



## NEWS RELEASE

Contacts: Charlene Ka'uhane  
President  
Ka'uhane Communications, Inc.  
Phone: (808) 243-2290; Fax: (808) 243-2211  
E-mail: charlene@kauhanecommunications.com

Keli'i Brown  
Director of Public Relations & Promotions  
Maui Visitors Bureau  
Phone: (808) 244-3530; Fax: (808) 244-1337  
E-mail: kelii@mauivb.com

### FROM FARM TO TABLE

Creating vibrant flavors, responsible chefs embrace an agricultural heritage

MAUI, Hawai'i – Not so long ago, during the years when sugar plantations phased out and tourism picked up, restaurants across Maui Nui imported most of their foods from the mainland – Maine lobster, iceberg lettuce, even bananas and tomatoes. For a small group of pioneering chefs, this made no sense. Locally, fertile fields lay unused and the descendants of immigrant farmers were struggling. The chefs vowed to create a new cuisine that would engage the farmers and center around fresh, local produce and the ethnic cultural influences of the plantation families. Long before it became a motto, the chefs championed sustainability. Today, Hawai'i Regional Cuisine holds a firm spot on the gourmet world map and has spurred many local cottage industries.

Leader of the pioneer chefs was an unknown visionary chef, Peter Merriman. A local hero and celebrity, Merriman opened Merriman's Kapalua on the edge of Kapalua Bay in west Maui in June 2008. Renewing his commitment to using only the freshest products, Merriman notes that 90 percent or more of his ingredients are locally produced or caught, with only sustainable methods. The restaurant exemplifies what it means to care for the culture, the lands and the agricultural lifestyle of Maui Nui.

In Lāhaina, two award winning restaurants, Pacific'O and I'o, have gone so far as to acquire their own farm. With a vibrant palette of crops and open to visitors, O'o Farm in Kula harvests several hundreds of pounds of fresh, organic produce each week on 8.5 acres of land – from salad greens, spinach, carrots, beets, rainbow chard, sugar snap peas, tomatoes, and fresh greenhouse herbs to whatever the season allows. Executive Chef James McDonald decides what is for dinner based on the farm's output. O'o offers gourmet lunch tours.



McDonald was trained at Maui Culinary Academy at Maui Community College in Central Maui. The Academy's award winning culinary arts program takes place in a state-of-the-art \$14 million facility. It is here that students, instructors, farmers, producers, chefs and restaurateurs daily converge to fuel the dynamic dialogue concerning Maui Nui sustainability. Students master the skills needed to be chefs, servers, and food managers and also learn about numerous other careers from food manufacturing to marketing, all linking agriculture to food. The students run a food court and a fine dining lunch restaurant on site.

Having been frustrated for years with the poor quality of mainland raised beef available in local markets, a group of Maui Nui ranchers is taking new pride in local livestock and is bringing Maui beef back to Maui through the Maui Cattle Company (MCC). One hundred percent natural and forage-fed, tender and tasty MCC beef reflects the flavors of the land. It can be found in an increasing number of outlets and restaurants.

The strong farm-to-table philosophy of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine mirrors itself in an increasing number of products made locally with local ingredients. These value added gourmet products bring in extra revenue for farmers, lengthen the agricultural cycle, and make delicious omiyage (the local Japanese tradition of bringing something home special to the place one visited).

Maui Culinary Academy partners with local companies to research, develop and market value added products in its Research and Development Center. In a joint venture with Tedeschi Vineyards, students use the lees of the winery's raspberry wine to make a garnet colored Maui Raspberry Wine Jelly, for sale at the winery's Tasting Room.

Maui Land & Pineapple Company provides cull pineapples for a second student product, Maui Roasted Pineapple Jam. Both are sweetened with Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company signature Maui Brand Natural Cane Sugar.

On the slopes of Haleakalā, family owned Hashimoto Persimmon Farm has been growing its blushing, sweet-tart mystical crop since the early 1920s. Today, fourth generation Clark Hashimoto manages the five-acre farm. His wife, Jackie has developed a line of carnelian colored irresistible persimmon products including scone mix, salad dressing, butter and jam. Maui Onions? Nothing makes a local style sandwich more addictive than a spoonful of pickled Maui onions from M. Uradomo Farms. The well-respected Uradomo family has been able to maintain their farming legacy by designing a whole line of tangy Maui Pickled Products.

Salt, or pa'akai, is an important product to Hawaiian culture. In early Hawai'i, it served as a primary dietary condiment. To this day it remains an essential element in Hawaiian



medicine and an integral part of ceremonial blessings. But modern air and ocean pollutants make sea salt hardly what it used to be. Hawai'i Kai Salts on Moloka'i applies advanced technology to pure, filtered sea water to create white, whole salts and mineral rich tonics.

Moloka'i produced significant amounts of honey in the 1900s. Today, the Kaneshiro family has revitalized this sweet legacy with Moloka'i Meli. ("Meli" is the Hawaiian word for honey.) The apiaries are set up in thick kiawe forests and have been developed from local, hand-picked, wild Moloka'i hives. Isolated from mainland diseases, the colonies have been able to thrive. The pure, gourmet kiawe honey is available in jars and Meli Stix (honey sticks).

'Ono is the word for delicious in Hawaiian. And there are just a few of the many innovative enterprises in Maui Nui that are rooted in local culture. Mauians are passionate about bringing local produce to local outlets and dedicated to enthuse a new generation to continue to care for the land. Each is a story unto itself. And as it turns out, a sense of responsibility for preservation and an awareness of interdependence and sustainability can be 'onolicious.

pau/end