

INSIDE: LOCAL RESTAURANTS ARE MOVING FORWARD, BOOST 'DA BUX', HFIA'S HOLIDAY BRUNCH

HAWAI'I RETAIL GROCER

WINTER 2020

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

LOOKING FORWARD



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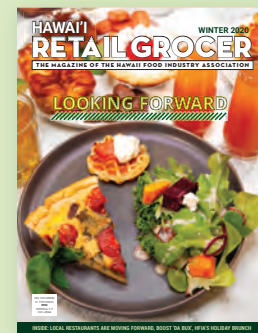
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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Aloha HFIA Team,

As I look ahead to the holidays this year, I know they will be a bit different. Some of our plans, celebrations, and traditions may have to change to stay safe in our current times, but I know that we'll still find ways to come together and share this special time of year.

As 2020 comes to an end we still have many challenges ahead. Safely welcoming visitors back to our islands and restarting the economy will take hard work and probably have some ups and downs. Looking back at the past several months I am continually amazed by everything our industry has done to continue to serve our communities and provide for the people of our state; we have shown time and again that we truly are essential. Our member businesses

have invested so much in keeping our customers and employees safe. Companies have found creative ways to stay open and stay stocked. I continue to hear so many stories of ways that those in Hawaii's food and beverage industry have gone above and beyond to make sure that people get what they need.

Thinking about the year to come I'm optimistic that we will continue to make progress. I know that someday soon we'll get beyond the current trials of this pandemic. Whatever our new normal will look like, I know that our industry will keep being there for our neighborhoods and our state. I know that we'll use what we've learned this year to keep improving and growing, and I know that someday, hopefully soon, we'll find a way to all get together in person again, and I'm looking forward to that!



Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Carter".

Joe Carter
VP-GM Coca-Cola Bottling
of Hawaii
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PHOTO ROBERT COUSE-BAKER

Leveling the SNAP Online Purchasing Playing Field for Independent Grocers

BY NGA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS TEAM

With Americans sheltering in place during the coronavirus pandemic, online shopping has been consumers' saving grace. And while grocers, deemed essential providers during the crisis, have not been squeezed as much as other merchants, e-commerce has allowed food sellers to give consumers seeking to limit contact outside their homes some additional peace of mind.

Independent grocers, in particular, were prepared for this dramatic shift in consumer need. Twice as many independent supermarkets started offering online shopping in 2020 than did so a year earlier, according to the 2020 edition of the Independent Grocers Financial Survey, a joint study between the National Grocers Association (NGA) and FMS Solutions. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, independent grocers have been working diligently to serve their customers and feed their communi-

ties in the most efficient and effective ways possible. Many consumers have also shifted their shopping habits and have been ordering their groceries online with delivery or curbside pickup options. But still, a significant segment of the consumer population remains underserved, particularly those in need, as household acceptance of e-commerce blossoms.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) has recognized the need for individuals qualifying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to have the option to use their benefits to order groceries online on retailers' websites, an option that was only accessible via four retailers, including two independent grocers, in eight states before the pandemic struck. Beginning in March, FNS quickly expanded its limited SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot to 47 states, including Hawaii. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**

HOW LOCAL RESTAURANTS ARE MOVING FORWARD

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

Like any location renowned for great dining, Hawaii's restaurant scene is always in a state of flux. New chefs and entrepreneurs pop up and make their mark, local institutions change hands and evolve, and diners' tastes shift with the times. Change has always been a constant, but the COVID-19 pandemic has altered and challenged Hawaii's restaurant market in extreme new ways. Sadly, the pandemic has already forced the closure of dozens of local restaurants and many more are still struggling. During mandatory closures restaurants still had expenses, and even when reopening was allowed the limited capacity requirements make it hard for many businesses to generate enough revenue to cover their bills. In order to overcome these obstacles, local restaurants and their supporters have launched several initiatives to help keep these vital local businesses moving forward.

In the very early stages of the pandemic the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation recognized the threat that COVID-19 posed to Hawaii's restaurants, and the negative consequences that large scale restaurant closures would have on Hawaii's employment numbers and economy. The Foundation created Food-A-Go-Go to connect Hawaii diners with local restaurants that are offering takeout. A diverse group of business and media partners has col-

laborated to make Food-A-Go-Go a success, including the Hawaii Restaurant Association, and HFIA Members Mahi Pono, Hawaiian Airlines, and Hawaii Gas.

The program continues to be a highly effective tool for helping hungry diners find which restaurants are offering takeout or dine in, and connecting shoppers with local farmers and food producers.

Food-A-Go-Go also has useful resources for both customers and restaurants and publicizes deals and promotions.

In March the Central Pacific Bank Foundation also saw the need to help support local restaurants in this time of hardship. They launched the #KeepHawaiiCooking initiative and made the tremendous commitment of reimbursing 50% of cost of takeout or deliv-

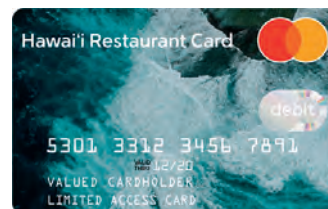


#KeepHawaiiCooking

ery meals purchased from participating local restaurants, up to \$100,000 total. Unsurprisingly the program took off and easily reached the \$100,000 goal in a short amount of time. CPB foundation embraced the momentum and created a second phase which resulted in at least 10,400 meals shared, which translated into \$615,000 spending at restaurants. Local diners were reimbursed almost \$310,000 from the CPB Foundation. Now phase three is in ef-

fect and CPB is keeping the movement going by giving away 2 gift cards per week to their featured restaurant of the week. This latest phase builds on the success of the previous two phases by leveraging the big social media following and directing it towards the featured local businesses.

The latest initiative to make sure Hawaii restaurants can keep going is the Hawaii



Restaurant Card. Each Restaurant Card is worth \$500 and were sent out at the end of October to qualifying unemployment recipients. The cards work like a debit card and can be used for food and non-alcoholic drinks at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers around the state until December 15. The program has been championed by the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii and Hawaii's restaurant industry. Funds for the cards came from Hawaii's portion of the Federal CARES Act money and the program was designed to provide two layers of benefits to the State; first it gives some additional food funds to families and individuals that are struggling due to job loss, and at the same time it helps to prevent further job losses in Hawaii's restaurant industry. Just a few weeks after the cards were mailed over 100,000 had been activated and 30% of the money on them had been spent at restaurants around the state.

Industry experts estimate that every dollar spent in restaurant **CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**

NGA UPDATE | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Although the pilot is now operating essentially nationwide, store options are still very limited for SNAP customers to use their benefits online. Specifically, for many SNAP participants, the only options to apply their benefits online are Amazon and Walmart. Yet, according to USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), independent grocers play an important role in helping to ensure food access for consumers, particularly in low-income and rural areas.

Dozens of independent grocers are interested in offering this service to their customers, and many have applied to FNS to participate, but no additional grocers other than the pilot retailers have yet launched SNAP Online Purchasing during the pandemic due to burdensome requirements and several barriers that are uniquely faced by small retailers. These barriers

include technical challenges, a testing process that must be performed with each individual store location, financial constraints to launch and continuously operate the program, and a lengthy application and approval process.

NGA has been serving as a critical partner in helping independent grocers maneuver the application process, while also actively lobbying Congress and the administration to create a level playing field for independent grocers in SNAP Online Purchasing. Given the studies that show that independents are more attuned to the needs of the community and offer lower prices for certain products, NGA is urging the government to launch more independent retailers as soon as possible so grocers can best serve their customers according to their needs and help fight food insecurity during this critical time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NGA is supportive of S. 4202 and H.R. 7535,

the Expanding SNAP Options Act, legislation introduced by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL), to make it more technically and financially feasible for independent grocers to participate in SNAP Online Purchasing. In September, NGA also hosted a virtual meeting with FNS Administrator Pam Miller and approximately 25 independent grocers and e-commerce representatives to discuss the barriers and challenges small retailers face when working through the SNAP Online Purchasing application and testing process.

NGA commends FNS for its robust efforts to expand the program throughout the pandemic. We look forward to continuing our work together with USDA to expand the SNAP Online Purchasing program to more independent grocers so that they can help to feed Americans when they need it most.

HOW LOCAL RESTAURANTS ARE MOVING FORWARD | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

creates \$1.82 worth of economic activity. Restaurants and the restaurant food supply chain are crucial job creators and economic drivers in our state. These initiatives and any other investments that the state and counties make in keeping these businesses and this

sector alive will help lessen the negative economic impact of the pandemic overall, and make the road to recovery that much shorter.

There has been an overwhelming positive response for all three programs, which illustrates how much the people of Hawaii value and appreciate their local restaurants. Whether it's historic eateries or promising up and

comers, tourist hot spots and local favorites, fine dining to food trucks, Hawaii restaurants are a vital part of Hawaii communities. While it is likely that more restaurants will close before the pandemic is done, it's also clear that Hawaii restaurants can count on the support of Hawaii residents as they move forward into the future.



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PHOTO: DUSTIN KODA

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

COUNTY

City Card Program

HFIA is working with the Office of Economic Revitalization and other stakeholders on the development of the City Card Program to provide households impacted by COVID-19 with pre-loaded funds on a MasterCard similar to a debit card. City Card will be used for households to purchase groceries, food, household items such as cleaning supplies, prescriptions and pharmaceutical household needs. The value of the cards has not yet been determined but should be between \$500 and \$1000.

Minimum Wage

The Honolulu Department of Environmental Services (ENV) is in the process of finalizing the Administrative Rules for the Disposable Food Ware Ordinance (DFWO), which started off as Bill 40 and was passed last year as Ordinance 19-30. Parts of the DFWO take effect on January 1, 2020, including a revised definition of a plastic checkout bag, a ban on plastic service ware (i.e. utensils), and a requirement that non-plastic service ware be provided only upon request or affirmative response from a customer. Draft rules have been released but the hearing had to be postponed and at time of writing has not been rescheduled.

Because of global shortages of various types of single use service ware and food ware caused by the pandemic, HFIA is collaborating with the Hawaii Restaurant Association (HRA) to request an industry exemption to the ordinance. Unfortunately, due to the way the measure was written we are not allowed to

apply for the exemption until after the DFWO goes into effect. HFIA and HRA submitted joint testimony for the hearing. Our testimony notes that because of the shortages and because many larger companies order supplies many months in advance, smaller businesses especially may have difficulty complying and that an enforcement grace period is necessary to allow time for the industry exemption to be applied for and granted. ENV has not confirmed a grace period.

We did get clarification on one point of confusion about the measure. ENV has confirmed that if a customer is buying prepared food, an employee may ask "Do you need utensils?" or "Would you like silverware?" or some variation of that, and if the customer says "yes" or otherwise responds affirmatively, the employee can provide compliant disposable service ware.

Honolulu Bill 65

At time of writing Honolulu Bill 65 is still going through hearings at the County. The current version will amend parts of the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu relating to the Office of Climate Change. HFIA is working with a coalition of other business groups including the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii, the Hawaii Restaurant Association, and others to ensure that our businesses community is part of the conversation on these matters.

Kauai County Polystyrene Ban

In September Kauai County passed a ban on polystyrene food ware. The ban goes into effect in January 2022. One version of the measure would have also banned plastic food ware. HFIA opposed this version noting this is not the time to take any action that will make things harder or more expensive for local businesses. The measure was revised back to a polystyrene-only ban.

The law states that "Food providers shall not sell, use, provide, or offer the use of polystyrene foam food service containers." It also says, "Polystyrene foam food service containers shall not be offered for sale or sold in the County."

There are exemptions for "Foods packaged outside the County of Kauai; Polystyrene foam food containers used for raw or butchered meats, poultry, fish, or eggs unless provided for consumption without further food preparation (e.g., sashimi and poke); Packaging in situations unique to the food provider, where there is no alternative to polystyrene foam food service containers, provided the food provider applies for an exemption and such exemption is granted by the Director; Packaging in any situation deemed by the County to be an emergency

requiring emergency supplies or services procurement."

STATE

HFIA is actively planning our strategies for the 2021 legislative session now. We don't yet know what form Session will take next year in terms of how hearings will be conducted or how testimony will be heard, but we do know some of the issues that we will likely be working on.

Honolulu Bill 40 Admin Rules

The economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic has been extreme in our state and we know that many believe the best response to that will be a minimum wage increase. This is especially likely given how far an increase got in 2020. HFIA will continue to communicate with our legislators the importance of keeping any increase to a reasonable level and implementing it over a time frame that is manageable and does not cause drastic unintended negative consequences for businesses or the state's economy.

Tobacco

Several bills aimed at banning flavored tobacco also made it very far in session last year and may have passed if not for the COVID-19 interruption. We believe there will be a renewed push for this in 2021 and that there is a strong possibility that some form of a ban will pass. HFIA will maintain our stance that including menthol in these bans is not in keeping with the overall intent of bills and that menthol should be excluded.

Grants and Tax Credits

HFIA has been participating in the House Food Stream and Agriculture Subcommittee with Representative Onishi, several HFIA members, and other stakeholders. This group has been expressly tasked with coming up with legislation that can be introduced next year that will help promote food self-sufficiency in the state. We are still working on specific recommendations and some of the ideas that have been getting a lot of traction are expanding the Double Up Food Bucks program, Manufacturing Grants for local food and for value-added products that use local agricultural products, creating food hubs, and tax credits to incentivize local food.

GET Exemption for Food and Essential Items

In 2021 HFIA will continue to advocate for reducing the tax burden on Hawaii's families by eliminating or reducing the GET for food. Hawaii is one of only a handful of States where

groceries are fully taxed and we believe now more than ever it is important that food be as affordable as possible for Hawaii residents. The State budget has been drastically reduced this year so any proposals that would cost the state money will be even more of an uphill battle than usual.

CBD and Hemp

This August HB1819 was signed into law as Act 014 legalizing the growth of hemp and allowing the processing and sale of hemp products through State licensing. It has a sunset date of 2022. The Department of Health's (DOH) current stance is that until they complete rules, CBD products cannot be sold. We have asked the DOH to keep us updated on the status of the rules. In 2021 we will continue to support having a functional and permanent regulatory framework for these products.

Waste Reduction and Plastic Bans

The Plastic Source Reduction Working Group that was convened under Senate Bill 522 last year has concluded. The group came up with eight recommendations and at the final meeting all members of the group agreed to approve the recommendations. The legislature will decide how, when, and whether to use these recommendations. HFIA's vote to approve the recommendations does not obligate us to take any particular stance on any piece of legislation that may be introduced in the future.

Recommendations:


1. Create a uniform statewide plastic source reduction standard.
2. Update the Department of Health (DOH) Health Code as needed to increase the use of reusables in food service.
3. Create a single, inclusive, across-the-board 15-30 cent user fee on all single-use service ware items and a separate 15-30 cent user fee on all carryout bags (but not cups, lids, and containers).
4. Enact a tax credit for businesses that invest in modern commercial reuse and washing equipment that reduce the use of plastics in the waste stream.
5. Organize, finance, and conduct a pilot project that tests the efficacy and expense of making UV-C or other sanitizing technology available.
6. Establish a 5-year State-facilitated education campaign about waste reduction.
7. Accelerate composting.
8. Undertake a fair and careful study of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the extreme importance of sanitation in foodservice and the need for single use items in many applications. However, both globally and


locally the pandemic has not dampened the public pressure for businesses and governments to take steps to reduce waste in general and plastic waste in particular. In 2021 we believe there may be some attempts at statewide bans or other waste reduction ordinances. HFIA will continue to support incentive-based waste reduction measures as well as responsible and sustainable waste management initiatives, such as local composting and recycling. We'll also work to ensure that accurate data about the impacts of various

measures on our environment and on our local businesses is heard in these discussions.

We will continue to provide updates on these and any other legislative issues in our Weekly Update emails. We will also periodically reach out to members with Action Alerts requesting that you submit testimony or take other action. We're very proud to be the voice of Hawaii's food and beverage industry and your participation on key legislation makes that voice stronger.



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REMEMBERING KEN OKIMOTO

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

This fall our industry lost another great leader. Ken Okimoto was a valued friend to Dick Botti. I know they had great times together at HFIA's conventions, and they worked together tirelessly to promote the food industry in our great state. Ken was one of the vanguard leaders who helped guide our industry and our association to where we are today.

The Waianae store was started by Ken's parents, David and Betty Okimoto, in 1949. The story remains a great example of a local family businesses that has not just survived but thrived. Doing business in Waianae has some unique challenges, including competition of all sizes. Ken over-

came those challenges with innovation, hard work, lots of industry knowledge, and strong relationships with fellow leaders. Ken's sons have built on that legacy and have grown Okimoto Corp to include multiple businesses on Oahu and Molokai.

Stan Brown of Acosta has a long history of working with the Okimoto family and deeply respects Ken and his legacy. In his words, "I've known Ken ever since the early days, he was kind of an industry pioneer. He was known for being gruff and outspoken with a good heart, and he was a good businessman. I'm happy to see that he was able to be as successful as he was. I know that his family was important to him, and I'm happy he was able to pass

the store on down to his sons, who have done a great job with it."

Another HFIA Member Kevin Misaki expressed how much Ken will be missed, "All I can say is that he was a good man, a great father, a smart businessman, and a generous community contributor. I had many great fishing trips with him. I will certainly miss his companionship. Aloha, my friend."

The Okimoto family is an integral part of HFIA and has been since its inception. We are so grateful for the leadership, friendship, and values that Ken brought to HFIA. We are saddened by the loss of another great food industry legend but so proud of the legacy that Kit, Kyle, and Kris Okimoto continue into the future.



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SCHOOL CLOSURES DEEPENS FAMILY HARDSHIP

BY JESSE COOKE AND KEITH DEMELLO

Over 17 weeks, from March 23 to July 17, 2020, the Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) Grab-and-Go school meals program provided more than 1.3 million school meals. These included breakfasts and lunches for children ages 18 or younger at nearly 80 public schools and community locations on Oahu, Kauai, Maui, Molokai, Lanai and Hawaii Island.

Though that is an impressive number, tens of thousands of Hawaii students were still left without meals each school day. To put the numbers in perspective, the Hawaii DOE before the pandemic typically served more than 135,000 meals in a single day (32,000 breakfasts and 103,000 lunches), and 1.3 million meals is what the department would serve in a mere two-week period (10 school days) versus 17 weeks.

Many students rely on school meals as their primary source of daily nutrition. The department's daily average after schools closed in April was 26,000 meals per day, which is approximately 20% of its normal production. As a result, at the beginning of the pandemic to the end of the school year, many struggling families were forced to pay for meals that were once provided free of charge or at a significant discount by their public schools. At the same time, many of these families are dealing with job loss and other financial issues due to the state's economic down turn.

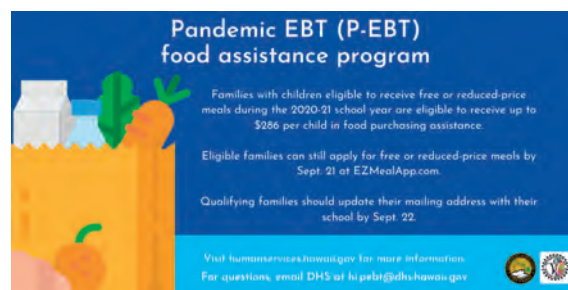
P-EBT program offers needed support

In response to this reduction of resources needed to provide well-balanced and nutritious meals to students, the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act made possible the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program to provide nutritional resources to families who lost access to free or reduced-price school meals.

In Hawaii, the DOE announced in June that families with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals would receive temporary cash assistance

for food. Discussing the program when it began, U.S. Senator Brian Schatz said, "With thousands unemployed and schools closed, many Hawaii families are struggling to put food on the table, especially those in low income or underserved communities. This new program will help make sure that children who rely on school food programs are still getting the meals they need at home during the pandemic."

According to the Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS), P-EBT benefits are provided to students who are either enrolled for free or reduced-price school meals at a school that participates in the



National School Lunch Program, or students who are enrolled in a school that provides free meals to all students through the Community Eligibility Provision or another provision.

The P-EBT program provides households an EBT card loaded with an amount equivalent to the value of the free school breakfast and lunch federal reimbursement rates for the days that schools were closed. Of the 135,000 meals the Hawaii DOE would normally produce per day, 90,000 of those meals — 25,000 breakfast and 65,000 lunches — are federally subsidized free and reduced-price meals. The federal reimbursement for free meals is 2.15 per breakfast and \$4 per lunch, and for reduced-price meals is \$1.85 per breakfast and \$3.60 per lunch.

For eligible families that were already SNAP households, benefits were automatically deposited into their existing Kokua EBT cards. For eligible families that were

not SNAP households, DHS mailed P-EBT cards with their benefits pre-loaded. Eligible families in Hawaii received up to \$646 in P-EBT benefits for the period of March through September.

Positive impacts locally and nationally

Nationally, approximately 30 million children were eligible for the P-EBT program, resulting in approximately \$10 billion in potential total benefits for households.

According to a report by the Brookings Institution, 55 million school-age children were not in school in spring 2020, and tens of millions lost access to school-based nutrition assistance programs (school meals). The report also found that P-EBT reduced food hardship experienced by low-income families with children, and lifted between 2.7 and 3.9 million children out of hunger. The P-EBT program impacts have been significant with reports of food insecurity for children substantially reduced, especially during the first week after benefits were paid. It also reduced household food insecurity and the likelihood of household members "sometimes or often did not have enough to eat."

In Hawaii, during the first round of P-EBT, DHS provided more than 93,500 eligible students with \$33,437,250 in food assistance support, according to the DHS website. "Ensuring that children in need have access to nutritious meals remains a top priority," said Cathy Betts, director of the Department of Human Services. "As families navigate the challenges of work, remote learning, and caring for their ohana, we hope these additional benefits will relieve some of the financial stressors of accessing healthy and nutritious meals."

HOW DOES THE P-EBT WORK WITH DA BUX DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS?

- SNAP and Hawaii P-EBT cards can also be used in the DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks program, which increases the purchasing power of local families and helping more families buy more healthy, local foods.
- Once families have a DA BUX access card, families can use the DA BUX access cards with their Kokua EBT cards or Hawaii P-EBT cards to access 50% discount on local fruits and vegetables.
- More information: dabux.org

STATE MATCHES PRIVATE-SECTOR DONATION TO BOOST 'DA BUX'

BY JESSE COOKE AND KEITH DEMELLO

The Food Basket's DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks program received a million-dollar infusion last October when the State of Hawaii matched a donation from a hui of private-sector organizations. As the name implies, the Double Up Food Bucks model doubles the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase locally produced, fresh and nutritious fruits, vegetables, and proteins at participating locations statewide.

SNAP is the nation's largest food assistance program. In the federal fiscal year 2018, SNAP issued \$60.9 billion in benefits to be spent on food. It accounts for about 8% of the food that U.S. families buy for their homes. Nationally, 35.7 million people (11% of the U.S. population) participated in SNAP last year, with 157,000 being Hawai'i residents (11% of the state population). Hawai'i SNAP recipients

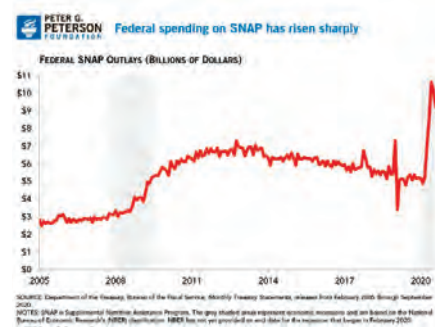
received \$448.3 million in benefits in 2019, resulting in an average monthly SNAP benefit for each participant of \$258.

SNAP participation up sharply during the pandemic

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, participation in SNAP has increased significantly. In August 2020 alone, 177,083 Hawaii residents received SNAP benefits, an increase by 14.5% over August last year. Between March and April, the latest months for which national data is available, SNAP participation grew across the country by nearly 16%.

Likewise, federal spending on SNAP increased following the outbreak of COVID-19. In August, the amount the federal government invested in SNAP was \$9.3 billion, which is a 76% increase over March (before the pandemic). The Congressional Budget Office estimated that,

due to pandemic factors, program costs would increase by \$24 billion in fiscal year 2020 and \$41 billion over the next decade.



In the first few months of the pandemic, from March through June, outlays grew at an average of 26% per month — nearly double the largest monthly growth seen during the Great Recession a decade ago.

SNAP is an economic stimulus

SNAP is a recognized automatic stabilizer for the economy. For example, when unemployment increases and wages fall during an economic downturn, SNAP eligibility and enrollment increase. The resulting increase in spending by SNAP participants benefits those who produce, transport, and market the purchased food and

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goods. In addition, lower-income households' cash is freed up for other essential items, like diapers and medication.

A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture study estimated that every dollar in new SNAP benefits, spent when the economy is weak and unemployment elevated, measurably increases the gross domestic product by \$1.54.

Double Up Food Bucks results in regional stimulus

The Double Up Food Bucks model, branded in Hawai'i as DA BUX, increases the purchasing power of low-income families; makes fresh, healthy food choices more accessible; helps expand markets for small farm operations; and keeps SNAP dollars circulating locally.

DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS IMPACT ACROSS THE NATION (2019)

- 28 states had Double Up Food Bucks programs
- \$15.2 million toward qualifying SNAP purchases and related incentives (\$4.6 million at farmers' markets and \$10.5 million at grocery stores)
- 221,712 families and 443,424 people impacted

Within the local agriculture sector, the result is measurable:

- Participating farmers are more successful.
- SNAP recipients and farmers are attracted to the market, thereby increasing SNAP redemptions and overall product sales.
- New direct and wholesale marketing opportunities are created.
- Farm expansion is stimulated in both acreage and crop diversity.

Many states have recognized these benefits as they respond to the increase in unemployment and food insecurity from the pandemic. Some states have provided either state or CARES Act funds to bolster their state's version of Double Up Food Bucks. Both Iowa and Michigan allocated \$1 million in CARES funding toward their programs, and West Virginia allotted \$100,000.

Hawai'i response 'enthusiastic'

In response to Hawai'i's steep increase in SNAP enrollment arising from the pandemic, and to address the sales losses suffered by local farmers and ranchers due to the shut-

down of hotels and restaurants, the philanthropic community raised \$500,000 to fund the expansion of DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks statewide. The organizations worked with The Food Basket, which administers DA BUX, to prepare and submit a project proposal to Gov. David Ige to secure a state match of \$500,000 in CARES Act funds.

The cross-sector partnership includes contributions by the following state and private partners:

- State of Hawai'i (\$500,000)
- Stupski Foundation (\$200,000)
- Ulupono Initiative (\$200,000)
- The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation (\$50,000)
- Kamehameha Schools (\$25,000)
- Anonymous (\$25,000)

"Interest in expanding DA BUX was enthusiastic because of a desire to help and a shared recognition that a strong agriculture economy is critical to addressing Hawai'i's long-term food security and resilience issues," said Murray Clay, president of Ulupono Initiative, one of the private-sector organizations contributing to the program. "These funds will uplift families and individuals who most need it while helping local agricultural food producers build their market base."

To facilitate the full spend down of the \$500,000 CARES Act funds by Dec. 30, 2020, the state also increased the DA BUX match limit to \$50 per day from \$20 per day, and local ground beef and eggs were added – both through Dec. 29, 2020.

Further, The Food Basket has assisted in bringing out new DA BUX retailers to provide local families with more opportunities and access to utilize their DA BUX benefits. Benefits can be redeemed at the following participating retailers:

- Grocery stores Times Super Markets, Shima's Super Market, Big Save Markets, and KTA Super Stores
- Direct food retailers Farm Link Hawai'i Food Hub and Farm Link – Big Tree Farm Stand
- Mobile markets like Roots Mobile Market (Kokua Kalihi Valley) and Sustainable Molokai
- The Food Basket's CSA program
- Farmers' markets including Hale Puna Farmers' Market (Kaua'i), Okoa Farms-Waipuna Chapel Farmers' Market (Maui), Okoa Farms-Upcountry Farmers' Market (Maui), and Okoa Farms-Ka'ahumanu Mall Farmers' Market (Maui)

For more information on DA BUX Double Up Program, visit dabux.org.

ONGOING THREATS TO SNAP BENEFITS

In Washington, D.C., Chief U.S. District Judge Beryl A. Howell recently struck down a Trump administration attempt to end food stamp benefits for between 700,000 and 1.3 million unemployed people, calling the measure "arbitrary and capricious."

It was the first of three new rules changes, announced by the administration in December 2019, to decrease SNAP funding and participation.

Attorneys general from D.C., Maryland, Virginia, New York, California and other states alleged that the first measure alone would have cut nearly \$5.5 billion for the program over a five-year period and required "drastic cuts" for adults without children.

Current rules restrict non-disabled adults without dependents (ABAWD), individuals age 18 through 49 who are not disabled or caring for children or other dependents, from having access to SNAP for three months in a 36-month period unless they are working 20 hours a week or enrolled in an employment or training program. However, states have long had the option to request statewide waivers or partial waivers from the time-limit if high unemployment or limited job availability criteria exist.

The Trump administration's proposed rule change, blocked by Judge Howell's Oct. 18 decision, would have narrowed state options to waive work requirements for ABAWD participating in SNAP. The USDA estimates 700,000 people would have lost access to SNAP benefits. The Brookings Institution, and non-profit policy research organization, put the estimated that over 1.3 million users would lose benefits.

The two additional rule changes, still being finalized, will attempt to limited deductions for utility allowance and SNAP access for working-poor families. A study by the Urban Institute indicated the combined impact of the three rule changes (if implemented in 2018) would have result in 3.7 million fewer people and 2.1 million fewer households receiving SNAP. Annual benefits would also decrease by \$4.2 billion. In addition, it's estimated that about 982,000 students would lose automatic access to free or reduced-price school meals.

SNAP provides a critical safety net to those who most need it. The program also represents a wise investment as part of our nation and state's economic recovery. Interested individuals and organizations should contact Hawai'i's Congressional Delegation to express urgent support for maximizing SNAP funds.



HFIA'S HOLIDAY BRUNCH

Start your holiday early with a delicious celebration brunch! This festive HFIA spread has something that everyone in your household will love, from decadent sweet treats to fresh island flavors.

1, 7: Sensei Farms Crystal Lettuce and Leafy Green Lettuce salad mixes both available at Foodland, tossed with Hawaii Pantry Pickled Beets, papaya, goat cheese, and Foodland's Makai Candied Walnuts and topped with Makai Papaya Seed Dressing.

2: Ulu Mana Bangin' Beet Hawaiian Hummus and Hawaiian Chip Co. Sweet Potato Chips, both available from Down to Earth.



3: Local fruit plate from KTA Super Stores.





4, 11: Mochi waffles from Mochi Foods, with freshly whipped Meadow Gold Cream and guava and raspberry sauce made with Maui Fruit Jewels Guava Puree.



5, 6: Drinks for everyone including Kauai Coffee Estate Blend and Hawaiian Sun Guava Strawberry. For the adults, a Hawaiian Hoki cocktail with Ko'olau Old Pali Highway Whiskey, ginger beer, and garnished with lime and mint, all available from Safeway.



8, 9: A dessert tray of Kona Gold Trading Co Macadamia Lilikoi Rum Cake available online through the Made in Hawaii Festival Marketplace; Diamond Bakery Guava Shortbread Cookies; Hawaiian Host Aloha Macs; Kouign Amann from La Tour Bakery; and mini Strawberry Pie from Anna Miller's.



10, 11: A delectable quiche featuring rainbow chard and cherry tomatoes from Sensei Farms, and finished with Red Hawaiian 'Alea Sea Salt from Salty Wahine.



PHOTOS BY BRIAN HART; FOOD STYLING BY FOOD GURUS HAWAII

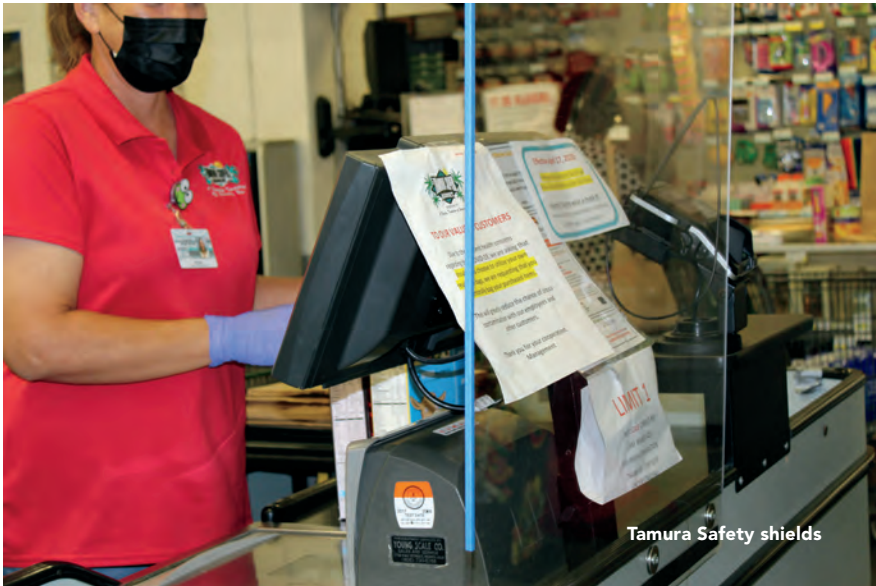


PHOTO COURTESY TAMURAS

overwhelmingly prefer to be the one to see and choose their own items, which is one of the key reasons that the majority of people still say they prefer in store grocery shopping. For pre-packaged items, curbside pick-up or delivery, whether ordered from the store or an online vendor, offer convenience and time savings. When the pandemic passes, people who are now ordering all groceries remotely may start to return to the store for fresh produce but still stock up on non-perishables by ordering.

Essential Employee Engagement

COVID-19 brought recognition to that fact that grocery stores, and grocery employees are essential. The work that industry professionals do to keep stores running has become more dangerous and more complex during the pandemic. Associates are now tasked with implementing vital practices that keep themselves and the public safe. Food retailers know they can't allow COVID fatigue to set in and lead to lapses in safety protocol. Keeping employees engaged and invested has taken on a new level of importance. This is likely to last as customers continue to demand high levels of safety, and as the world has a new appreciation for how important our industry and its workers are.

KTA President Toby Taniguchi refers to his employee engagement initiatives as "PPE for the spirit" and said, "We know how important it is to keep the staff in the game." At the beginning of the pandemic KTA bought extra toilet paper which they provided for employees to take home. Now, Toby and KTA leadership continue to keep employees engaged with employee only contests and giveaways like custom shirts. The latest features the message, "Mahalo for living with Aloha" and helps communicate to staff and customers the need to continue working to keep everyone safe.

Home Cooking Renaissance

When restaurants closed and many areas urged or ordered residents to stay in their houses, home cooking suddenly became mandatory. Home cooking has cooled off somewhat from that early spike and we are no longer seeing large scale shortages of things like yeast, but a notable increase in the number of home cooked meals persists. Many people learned new recipes and cooking skills in the beginning of the pandemic and will continue to use them even when it is not a necessity. Consumers also developed new habits that involve cooking at home which many will stick with. Prior to 2020 there was some talk that meal kits had perhaps peaked and were beginning to decline in popularity. The pandemic has sent them

WHAT 2020 ADAPTATIONS AND INNOVATIONS WILL ENDURE?

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit there was initially a lot of discussion about when things would get back to normal, but fairly rapidly that shifted to discussing the "new normal." Food retailers have had to make sweeping changes in order to stay open and keep customers and employees safe. As the pandemic progresses, and a time beyond COVID hopefully comes closer, it's becoming clearer which innovations and adaptations will become part of the new normal.

Safety and Sanitation

Customer's expectations for cleanliness, safety, and sanitation in food retail have never been higher. Many consumers are not aware of the myriad rules and regulations that have always been in place to keep food safe and sanitary, but now customers and regulatory agencies demand retailers provide an added layer of protection specific to COVID-19. One way isles to enable social distancing and mandatory mask wearing will probably not stick around when COVID-19 subsides, but heightened awareness of germs means that customers may still want to see other current safety measures in place even where there is not a specific viral threat. Sanitizing areas that customers touch like checkout stands and carts, and keeping plastic shields

between customers and employees are both likely to remain common practice.

When it comes to things like salad bars and buffets the future is uncertain. After COVID, some customers will want their salad bar back, but others won't be comfortable with shared utensils and other components of self-serve food. It's hard to predict exactly how the numbers will shake out and if buffets and food bars will be a profitable use of space when the new normal sets in. There is a good chance the answer will vary from place to place and may involve more adaptations, at least one company is already working on a robot that builds salads based on customer selected ingredients.

Delivery and Pickup

Grocery delivery and pickup were growing segments before COVID but the pandemic sent demand for these services skyrocketing. Many customers who had not used them before started to take advantage, and those who had used them sparingly began to turn to these as their normal way to get food. The majority of consumers still prefer to shop in store so ordering may decline some after the pandemic ends, but will remain strong for the foreseeable future.

The way that customers use these services may also shift once COVID is no longer a threat. For fresh fruits and vegetables, customers

surging back into the spotlight, with more companies offering more different types than ever. Customers have subscribed to meal kits and worked them into their weekly cooking routines along with more made from scratch dishes and may not switch back to as many restaurant meals when the pandemic ends.

Cashless is King

The decline in usage of paper money began well before COVID-19 but the pandemic has drastically accelerated the switch to cards and digital transactions. Many places have asked customers not to use cash at all in an effort to reduce contact between customers and employees. The coin shortage earlier this year showed that there are still some applications where only real money will do, so it's unlikely cash will disappear completely any time soon. But for more and more customers, cards and various types of digital transaction, especially those that don't require any contact, will be the preferred method of payment.

Robot made salads and a world with no paper money may or may not be right around



PHOTO COURTESY KTA

Masked KTA employees donning company shirts.

the corner, but many of the changes that 2020 has brought will definitely stick with us. The work that food retailers have done to react, adapt, and innovate this year has paid off. Consumers have been able to continue to get food and other essential items safely

throughout the pandemic, and more than ever people understand that this industry truly is essential. It's clear that as we move into the new normal, the food industry will not be looking backwards but moving forwards.

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HAWAII'S REOPENING UPDATE

STATE

With the launch of the Safe Travels Hawaii program starting October 15 visitors who had a recent negative COVID-19 test were allowed to enter Hawaii without the mandatory two-week quarantine for the first time since March. This was an important milestone in the State's reopening strategy and while there has been some confusion and a few unexpected challenges so far it has progressed relatively smoothly.

The State's "Beyond Recovery: Reopening Hawaii" strategy is intended to address both the health crisis and the economic impacts of COVID-19. It's a phased approach predicated on the assumption that COVID-19 will be an issue for the foreseeable future. The five phases are named and categorized by the level of dis-

ruption to normal life that they entail. They include "Stay at Home (Major Disruption), Safer at Home (Moderate Disruption), Act with Care (Minor Disruption), Recovery (Minimal Disruption), and New Normal (No Disruption). Each phase has rules for specific business sectors regarding if they can open fully, open with adjusted safe practices, open with adjusted safe practices and physical distancing, open only if essential, or remain closed.

At time of writing, the state is in the Act With Care phase. This allows most businesses including restaurants and retail to be open with physical distancing and safe practices. According to the detailed plan, "The four phases on the roadmap to recovery and resilience may also correspond with "Impact Levels" informed by health, economic, and community-based indicators. Decisions to advance impact levels and corresponding actions will be coordinated with county mayors, subject matter experts, and the community. A minimum 14-day observation period between decision points will allow time to assess conditions before moving to the next impact level." Updates on the plan and when the State will move to the next phase can be found at <https://recoverynavigator.hawaii.gov/>

COUNTIES

Several Counties have also enacted their own regulations to manage the pandemic, these

provide rules and guidelines that apply in addition to the State regulations.

Honolulu County has a tiered system with Tier 1 being the most restrictive and Tier 4 being the most relaxed, each Tier has rules for which types of activities are allowed as well as additional businesses regulations. Movement from one tier to another, whether forwards or backwards is determined by predetermined average daily case count and percentage positivity metrics. The County will stay in each tier for at least two weeks before moving to a less restrictive tier. At time of writing the County had just moved into Tier 2. This tier allows essential businesses to be open, with a 50% capacity cap for all retail including essential businesses. Bars and nightclubs must remain closed but restaurants can be open with restrictions on group size and capacity in place. Additional information is available at <https://www.oneoahu.org/reopening-strategy>

In Hawaii County travelers must have two negative COVID-19 tests in order to bypass the 14 quarantine. Additional details of the County's reopening rules are available through the County of Hawaii Research and Development page. Maui County and Kauai County are both encouraging but not requiring travelers to get a second COVID-19 test after arrival. Further information is available at MauiCounty.gov and KauaiCounty.gov

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Your Professional Networking Hub

HFIA hosts several low-cost membership events throughout the year. Our quarterly & annual events provide valuable education & resources, while facilitating strong industry connections that help members grow their business. As an added bonus, our events are downright fun. That's why HFIA members share a unique connection and camaraderie that makes this association unlike any other in the state!



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FOOD TRENDS FOR 2021

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

Looking ahead to the new year means looking forward to novel flavors and other food trends on the horizon. In 2021 we're likely to see new customer demands on beverages, unexpected flavor combinations, new ways to use ingredients, and more.

FUNCTIONAL BEVERAGES

Many consumers are no longer satisfied with drinks that simply taste good, they want beverages that also provide some added benefit or function. Drinks with ingredients that help customers energize or relax, provide vitamins and nutrients, or do things like improve digestive health are all seeing increased demand that will continue into next year.

NEW FLAVOR PAIRING

Sweet and sour has been well liked for decades, sweet and salty took off several years ago, while sweet and spicy is currently de rigueur in everything from chips to chocolate. The coming combination of sweet and umami is well poised for growth in 2021. This trend will likely manifest in different ways in different parts of the country. Here in Hawaii we could see traditional local and Japanese ingredients, which have strong umami flavors, combined with more

sugary partners.

AQUAFABA AND MORE

Chickpea water, also known as aquafaba, has increasingly been popping up on popular baking shows and blogs as a substitute for egg whites. The liquid can be whipped and baked similarly to egg whites, and acts as vegan component for meringues, macarons, and other vegan and vegetarian recipes. Chickpea flour is also gaining traction and is being used as a gluten free alternative in recipes for pizza crusts, pasta, and bread.

BREADFRUIT

The resurgence in breadfruit, or Ulu, has been a long time coming. It's frequently labeled a "super food" because of its

high protein content, low fat, and lots of beneficial nutrients. Ulu can be grown sustainably in a variety of areas; and is a traditional staple food for cultures around the globe. However, despite the efforts of Ulu enthusiasts, it has faced stumbling blocks when it comes to being accepted by mainstream consumers. That could finally change in 2021. Companies like Ulu Mana and Hawaiian Chip Company have created breadfruit versions of snack foods like hummus, and chips that are generating excitement. The new generation of Ulu products tastes great, and popularity is rising quickly.

RESTAURANTS REIMAGINED

Around the world restaurants have been one of the sectors hardest hit by COVID. While some have closed, many have found ways to adapt. Offering takeout and delivery options has become the new normal for many eating establishments and will almost certainly represent a significant percentage of sales for months and years to come. Pivoting to this new way of doing business can mean changing menus to include more transportable dishes, offering curbside pickup, and selling groceries along with prepared food. Some businesses have fully embraced the takeout and delivery boom and become "ghost kitchens," where prepared food is cooked and sold, but where there is no option to dine in. Aside from the obvious savings on front-of-house costs, ghost kitchens reduce public exposure for customers and staff, potentially providing a safer dining experience, which can be a selling point.

ECO-CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM CONTINUES TO GAIN MAINSTREAM ACCEPTANCE

While COVID has shifted consumer priorities to things like cleanliness, sanitation, and safety, current data shows that environmental impact remains highly important to shoppers. The two biggest areas of concern for many customers are products' carbon footprint and plastic packaging. Many brands and companies, including global giants, have recently made commitments to increase sustainability in one or both areas. Expect to see this trickle down to smaller businesses in the coming year.



PHOTO COURTESY KANU HAWAII/FLICKR

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THE LAST WORD

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

2020 has been a year like no other. I don't think anyone could have predicted all the challenges and obstacles this year would bring, but it has come as no surprise that Hawaii's food industry has risen to the occasion.

As this year progresses HFIA is continuing to work to find the best ways to support our members. We know that there is a lot of information, and misinformation, out there about every facet of the pandemic from Federal programs to County reopening guidelines. Whatever the next phase of this situation is, we'll continue to provide accurate, industry-specific, actionable information to our members through our Weekly Updates and online events. We know how important it is for everyone to have access to national, state, and county safety rules and recommendations for the food industry. We also provide access to information on relief efforts and financial resources that may be available to our members.

As I'm writing this, we're preparing for our next COVID-19 informational webinar. For this meeting we'll be joined by Lieutenant Governor Josh Green and Representative Richard Onishi, giving updates on the pandemic and the State's response. Past webinars have featured experts on a variety of subjects, including leadership from DHS, HR experts, Congressman Ed

Case, Hawaii House Speaker Scott Saiki, and others. For some of our online events, including the Eat, Drink, Think series we've been collaborating with our friends from the Chamber of Commerce, the Hawaii Restaurant Association, Retail Merchants of Hawaii, and Ulupono Initiative.

HFIA has also been working with other local business groups to advocate for a well-planned, responsible, safe, and timely reopening of the state to tourists. We're continuing to promote a range of small business relief efforts including the HERES Act in Honolulu. One of the most important things that is needed in order to make decisions about our economy right now is information on how the virus is impacting businesses, so we've been helping facilitate the Commercial Rent Surveys, the second of which was just completed.

We've always known how important it is for our community to stand together and support each other, and we continue our close collaboration with our business colleagues as we move forward. As I noted in the Legislative Update, we have been working closely with the Chamber of Commerce and the Hawaii Restaurant Association to present a united front on several key pieces of legislation that will impact our industries.

In the Legislative Update I also discussed our work on the House Food Stream and Agriculture Subcommittee. This commit-



tee has been given the rare task of not just providing information to the legislature, but with creating draft legislation for the legislature to consider. This legislation is aimed at improving local food production and consumption in order to increase our states' stability and resiliency. Working in this group has been a challenging and rewarding chance to look beyond the immediate hardships of COVID-19.

We don't know yet when or how this pandemic will end, and we don't know all the lasting impacts it will have. However, we do know that in the future our state will still rely on our industry to feed it. We know that we'll meet that need. I know we're all looking forward to getting past this pandemic, and I'm looking forward to seeing how our members will find new ways to grow and innovate for our customers and communities in the future.

MEMBER NEWS



Foodland and Sensei Farms

A new partnership between Foodland and Sensei Farms means that Sensei Farms lettuce is now available at all 32 Foodland locations around the state. Foodland is the first statewide retailer to feature Sensei Farms' produce.



Kahala Market

In mid-November Foodland opened their newest concept store, KAHALA MKT. by Foodland. The 13,000 sq ft store has been designed specifically for its Kahala community and will include a full-service restaurant and bar, as well as gourmet pizza and a full-service poke counter. It will also bring about 100 new jobs to the area.



Five Star Transportation

In September Five Star Transportation, Inc. and Expeditors Hawaii announced the merger of their two kama'aina firms to offer enhanced services and capabilities to their clients. The merged companies started operating under the Five Star Transportation umbrella in October. With this merger, Five Star further strengthens its ability to provide comprehensive, "gold standard" service within the Hawaii logistics market while additionally fortifying its market leadership position.



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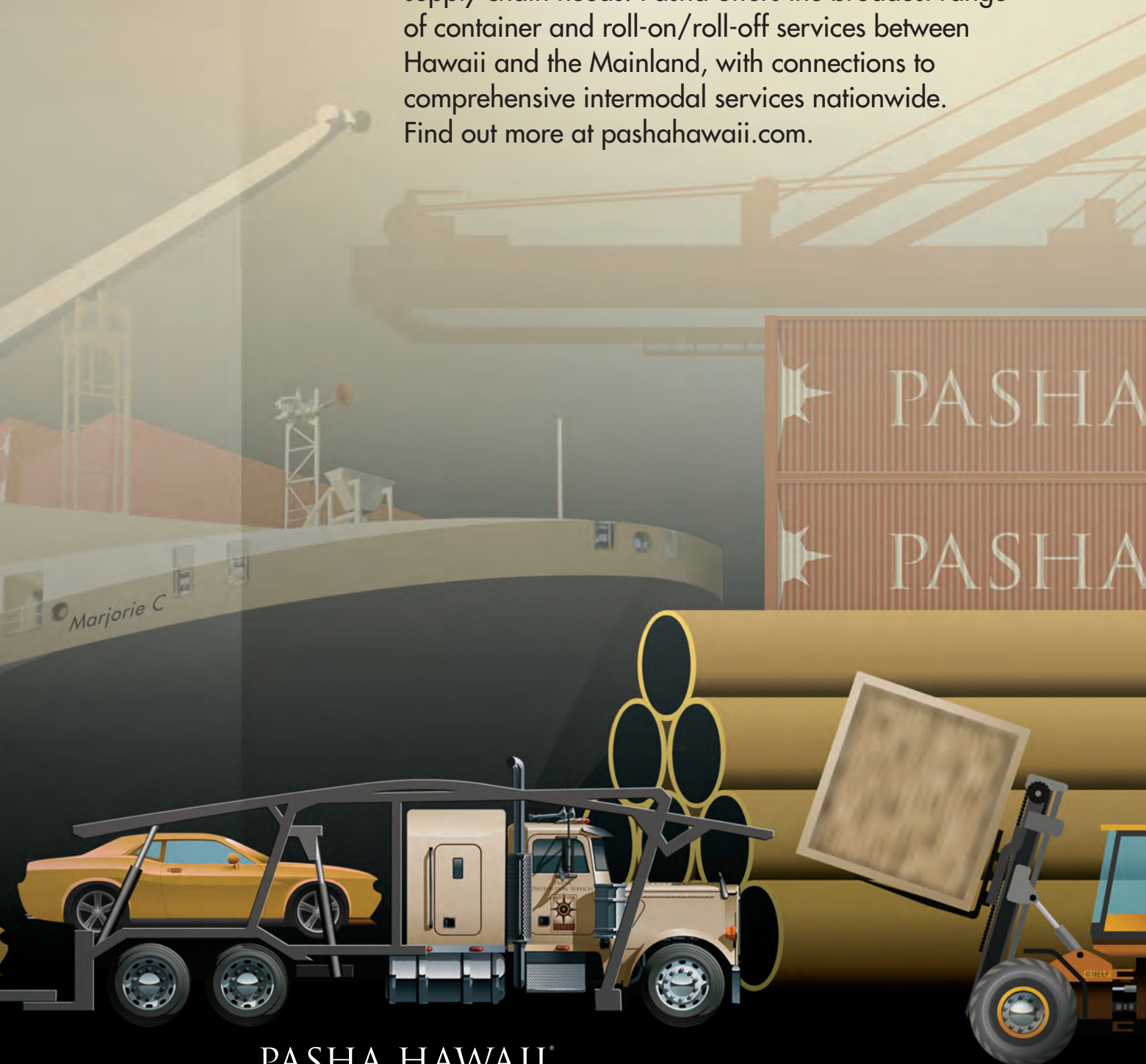
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