Kaua‘i also offer wonderful culinary experiences.

LOCAL EATS

Some of Hawai‘i’s longtime favorites are undergoing a creative revisioning at popular eateries across the Islands.

Plate Lunch: Dating back to the late 19th century sugar and pineapple plantation era in Hawai‘i when laborers



from Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines, Portugal and elsewhere first came to the Islands – the plate lunch likely owes its origins to midday meals carried to work back then by laborers in compartmentalized metal containers, featuring a lot of rice and some meat or fish left over from dinner the night before. The more modern, plate lunch musts usually entail two scoops rice, macaroni or potato salad, and grilled fish, beef, pork or chicken. And while they can be enjoyed at terrific eateries across the state, one longtime legend is Rainbow Drive-In on O‘ahu. And those looking for a can’t-miss example should pick up a Miso Ginger Salmon Plate to go from Diamond Head Grill near Waikīkī.

Spam Musubi: Offered in mom-and-pop shops, as well as chain convenience stores and beloved restaurants across the Islands, the longtime local favorite and extraordinarily portable spam musubi owes its origins to World War II,

DID YOU KNOW?



coffee

It’s not uncommon to think first of the Kona district on the island of Hawai‘i when picturing Hawai‘i’s celebrated coffee industry. But each of the main Islands is home to their own diverse assembly of coffee farms, many welcoming those interested not only in a chance to see coffee trees and their beans up close, but also learning more about their harvest and roasting process. Of course, sampling one of Hawai‘i’s most beloved exports with your own properly brewed cup is also highly encouraged.



when the canned meat first became prevalent throughout the Islands. Initially thought up as sort of a spam sushi, consisting of the grilled or fried canned meat combined with white rice. Today, spam musubi is typically a slice of the salty meat flavored with a sweetened soy sauce and set atop a block of white rice then wrapped in nori, or dry seaweed. Eateries around the state offer clever takes on the enormously popular comfort food, including plum cucumber spam musubi and eel egg spam musubi.



Malasadas: This sugar-dusted, delicious deep-fried-dough donut treat first appeared in Hawai'i thanks to Portuguese laborers, who traveled to the Islands to work on sugar plantations in the late 1800s. O'ahu's Leonard's Bakery is, of course, famous for selling fabulous malasadas since the 1950s, but folks on Maui looking for an innovative spin on the iconic fried favorites might stop at Donut Dynamite, where filling options include *liliko'i* (passion fruit), chocolate mousse, pumpkin crème brulee, and calamansi meringue.

Shave Ice: Like so many of Hawai'i's favorite foods, shave ice – not shaved ice – also first appeared in the Islands during the plantation era, when immigrant laborer families gathered on weekends and shaved blocks of ice and then poured fresh fruit juice over the shavings. Today, it's common to find the frozen treat throughout the Islands, flavored often with sugary sweet syrups and piled over ice cream or azuki beans. Kaua'i visitors will want to stop by The Fresh Shave in Kōloa, where they serve an all-natural take on one of Hawai'i's favorite treats, featuring organic ingredients and local farm fresh fruits and produce.

CELEBRATION OF CUISINE

Food isn't taken lightly in the Hawaiian Islands, so cuisine is celebrated often. Here are some of the state's most beloved culinary festivals.

ISLAND OF HAWAII:

Kona Coffee Cultural Festival: Slated for November, the Kona Coffee Cultural Festival is the longest running food festival in the Islands, spanning several days and featuring coffee tastings, food, music, art, farm tours and contests. konacoffeefest.com

DID YOU KNOW?

artisanal spirits

Hawai'i is now producing a rapidly growing collection of distinctive artisanal liqueurs throughout the Islands, including a number of rums, vodkas, and whiskies. Many of the popular artisanal rums here are produced from sugar cane, a critical crop in Hawai'i's plantation history. Travelers can tour a range of facilities where these spirits are produced on each of the main Islands and sample the broad representation of varietals.



DID YOU KNOW?



hawaiian food

It's an understandable mistake for travelers to confuse traditional Hawaiian cuisine with what most people living in the Islands just think of as local food. But the many traditionally prepared dishes that come from Hawaiian culture are certainly in their own beloved culinary category in the Islands. Some of the many highlights include *kālua* pork, cooked in underground ovens known as *imu*, and *laulau* – fish, pork or even chicken steamed in *kalo* (taro) leaves – or *poi*, the purplish, sticky staple, pounded from roots of the taro plant.



O'AHU:

Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival:

Typically featuring a roster of more than 150 internationally renowned master chefs, culinary personalities, sommeliers, mixologists and wine or spirit producers, this highly-anticipated annual festival is traditionally held in October. The event has expanded across three Islands and offers up a sophisticated collection of culinary experiences, wine tastings, cultural events and dining opportunities.

hawaiifoodandwinefestival.com

MAUI:

Kapalua Wine & Food Festival:

Held traditionally each June over the past 40 years, this event is one of Hawai'i's most acclaimed culinary confabs and features cooking demonstrations, wine and food pairing events, and winemakers' dinners.

kapaluawineandfoodfestival.com

KAUA'I:

Kōloa Plantation Days:

The many ethnic groups that came to Hawai'i to work on sugar plantations, and the Hawaiians who welcomed them, are celebrated through music, dance, costumes, and, of course, lots of wonderful food during this annual 10-day festival typically held in July.

koloaplantationdays.com

A CHANCE TO MĀLAMA

Epicures looking to leave Hawai'i in better shape than they found it may find the food-focused volunteer opportunities below hit the spot - not to mention - make the food taste more 'ono (delicious).

Mālama Ka 'Āina Tour at Kualoa Ranch:

Travelers will have hands-on exposure to one of O'ahu's oldest *abupua'a* systems at Kualoa, working in the *lo'i kalo* – taro patches – including harvesting as need dictates, or they may participate in stream maintenance or contribute to the upkeep of a

"Local or visitor, coming to a place and taking care of that place, making that place better when you leave than how it was before you got there, that's the type of mentality that's going to sustain us generation after generation. So if we're able to have visitors come and not just remove invasives or help plant *kalo*, but get the full-blown experience of what sustainable agriculture in Hawai'i really is, man that's almost life changing for a lot of people."

Rick Barboza, co-founder Papahana Kuaola on O'ahu



centuries-old Hawaiian fishpond.

kualoa.com/toursactivities/malama-ka-aina-tour

La'akea Village Farm: Maui visitors can spend the morning upcountry in Pā'ia working on the La'akea Village Farm, a nonprofit dedicated to helping autistic children and adults. Options include working alongside farm residents on upkeep like weeding and composting, as well as planting and pruning plants and crops. <http://laakeavillage.org>



TOP HAWAII CULINARY EXPERIENCES

The Hawaiian Islands are home to terrific food experiences. Travelers will definitely want to make time for these favorites.

MAUI:

Surfing Goat Dairy: Maui visitors can visit a working goat dairy, where owners produce 25 different cheeses, including 11 national-award-winning varieties. Surfing Goat Dairy offers casual tours, showcasing the upcountry Maui facility's process and, of course, its stars – the goats. Springtime visitors may even get a chance to hold adorable baby goats. Visitors looking to pitch in can also milk goats in the evening and help with other farm activities. surfinggoatdairy.com

O'AHU:

Kahumana Organic Farm: Owners of this 25-acre west O'ahu farm encourage travelers to “follow a meal from the fields to your fork” during a tour of the organic operation. Guests meet the farmers behind the food, taste exotic fruits, harvest vegetables, learn about indigenous crops and meet the farm's sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks, and bees. And post tour, folks can enjoy a three-course farm-to-table meal from the property's café, outfitted with a tremendous view of O'ahu's Wai'anae mountains. kahumana.org

ISLAND OF HAWAII:

Big Island Bees: Take a beekeeping farm tour in the town of Captain Cook, where travelers can sample organic

DID YOU KNOW?



food trucks

Some of Hawai'i's most innovative meals are being served up regularly at food trucks across the Islands. Everything from clever twists on the *malasada* – a Portuguese donut – to Island-grown shrimp and flavorfully inventive tacos and *poke* can be found at the fleet of rolling eateries patrolling the state, including vendors who make regular appearances at farmers markets. Travelers should also keep an eye out for food truck gatherings planned across the Islands. One that's hugely popular is the monthly *What The Truck?!* gathering on O'ahu, which showcases more than 30 local and rolling food vendors.



honey produced from island of Hawai'i blossoms, watch up close while beekeepers open a hive and then browse through a museum loaded with beekeeping memorabilia and a store stocked with honey and beeswax products. bigislandbees.com

KAUAI:

Tasting Kauai: Foodies looking for a guided introduction to both Kauai's culinary scene and its extraordinary history will want to join a Tasting Kauai food tour, described by organizers as a “a culinary romp through paradise.” Offering options on Kauai's North Shore, South Shore and East Side, the tour operator offers epicures the chance to sample one-of-a-kind specialty food stores, legendary local restaurants and popular regional food trucks. tastingkauai.com ♦