



## NEWS RELEASE

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### EDIBLE MAUI

While planting the future, diversified farms honor an agricultural past

MAUI, Hawai'i – After the mid 1900s, Hawai'i's large sugar plantations which sprung up in the late 1800s, began closing, unable to compete with lower production costs elsewhere. Although one plantation continues to this day in Maui Nui, many sugar fields fell fallow.

But not for long. Agriculture, after all, is the heartbeat of Maui. The early Hawaiians were master agriculturists enabling a self-sustainable, thriving society. The thousands of laborer immigrants who came during plantation days depended on agriculture. Farming runs through the blood of local families. Agriculture is what keeps Maui rural and green. Today, a new agricultural economy is gaining strength, quickened by the renewed global-wide need for localized sustainability. Maui Nui's new agriculture is centered around small diversified farms that bring to market a wide variety of produce from dragon fruit and micro greens to sweet corn, coffee, goat cheese, and strawberries. Many of these farms have embraced agritourism, inviting visitors to feel the pulse of the land.

Sweet, juicy Maui Onions grown on the slopes of Haleakalā in Kula are proof that small crops of high quality make a difference. Grown on just 150 acres by a handful of passionate farmers, they are celebrated at the annual Maui Onion Festival, held at Whalers Village Fine Shops & Restaurants at Kā'anapali Beach each August.

Organic farming is creating a niche as well, providing restaurants with flavorful produce while preserving the health of community and land. Trek to distant Kīpahulu in East Maui to tour ☐ Ono Organic Farms, where the Boerner family cultivates a huge variety of



crops including coffee, citrus, banana, cacao, dragon fruit, durian, lychee, soursop, pomegranate, egg fruit, kumquat, and passion fruit on 30 acres of sprawling farm lands.

And while coffee traces its history back to 1817, it is today one of the most exciting crops in Maui Nui, producing a brew with rich character. About 40 farms produce Maui coffee, mostly tiny estates of one acre or less. Casey Shim, who produces hearty Shim Pure Kula Coffee and also grows proteas and offers a guided tour of his scenic family farm in Kula. Tours are seasonal and offered by appointment only. Coffees of Hawai'i (on Moloka'i) runs a gift shop and espresso bar, and offers adventurous mule drawn wagon tours as well as coffee hiking adventures through its sprawling coffee orchards.

Most of Maui Nui's ranch dairies belong to yesteryear, but these days Thomas and Eva Kafsack make more than two dozen varieties of gourmet goat cheese at their Surfing Goat Dairy in lower Kula. Visitors are welcome to stop by any time, but the hands on "Evening Chores & Milking" and "Grand Tours" offer far more intimate encounters.

As unusual is Ali'i Kula Lavender, a deliciously fragrant farm high up on the slopes of Haleakalā. Created by Ali'i Chang, the farm offers daily walking tours amid the lavender gardens. You can also wander around on your own, sign up for a cart tour with Chang, or treat your party to a lavish lavender lunch or tea and scones. Relaxing, restorative lavender shows up in coffee, gourmet seasonings, honey, scone mix, syrup, and even chocolate.

In 1974, Emil Tedeschi established Maui's first commercial winery on a few acres at 'Ulupalakua Ranch on the slopes of Haleakalā. Tedeschi Vineyards now produces seven different wines and is a destination in and of itself. You can sample the wine around an eighteen-foot long bar cut from the trunk of a single mango tree in the historic Kalākaua Cottage Tasting Room, first built in 1874. You can bring a picnic and stroll the winery grounds while learning about 'Ulupalakua's past. Guided tours are offered daily.

The rich, delicious flavor of macadamia nuts becomes sweeter on Moloka'i since it is quite possible that Purdy's Natural Macadamia Nuts are the best you'll ever taste. Kammy and Harry Purdy have opened their 5-acre, 70-year-old macadamia nut farm in Ho'olehua to visitors and are happy to share knowledge as well as Moloka'i lore. You'll learn everything you ever wanted to know about mac nuts, from growth to harvesting and shelling; you even get to crack some macs.

Of course, the many farmers markets and road side produce stands that color Maui Nui's landscape extend a powerful invitation to experience the islands' agricultural lifeblood and local, rural character right on the spot. Often the farmers themselves are present to volunteer their stories and recipes. Every Saturday, the Moloka'i Farmers Market in Kaunakakai and the Lāna'i Market Place in Lāna'i City draw people out of



their homes to shop for island-grown vegetables, fruits, and flowers, as well as handmade crafts, cooked foods, and jams and jellies.

On Maui, you'll find numerous produce stands depending somewhat on the season. Tropical fruits are turning Maui Nui agriculture increasingly sweet. And mangoes, for example, were once a backyard crop, that is now an irresistible visitor treat. Yee's Orchard Fruit Stand in Kīhei is a must-stop.

As for farmers markets, always popular is the Saturday morning Maui Swap Meet in Kahului. Besides crafts and local-style clothing, it features lots of fruits and locally-grown veggies. Kīhei Farmers Market in North Kīhei spills over with produce and aloha five full days a week and remains a low-key favorite for island residents.

Unmistakable signs of modern times surround the farmers markets and farming enterprises of Maui Nui today and agricultural methods used may have embraced technology. Agriculture prevails on Maui Nui as it has done for centuries and in its vibrant essence continues to give life to the land.

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