

HAWAI'I FOOD INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

WWW.HAWAIIFOOD.COM

FALL 2026



32ND ANNUAL

MADE IN HAWAII FESTIVAL

HAWAI'I ON THE HILL

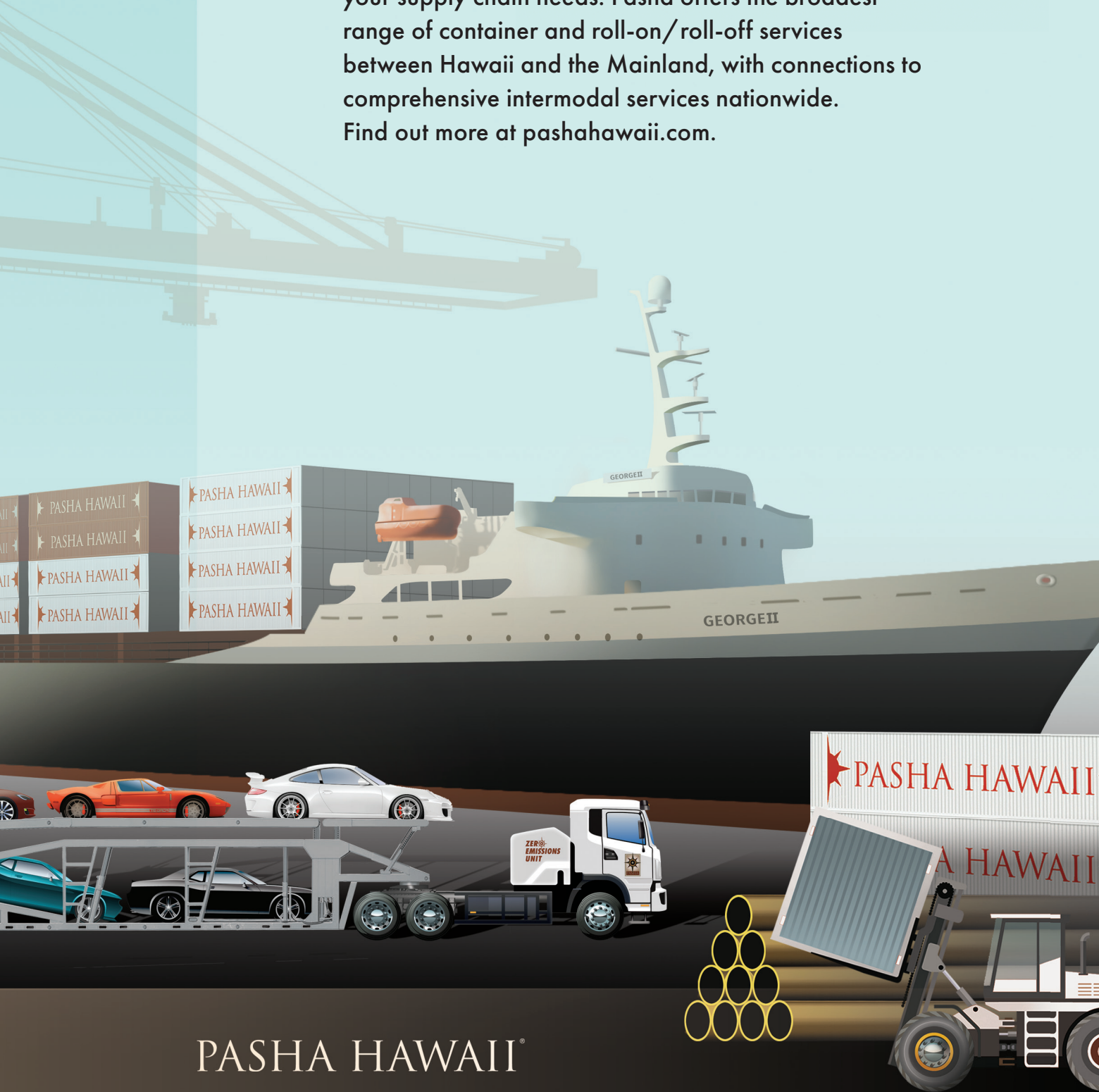
2026 CONVENTION PHOTOS

AG SUMMIT PREVIEW



Serving Hawaii Is Our Business

Pasha Hawaii's dynamic shipping network and knowledgeable professionals are here to serve your supply chain needs. Pasha offers the broadest range of container and roll-on/roll-off services between Hawaii and the Mainland, with connections to comprehensive intermodal services nationwide. Find out more at pashahawaii.com.



PASHA HAWAII®



You're Someone Special

KTA Super Stores is Hawai'i Island's locally owned and operated one stop shop, serving the community's grocery, household and pharmacy needs for over 100 years!

KTA Downtown, Hilo
321 Keawe St.
808-935-3751

KTA Kailua-Kona
Kona Coast Shopping Ctr.
808-329-1677

KTA Puainako, Hilo
50 E. Puainako St.
808-959-9111

KTA Keauhou
Keauhou Shopping Ctr.
808-322-2311

KTA Waikoloa Village
Waikoloa Highlands Ctr.
808-883-1088

KTA Express, Kealahou
81-6602 Mamalahou Hwy.
808-323-1916

KTA Waimea
Waimea Ctr.
808-885-8866

KTA Pharmacy, Ponahawai
670 Ponahawai St., Suite 211
808-865-0505

WWW.KTASUPERSTORES.COM



CONTENTS



PHOTO BY ANTHONY CONSILIO



PHOTO MARK SALONDAKA

DEPARTMENTS

Chair's Message	6
Legislative Update	8
NGA Update	12
New Members	28
Member News	28
The Last Word	30

FEATURES

Kit's Cowboy Up Convention	13
HFIA's 2026 Convention Panel	17
Hawaii's Best Bagger Contest	18
Why Local Food Security Matters	19
Bring Aloha to Capitol Hill	20
Hawaii's Agriculture Conference is Hawaii's Island Bound for 2026	23
32nd Annual Made in Hawaii's Festival Expands with New Local Debuts	24
Building Hawaii's Food Workforce	29

HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

Hawaii's Food Industry Magazine is a quarterly publication of the Hawaii Food Industry Association

PUBLISHER

Lauren Zirbel

EDITOR

Alexis Chapman

WRITERS

Alexis Chapman

Jayson Watts

Lauren Zirbel

ART DIRECTOR

Dustin Koda

ADVERTISING

Derek Ichiyama

Joann Kinmoto

Rudy Mueller Schrader

Keenan Porter

PUBLISHING AND PRINTING PARTNER

Trade Media Hui



Cover photo by Anthony Consilio

All editorial content ©2026 by the Hawaii Food Industry Association. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior approval of the publisher.

Please address all correspondence to:
1050 Bishop St., PMB 235
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: 808-533-1292
www.hawaiiifood.com

Advertising inquiries?
We're here for you!
Please contact Jay Higa at
jay@trademediahui.com
or call 808-738-4947.

*Trade Media Hui, your
full-service media partner.*

When agriculture thrives, communities flourish.



Photo by Sean Marrs

At Ulupono Initiative, we partner with others to sow the seeds for a sustainable future in Hawai'i. By investing in local food production together, we cultivate resilience and strengthen communities. Join us in nurturing Hawai'i's bounty for generations to come.

Learn more about our commitment
at ulupono.com

(Above) Pekuna Hong and her children appreciate the bounty of sustainable foods Hawai'i's farms have to offer.



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

ALOHA HFIA MEMBERS,

It is exciting to be greeting you for the first time as your chair. First, I want to extend my deepest thanks to our previous Chair, Kit Okimoto. Kit has been a tremendous leader for our organization, and I am incredibly grateful for the great example of leadership he has set for us to follow. As I begin my chairmanship, I am also very fortunate to have the support of our Vice Chair Jill Tamura, our new Secretary and Treasurer Jacob Noh, and our entire Executive Committee and Board. Thank you all for your dedicated leadership in steering our industry. I am honored to work alongside you in this new role. Of course, I want to give a huge mahalo to everyone who joined us at the Convention, our wonderful sponsors and donors, and HFIA's amazing social committee who made such a memorable event possible. I cannot think of a better way to start my time as Chair. You can check out the full coverage of this year's Convention on page 13.

One of the duties as HFIA Chair that I am most looking forward to is opening the 2026 Made in Hawaii Festival. This year marks the 32nd Annual Festival, and we have some exciting new developments in store, which you

can read more about on page 24. This event also holds a very personal significance for me as Mahi Pono has served as the official Agricultural Partner of the Made in Hawaii Festival for the last several years. It represents a powerful, physical manifestation of our local food pipeline. Mahi Pono's partnership really highlights the massive scope of the festival: connecting local farms, local makers, and local retailers directly with local shoppers.

We sometimes forget that farming is a business, and Hawaii food industry is big business. The Made in Hawaii Festival is a prime example of this economic engine in action. The benefit of the Festival is far-reaching, driving positive economic impact for our vendor businesses, the local suppliers and distributors that support them, and the State of Hawaii as a whole. Beyond the business metrics, it is an incredible opportunity for us as consumers to vote with our dollars and support Hawaii companies all in one place.

The Made in Hawaii Festival is a monumental undertaking, and it is hard to believe this is just one of the many things HFIA drives. Between our major industry networking events like the upcoming golf



tournament in a few weeks, our educational resources, and our relentless legislative advocacy, this association truly delivers on its mission to improve business conditions across our industry.

The thing that makes this industry so incredible is our people and I am thrilled and grateful to have the opportunity to connect and collaborate with all of you as Chair.

Mahalo!

Jayson Watts
HFIA Chairman
Director of Environmental Health & Safety,
Mahi Pono



"With great aloha, five generations later, the Tamura ohana continues to take pride in the family tradition of serving you."
- Clifford Tamura, Owner & CEO



86-032 Farrington Hwy. Waianae, HI
808-696-3321 | tamasupermarket.com



@tamasupermarket



Mahalo for 125 Years of Support

For generations, Dole Hawai'i has been honored to serve our communities, support local families, and partner with retailers who share our commitment to quality and nourishment.

As we celebrate 125 years, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the consumers and partners who have been part of our journey.

Thank you for growing with us.





ILLUSTRATION BY DUSTIN KODA

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

While the State Legislature is currently not in session HFIA's advocacy efforts continue during the summer and fall. We've been working on County level initiatives and Federal policy, keeping members up to date on State law changes, and preparing for next year.

At the County level HFIA has been testi-

fying in support of the Honolulu Food Security Fund. This initiative will allow the County to use funds to purchase locally grown food to combat food insecurity. More information on this important program is available in the Foodbank's article on page 19.

At the State and Federal level, we're continuing to work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to help make sure the upcoming Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) waiver is implemented smoothly. In 2025 Hawaii was one

of several states that filed a waiver to partially restrict SNAP Choice by prohibiting the use of SNAP funds to purchase soda. Rural Health Transformation funds were tied to whether states submitted such waivers. This was enacted by the Governor's office and did not require legislative approval. HFIA worked with DHS to ensure that the definition of soft drinks used in the waiver is functional and consistent. We've scheduled regular meeting with DHS and retailers to help proactively solve any potential implementation issues. We've also gathered information from retailers which we've shared with DHS suggesting that an extension of the implementation deadline, originally set for August 1, will likely be necessary.

Hawaii's application for an extended implementation date was approved and the waiver is currently set to go into effect April 2027.

In June a Federal judge sided with five states that had challenged their waiver, Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Hawaii was not part of the suit, however there may be subsequent suits that impact the waiver. We'll keep working with DHS and keeping members updated via the Weekly Update.

At the state level we've also been keep-

Coca-Cola **HAWAII**
BOTTLING OF
A SUBSIDIARY OF THE **Odor** CORPORATION

MONSTER ENERGY
ULTRA BLUE HAWAIIAN

ZERO SUGAR



PPRM

Pan Pacific Retail Management
HAWAII



A Proud Supporter of HFIA



ing members up to date on the ahi labeling law, Act 238 (2025) which took effect this July. This law requires retail establishments selling raw processed ahi products to have country of origin labeling. It defines "Retail establishment" as an "establishment licensed under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act of 1930, which includes any retail establishment that purchases over \$230,000 of fresh or frozen produce per calendar year." When the measure took effect Governor Green and the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), released a statement, noting that "DAB's Quality Assurance Division, through its Measurement Standards Branch, will support enforcement through education and outreach." If you think your business may be impacted, or for links to the full measure or press release feel free to reach out to us.

While the 2027 Legislative Session may seem like a long way off we're also engaged in preparations for next year. We've been meeting with Senators, Reps, State departments, and our friends from other associations and groups to discuss our priorities and goals for next year.

This July, I went to Kauai with Consumer Protection Chair Scot Matayoshi, Young Brothers, Public Utilities Commission (PUC), Department of Transportation, and Steve-

dores to discuss ways to improve interisland shipping and regulatory structure. We did a tour of the harbor and discussed the tens of millions of dollars Young Brothers is losing on Less than Container Load shipping and the possibility of allowing freight forwarders to handle this service – which could potentially save the company money and reduce the cost of container services.

We all discussed the PUC's long term regulatory plans now that they have appointed a special overseer and the legislature passed a three-year trial for the Water Carrier Inflationary Cost Index (WICI), a mechanism that automatically adjusts shipping rates outside of a rate case before the PUC. The hope is that reviews will be more streamlined and less expensive now that there is a special overseer appointed at the PUC – something that was announced during the PUC's 25.75% rate increase for Young Brothers effective January 1, 2026.

In its approval, the PUC cited Young Brothers' escalating financial instability and the overriding public interest in avoiding an abrupt loss of the regulated intransit shipping services Young Brothers provides.

While the PUC approved the rate increase in January of 2026, they did not approve Young Brothers request for a WICI. In spite of

this, legislation creating the WICI was passed during the 2026 Legislative Session.

At the time of the rate increase, the commission stated they would add a strict oversight conditions, including a prohibition on rate increases for at least two years, as Young Brothers implements its business plan intended to regain financial stability, improve operational efficiencies and break the cycle of seeking urgent and substantial rate increase requests.

Due to the legislation passed in 2026 mandating WICI for 3 years, interisland freight rates for Young Brothers saw an automatic 3% increase on July 1, 2026.

If things work out as advertised during the legislative session, the full rate case amount requested in three years will be inflation based and less than 5%. We hope that is the case. The entire premise of the legislation was to avoid large rate increases during full rate case reviews.

HFIA is proud to be the voice of Hawai'i's food and beverage industry. We encourage members to reach out to us with your own legislative priorities, questions, and concerns, and to get involved by submitting testimony and being a part of HFIA's Government Relations Committee. ❖



Food & Service

Delivered with Aloha

📄 yhata.com 📍 O'ahu • Kaua'i • Hawai'i Island ☎ (808) 447-4100

TOBACCO LAW: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Chapter 245, Hawai'i Revised Statutes

Wholesalers, dealers, and retailers of
electronic smoking devices and e-liquids

This law affects your business & business taxes

The Hawai'i State Department of Taxation requires:

Wholesalers/Dealers to:

- ✓ Acquire a tobacco license
- ✓ File a monthly tax return
- ✓ Report monthly shipments
- ✓ Pay an excise tax of 70% of wholesale pricing

Retailers to:

- ✓ Obtain a retailer tobacco permit (for each retail location)

For more information, visit
<https://ag.hawaii.gov/cjd/files/2023/06/ACT-62-FAQ.pdf>



"Tobacco product" now includes:



Electronic Smoking Devices
(ESDs, e-cigs, vapes, etc.)



E-Liquids
(vape juice, pods, etc.)



IMAGE BY ZAPP2PHOTO/ADOBE STOCK

NGA LEADS ON FIGHTING GROCERY PRICING MISCONCEPTIONS

**BY GREG FERRARA,
PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION**

A false narrative is spreading through statehouses, social media feeds and news coverage across the country: that grocers are gouging their customers, and that new in-store technology is about to make it worse. You have likely heard the claims that electron-

ic shelf labels (ESLs) will enable "dynamic pricing" or "surge pricing," with the cost of ice cream jumping on a hot afternoon or bottled water spiking before a storm. Lawmakers in several states have introduced legislation to restrict or ban these tools based on little more than speculation.

For those of us who have spent our lives in this industry, these accusations are not just wrong. They are backward. And for Hawaii's independent grocers, who already contend with some of the highest food and operating costs in the nation, the stakes of getting this debate right could not be higher.

Here is the truth: independent community grocers operate on net margins of one to two percent. For every dollar that crosses the register, a penny or two remains after paying for product, labor, rent, refrigeration, and freight. That is not the profile of an industry gouging anyone. Our members price the way they always have, based on cost, and they pass along savings through promotions, loyalty programs, and discounts whenever they can. They do not use surge pricing. Period.

We have seen this movie before. In 1974, the first supermarket barcode was scanned on a pack of chewing gum in Ohio, and consumer advocates warned that scanners would let grocers manipulate and inflate prices. A half-century later, the barcode stands as one of the most powerful affordability tools in retail history, speeding checkout, improving accuracy and driving down costs across the entire supply chain. The predicted gouging never materialized. Today we are re-enacting the same panic with a new piece of hardware, and we risk legislating away an affordability tool in the name of protecting consumers from it.

Because that is what ESLs actually are. These labels do not determine prices. They display them, with one critical improvement over paper: the price on the shelf always matches the price at the register. When a store's system flags that rotisserie chickens need to be marked down before closing, an ESL updates that price in seconds instead of waiting for an employee to print a tag and walk the aisle. The result is a lower price for the shopper, less food in the dumpster, and staff hours redirected from swapping paper tags to serving customers. In a market like Hawaii, where every container shipment adds cost and every hour of labor is precious, these efficiencies flow directly to keeping shelf prices down.

NGA is fighting this misinformation on every front. In Washington and in our state capitals, NGA's government relations team is meeting directly with lawmakers and pushing back against misguided legislation, armed with the data and the real stories of community grocers. We are organizing store tours that bring elected officials inside our members' stores to see firsthand how pricing actually works, because nothing corrects a false narrative faster than a legislator standing in the aisle of a family-owned market. And we have launched a digital awareness effort across social media and earned media, including op-eds in national trade press, to reach consumers and lawmakers directly with a simple message: data-based pricing tools are how independent grocers cut prices faster, reduce waste, manage labor and keep shelf prices honest. Restricting them will raise grocery bills, not lower them.

But an association is only as strong as its membership. If your company is not yet an NGA member, I am asking you directly: join us. Your voice, the voice of a grocer who serves island communities, sponsors local teams and knows customers by name, is the most credible one in this debate. Membership connects you to our advocacy team, gives you a seat at the table when policy is written, and links you with thousands of independent operators facing the same fights. If you are already a member, get engaged: host a store tour for your legislators, share our campaign content, and tell your story.

The independent grocery sector will always answer false narratives with facts and hard work. Together, we will set this record straight, too. Visit nationalgrocers.org to learn more or to become a member. ❖




24/7 EMERGENCY SERVICE AVAILABLE

Locally Owned since 1998

COMMERCIAL REFRIGERATION SPECIALISTS

- ✓ RACKS
- ✓ WALK-INS
- ✓ REACH-INS
- ✓ ICE MACHINES

MAINTENANCE
 REPAIRS
 REPLACEMENTS

Ensure your cold storage and refrigeration systems run efficiently year-round. From supermarket rack systems to restaurant walk-ins, our factory-trained technicians deliver expert service and rapid response across Hawaii.



CALL FOR A FREE ESTIMATE
(808) 295-5433

WWW.CM-SVCS.COM
Licensed AC-34596
Experience the Difference

Malia Lau
Business Development

KIT'S COWBOY UP CONVENTION

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CONSILIO

This year's Convention was a routin' tootin' good time from start to finish!

We'd like to give one more huge shout out to our Sponsors, donors, all our attendees, and of course our amazing Social Committee, yee-haw!

Our annual Convention is such an important chance for our industry to strengthen the connections that help us feed our

state and develop new bonds and networks at events like the Chair's reception sponsored this year by Mahi Pono. And of course it's also a lot of fun! This year we had some new features and it was our first rodeo in a couple ways! HMAA brought animal rides for family games which were a big hit with the kids, and the grown-up kids.

We were also very pleased to feature our

first ever official Hawai'i best bagger competition, sponsored by JB Gottstein. Mahalo to all our competitors. This of course includes Mayor Derek Kawakami, who stepped in to fill an open non-competitive slot. His family previously owned Big Save, and apparently he hasn't lost his touch and he scored very well in his heat. This contest was a great opportunity to celebrate the skills and dedication of

PLATINUM SPONSORS



GOLD SPONSORS



Best Bagger Top Shelf Sponsor



Family Games Sponsor



Saturday Bingo Sponsor



Cooking Challenge Sponsor



Friday Casino Games



Friday Chairman's Reception Sponsor



Speakeasy Bar Sponsor



Best Bagger Interisland Travel Sponsor

Hawaiian Airlines

Saturday Breakfast Sponsor



Friday Wine Tasting Sponsor



Saturday Beverage Tasting Sponsor



Cooking Challenge Product Donations

King's Hawaiian Sustainable Island Products

SILVER SPONSOR



BRONZE SPONSORS



our industry's front-line workers. We're looking forward to having an even bigger showing next year!

Of course one of our fan favorite events each year is the Cooking Challenge sponsored by Hawaii Gas. The challenge was wild west sliders on buns from King's Hawaiian. 2026 contestants included Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Pasha, KOHA Foods, Island Distributing, Okimoto Corp., and a joint team from Pepsi and Frito Lay. Many attendees agreed that this was one of our best challenges yet, with all the teams putting up delicious western inspired sliders. In the end, our outgoing chair had an ace in the hole with their chicken fried pipikaula, and Okimoto Corp took the overall win.

Of course, they weren't the only winners of the weekend. On Friday night Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, a subsidiary of the Odom Corp, sponsored casino games once again. And on Saturday night we had BINGO! Sponsored by Preferred Transportation and featuring the HFIA BINGO crew, who are always ready to shake em up! For those who wanted a sure thing, the Island Saloon sponsored by Island Distributing featured a huge range of beverages to try.

Each part of this great weekend is so fun and special on its own. But when you put them together all that support from our Sponsors, donors, and Social Committee, and all the members and guests who come out to celebrate, it's truly more than the sum of its parts. We want to thank you all for making this such a wildly good time, and we can't wait to see you all next year! 🍷



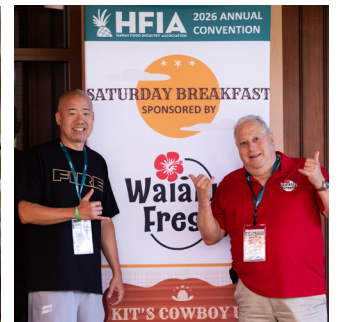






PHOTO BY KRISTEN KAWACHI

2026 CONVENTION PANEL: BUILDING A STRONGER HAWAI'I FOOD ECONOMY

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

Every year one of the highlights of our Annual Membership Meeting, in addition to the loco moco breakfast sponsored by Waialua Fresh Eggs, is the panel discussion. This year our panelists took on a truly challenging and urgently important topic: building a stronger food economy for Hawai'i.

Our panel was once again moderated by Derek Kurisu, Executive Vice President of KTA Super Stores.

Panelists included:

Derek Kawakami, Mayor of Kauai County

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Jayson Watts, Director of Environmental Health and Safety, Mahi Pono; Incoming Chair, HFIA

Paul Talbert, VP of Sales, Approved Freight Forwarders

The conversation centered around understanding some of the factors negatively impacting food affordability right now, and what are the leverage points that our industry and legislative leaders can use to ensure that our food systems are serving all Hawai'i.

Derek Kurisu opened the discussion by sharing HFIA's mission, to support a strong, sustainable, and resilient food industry. He also gave a framework for what it takes to make food accessible, affordable, and safe as a *pai aina* surrounded by water; no single organization can solve Hawai'i's problems.

All the members of the panel were frank about understanding our state's current food economy and historically high rates of food insecurity. They were also highly solutions oriented. Workforce shortages have been a problem in the food industry for many years,

and high housing costs have been a contributing factor. On Kauai under Mayor Kawakami's leadership the County has already been proactive about creating more affordable housing for workers.

Hawai'i's geographic isolation requires

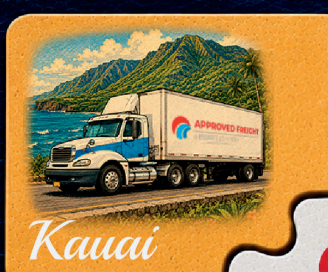
that a large percentage of our food be shipped in which increases cost. Jayson explained that we can maximize local food production by communication and collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, producers like Mahi Pono, and retail partners. He gave a straightforward solution, "If we know that your customers want, we will grow those products." For products that do need to be shipped in Paul Talbert talked about the importance of transparency and visibility in shipping to avoid costly mistakes that drive up prices.

Senator San Buenaventura discussed the potential loss of some Federal funds and some state tax rebates. She explained that for her these changes justify the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, which she chairs, giving a hearing to HFIA's bill to exempt groceries from the General Excise Tax.

In the course of the discussion it was very clear that all our panelists have a real understanding of the challenges that face our state's food industry and those who rely on it, and the need to take action to build a better food economy for all. Working towards a stronger food economy will take collaboration among all, and that collaboration will involve, communication, trust, and responsibility from leaders in the industry and our legislature. ❖

APPROVED FREIGHT FORWARDERS

SOLVED HAWAII SHIPPING



Kauai



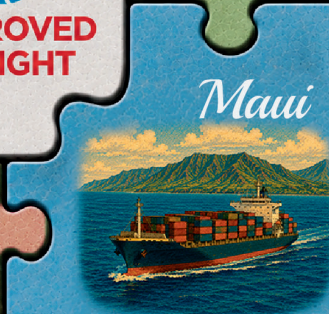
Big Island



**APPROVED
FREIGHT**



Oahu



Maui

Connecting Every Piece of Your Supply Chain.

www.approvedforwarders.com | (626) 702-2583



HAWAI'I'S BEST BAGGER!

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CONSILLIO

This was HFIA's first year hosting the official Best Bagger Hawai'i competition. We'd like to thank our sponsor, J.B. Gottstein for making this possible, as well as Hawaiian Airlines for providing interisland transportation for neighbor island contestants.

Our first place winner will be representing Hawaii at the

National Grocer's Association 2027 Best Bagger National Championship in Las Vegas!

This competition is truly a celebration of all our front-line food industry employees who go above and beyond to excel and give their customers the best service.

Congratulations to all our competitors! 🌺

1ST PLACE

Austin Kaalekahi, Friendly Market



2ND PLACE

Kimberly Sparks, Waianae Store



4TH PLACE

Aaron Tretpe, KTA Super Stores



3RD PLACE

Gina Ann-Marie Hall, Safeway



5TH PLACE

Jocelyn Ana-White, Tamura Super Market



WHY LOCAL FOOD SECURITY MATTERS



MEMBER OF
FEEDING
AMERICA

Every day, Hawai'i's food industry plays a vital role in keeping our communities fed. From farmers and ranchers to manufacturers, distributors, retailers, restaurants and nonprofit organizations, each link in the food supply chain contributes to the health, resilience and well-being of our islands.

Yet recent years have underscored an important reality: Hawai'i remains heavily dependent on imported food, with an estimated 85% to 90% of the food consumed in the state coming from outside Hawai'i. Supply chain disruptions, severe weather events, rising transportation costs and inflation have all highlighted the need to strengthen our local food system and improve long-term resilience.

At the same time, food insecurity remains a significant challenge. According to the 2024-2025 Hawai'i Foodbank Hui Food Insecurity Report, one in four O'ahu households,

approximately 250,000 individuals, struggles to afford enough food. More than 160,000 residents experience very low food security, meaning they may skip meals or reduce how much they eat, while another 170,000 residents are just one or two paychecks away from needing assistance.

Food insecurity is not limited to the unemployed or unhoused. Many affected households include working families, kūpuna living on fixed incomes, and residents struggling with Hawai'i's high cost of living.

This November, O'ahu voters will have the opportunity to decide whether to establish a dedicated Food Security Fund by voting "Yes" on Charter Question No. 1. The measure will dedicate a small portion of existing annual real property tax revenues to strengthen local food production, improve access to healthy, locally produced food for food-insecure residents and communities, and build a more resilient food system for O'ahu. The proposal will not create a new tax or increase existing property tax rates.

For members of the Hawai'i Food Industry Association, this is an opportunity

to support a long-term investment in Hawai'i's food future. A stronger local food system benefits farmers, ranchers, food manufacturers, distributors, retailers, restaurants, nonprofit organizations and, most importantly, the families who rely on them every day.

When your ballot arrives, vote "Yes" on Charter Question No. 1 to help strengthen O'ahu's food security for generations to come. ❧



ORIGINAL PHOTO BY JOYNOB/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

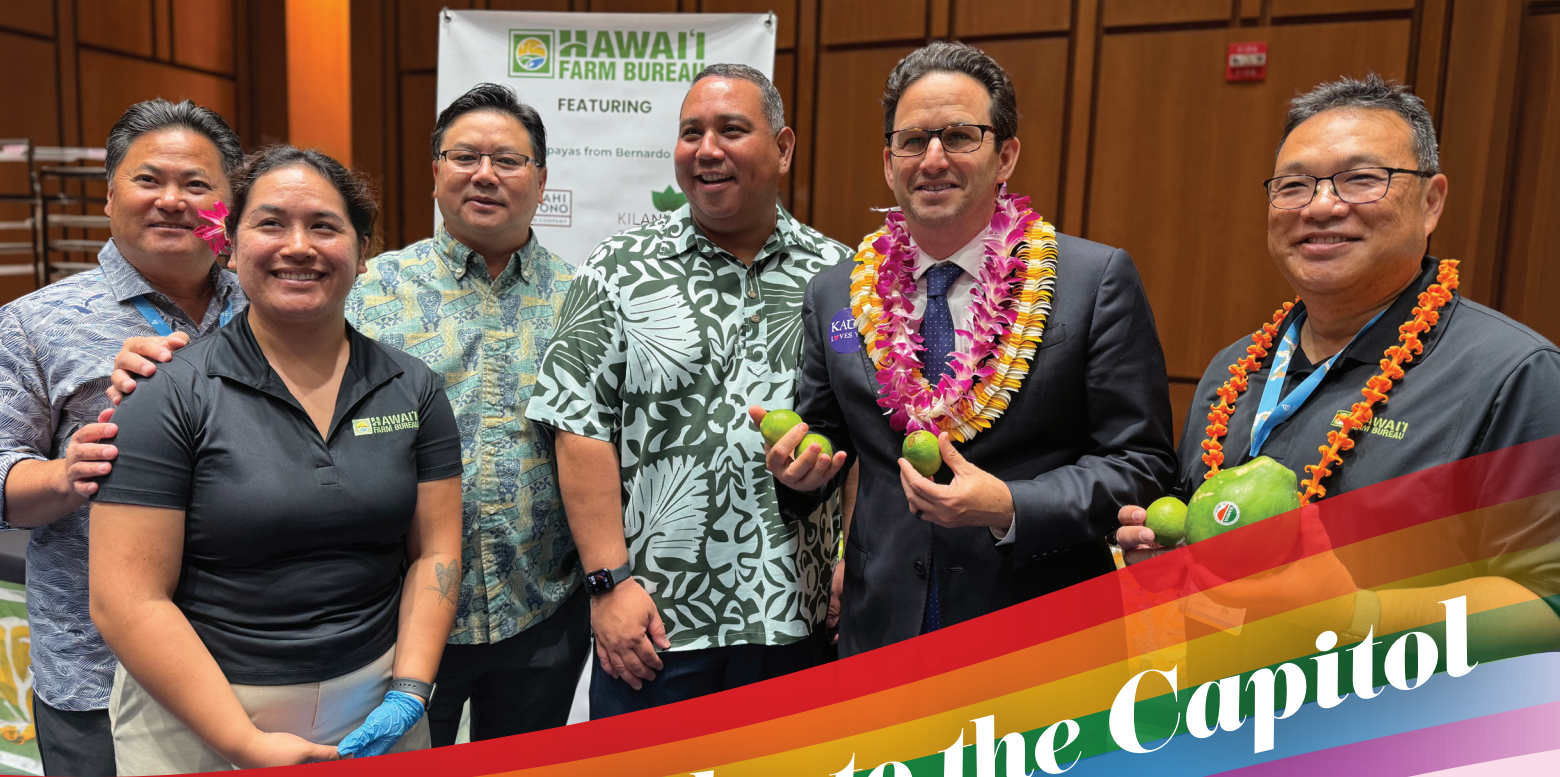
Call us to find out about our **NEW BRANDS!**



808-487-0030

Distribution Solution for FROZEN, CHILL, and AMBIENT PRODUCTS

Left to right: Alan Takemoto, Bayer; Kaelin Sylva, Hawaii Farm Bureau; Alec Sou, Aloun Farms; Jayson Watts, HFIA; U.S. Senator Brian Schatz; Brian Miyamoto, Hawaii Farm Bureau



Bringing Aloha to the Capitol

WHY HAWAII ON THE HILL IS MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER BY JAYSON M. WATTS, CHAIR, HFIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Every June, a powerful transformation takes place in our nation's capital. For a few days, the marble corridors of Washington, D.C., are filled with the scent of fresh plumeria, the sounds of slack key guitar, and the energy of Hawaii business community.

This past June 6 to 11, 2026, marked a monumental milestone: the 10th Annual Hawaii on the Hill. Co-hosted by U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono and the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii, this year's delegation brought more than 200 local leaders representing over 90 businesses and nonprofits directly to federal decision-makers. For those of us in the Hawaii Food Industry Association (HFIA) and the Hawaii Farm Bureau, this event is our premier platform to showcase the very best of Hawaii agricultural and culinary landscape.

One of the most powerful aspects of Hawaii on the Hill is how it unites the entire food pipeline. The strategic partnership between the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, HFIA, and the Hawaii Farm Bureau creates a formidable advocacy triad.

While the Chamber champions the overarching business climate, HFIA and the Farm Bureau bring the ground-level realities of the food supply chain straight to federal ears. Together,

our focus centers on:

- Strengthening supply chain resilience to protect our isolated island economy.
- Securing federal funding for agricultural technology, biosecurity, and infrastructure.
- Advocating for regulatory relief and small business protections that keep local farms and family grocery stores viable.

FARMING IS A BUSINESS, HAWAII FOOD IS BIG BUSINESS

We often romanticize agriculture in Hawaii, viewing our fields through a purely scenic lens. But let us be entirely clear: we sometimes forget that farming is a business, and Hawaii food industry is big business.

From soil to shelf, our agricultural and food sectors represent a massive economic engine. If our farmers cannot operate profitably, our local supply chains collapse, our retail shelves empty, and our dependency on imported goods skyrockets. By standing shoulder-to-shoulder in D.C., we showed federal leaders that investing in Hawaii agricultural infrastructure is about protecting a vital sector of Hawaii GDP and building true economic resilience.

OUR CHAMPIONS IN WASHINGTON: A POWERFUL LINEUP

We are fortunate to have a dedicated Congressional Delegation representing us. Keeping them continuously informed of our challenges gives them the ammunition they need to advocate for Hawaii interests:

- **Senator Mazie Hirono (Senate Small Business Committee):** As our co-host for Hawaii on the Hill, Senator Hirono has been a relentless champion for our small businesses, utilizing her seat on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee to safeguard the diverse ecosystem of our local manufacturers, retailers, and family-run commercial operations.
- **Senator Brian Schatz (Senate Appropriations and Commerce Committees):** Senator Schatz uses his leadership on the powerful Appropriations and Commerce Committees to directly target Hawaii transportation infrastructure. His work ensures that our harbor systems, shipping lifelines, and cargo pathways receive the critical federal resources required to keep goods moving smoothly to our isolated islands.
- **Congressman Ed Case (House Appropriations Committee):** Serving on the highly influential committee managing



Left: HFIA Chair Jayson Watts and Chef Danny Lee of the Washington D.C. restaurant Anju show off a Korean Gimbap dish featuring Maui Cattle Company ground beef at the Hawaii on the Hill opening reception. This unique collaboration showcased how premium Hawaii ranch products can shine on a national culinary stage.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAYSON WATTS

Right: Bridging the Miles, Building Our Future: The Chamber's "Taste of Hawaii" connects state and national leaders, while offering a special opportunity to unite Hawaii's business community with the kamaaina working in Washington, D.C. Pictured here are the Princess Abigail Kawanānākoa Foundation Fellows: Brandee Markwith (Office of Senator Schatz), Joshua Worth (Office of Senator Schatz), and Neil Natori (Office of Senator Hirono). Carrying forward a profound legacy of leadership, these fellows work daily within our congressional delegation to shape a brighter future for our islands.

▪ **Congresswoman Jill Tokuda (House Agriculture Committee):** As our dedicated representative on the Agriculture Committee, Congresswoman Tokuda is a tireless advocate for boosting our local agricultural capacity and cutting business costs. She spearheaded the Tariff Free Farming Act to eliminate heavy costs on vital agricultural imports like feed and equipment. She also successfully secured key provisions in the House Farm Bill draft, including doubling funding for the Micro-Grants for Food Security Program to \$30 million, establishing a dedicated Tropical Plant Health Initiative to support specialty crops, and securing \$2.5 billion for critical agricultural research facilities

CAPTURING THE CAPITAL: "TASTE OF HAWAII"

The absolute crown jewel of the week was the legendary Taste of Hawaii exhibition on Capitol Hill.

This year, a record-breaking crowd of over 1,600 members of Congress, federal agency staffers, and national leaders packed the room. They did not just hear about our products; they tasted them.

From local mainstays like the Hawaiian Chip Company, Kauai Kookie, and Lappert's Ice Cream to fresh island produce from

federal spending, Congressman Case has been a fierce economic defender of Hawaii business and agricultural bottom lines. He has put his legislative weight behind securing over \$216 million for pest control

programs, defending the critical Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program (RTCP) to offset island shipping costs, and fighting for funding that directly supports our local specialty growers.



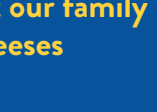
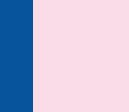

THE PERFECT CHEESONING for every meal.



LEARN MORE
about our family
of cheeses







Mahalo

for all you do for our communities!

Thank you to all our partners
and customers! We are proud to
provide an extensive variety of
quality products and services to
help our customers thrive.



Contact us today to become one of our
braggingly happy customers!

Customer Service: 844-995-8755
hawaiiics@cswg.com | cswg.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAYSON WATTS

Above: U.S. Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey tries local papayas with Maui limes.

Mahi Pono, Maui Gold, and Aloun Farms, we brought the physical bounty of our islands directly to their plates.

Our participation in partnership with the Hawaii Food & Wine Festival (HFWF) elevated this culinary showcase even further. HFWF brought world-class culinary talent to Washington, demonstrating that Hawaii is not just a vacation destination, but a global culinary and agricultural powerhouse.

THE TAKEAWAY: THE UNMATCHED POWER OF "SHOWING UP"

Having worked in Washington, D.C. myself for the late Congresswoman Patsy Mink, I can personally attest to the absolute truth of Senator Hirono's comment: showing up is indeed half the battle.

In a town where thousands of interests compete for attention daily, the need to be seen and heard in person cannot be overstated. When you are an island state situated 5,000 miles away, it is easy to become "out of sight, out of mind". But when we walk the halls of Congress in person, we become impossible to ignore.

In-person advocacy allows us to:

- **Put a Human Face on Policy:** It is one thing to read a shipping brief; it is another to look a Hawaii farmer in the eye and hear how federal policies impact their weekly payroll.
- **Create Lasting Memories:** Staffers will never forget the delegation that brought the genuine warmth of the Aloha State and shared our world-class local products.
- **Demonstrate Unified Clout:** Showing up together, Chamber, HFIA, Farm Bureau, and the Food and Wine Festival, signals that Hawaii business community is organized and aligned.

By continuing to show up in Washington, we are establishing real, lasting brand equity for "Made in Hawaii" products. We are proving that our local food industry is sophisticated, vital, and absolutely worth protecting.

Let us continue to support each other and keep the momentum of Hawaii on the Hill alive right here at home! ❀



Chefs from Kapiolani Community College Culinary Institute of the Pacific serve up locally sourced culinary creations at the Farm to Table Pau Hana at the 2019 Hawaii Agriculture Conference.



Hawai'i Agriculture Conference is Hawai'i Island Bound for 2026

The annual gathering will share knowledge and conversation about Hawai'i's agricultural future.

BY ULUPONO INITIATIVE

For nearly a quarter century, the Hawai'i Agriculture Conference has served as one of the leading gatherings for the state's agricultural sector, shaping what's next for our island food systems. Its 2026 edition is set for Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort and Spa on the island of Hawai'i, November 9 and 10, with a schedule of discussions and networking opportunities for Hawai'i's ag community.

Hosted by the Agricultural Leadership Foundation of Hawai'i, with support from the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, this year's conference carries the theme, "Hawai'i Agriculture: Driving Dedication, Diversity and Diligence." Programming will explore how the theme's three pillars are collectively shaping a vibrant and resilient future for Hawai'i agriculture built on collaboration, innovation and a resounding com-

mitment to strengthening the state's food systems.

This year's gathering will be its first on Hawai'i Island, tapping into local agricultural expertise, successful food production models and innovative ideas broadening perspectives on what is possible for agriculture in Hawai'i and beyond. Since its founding in 2002, the conference has grown into a must-attend event for farmers, ranchers, processors, researchers, educators, suppliers, policymakers and others whose work supports agriculture statewide.

"The conference will showcase diverse agricultural landscapes and perspectives while fostering critical agricultural community engagement and inclusivity," says Jacob Tavares, its 2026 co-chairperson. Bringing participants to Hawai'i Island, he adds, will give them firsthand understanding of the

opportunities, challenges and regional sustainability practices shaping agricultural success in different environments.

Attendees will celebrate the diversity that defines Hawai'i agriculture, from traditional kalo farming and local food production to advances in agricultural science and technology. Tavares believes the conference's Hawai'i Island setting will "breathe new life into our discussions, encouraging a holistic view of Hawai'i's agricultural future and economic development strategy."

Whether longtime or new members of the state's agricultural community, attendees will find opportunities to learn from its leaders, connect with peers and shape conversations transforming Hawai'i agriculture for years to come. Learn more at <https://hiagconference.org/>.



The annual tradition of shopping local is getting bigger this summer and expanding to include the third floor of the Hawai'i Convention Center!

The 32nd Annual Made in Hawai'i Festival returns to the Hawai'i Convention Center from August 20–23 during the long weekend, bringing with it an expanded footprint, hundreds of local makers and a showcase of the creativity, culture and entrepreneurship that continue to shape Hawai'i.

Known for drawing thousands of attendees each year, the festival is much more than a shopping event. Visitors come for the live entertainment from Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award-winning artists, chef demonstrations, tastings, fashion shows and food experiences, but many return year after year for something else — the stories behind the products and the people creating them.

This year, the festival is growing once again. Since relocating to the Hawai'i Convention Center several years ago, the event has filled Exhibition Halls 1–3 on the ground level. Organizers are now expanding onto the third floor, adding more than 100 additional vendor booths, expanded food and beverage offerings, additional seating and a new staging area.

For shoppers, that means even more opportunities to discover emerging local brands, limited releases and products found nowhere else.

Businesses from every major Hawaiian island will gather to introduce new products

while longtime festival favorites return alongside first-time participants. Industry buyers from retailers and specialty markets also attend through dedicated Buyers' Hours, creating opportunities for local companies to grow beyond the islands.

Among the first-time participants this year is Hawai'i Island-based Kalapana Beauty, a business rooted in family history and agriculture.

Founder Ekelu Miller launched the skincare company last summer on land once cultivated by his grandfather as a macadamia nut farm in Kalapana. For years, the family farm supplied nuts to recognizable Hawai'i snack and confectionery brands, but as large-scale production increasingly moved overseas, demand for locally grown nuts changed.

Rather than allowing the harvest to go unused, Miller saw another possibility: transforming the farm's macadamia nuts into cosmetic-grade skincare oil.

The festival debut carries even deeper meaning because Miller will be exhibiting alongside family members whose own entrepreneurial journeys inspired him.

"Launching at the Made in Hawai'i Festival alongside my stepmother and sister is incredibly meaningful," Miller said. "Watching both of them build successful businesses from the ground up showed me the dedication and perseverance it takes to create something lasting."

Also unveiling something new this year is Alikaleo Park, a local apparel company blending vintage Hawai'i design with modern ac-

tivewear.

What began as a children's brand has expanded into an 'ohana lifestyle collection inspired by family life and island living. The company's new adult line, making its debut at the festival, incorporates colorful Hawai'i-inspired artwork and sun-protective features intended for active families.

Founder Sarah Kawakami said the expansion grew naturally after continued requests from parents looking for matching pieces.

"Our hope is to continue building Alikaleo Park into a lifestyle brand that grows with families and the way they live today," she said.

Making her debut at the Made in Hawai'i Festival this year is Maui entrepreneur Cymz, founder and creative force behind Cymz Sweet Kre8tionz, a dessert brand built around transforming sweet treats into memorable experiences for the last 12 years.

Known for cupcakes, dessert cups, truffles, tarts and custom creations, Cymz Sweet Kre8tionz focuses on combining quality ingredients with bold presentation and flavors designed to leave a lasting impression. Each dessert is handcrafted and tailored to reflect the occasion and the people being celebrated.

"Preparing for an event of this size—especially traveling from Maui to O'ahu—is no small thing. There are a lot of moving parts, a lot of long days and late nights, and a whole lot of planning behind the scenes. I'm preparing to produce thousands of desserts while making sure every single item still represents the quali-



ty and love that I put into my work. I'm nervous, excited and definitely pushing myself outside of my comfort zone, but that's also where growth happens," Cymbree Fevella said.

The Maui native plans to launch Li Hing Apples, Ube Tres Leches and Ube x Crunch cakes at the event this year.

"As a small business owner from Maui, I don't take this opportunity lightly. To be able to bring something I built from the ground up to a stage like the Made in Hawai'i Festival is something I'm truly grateful for," she adds.

These stories span family legacies, cultural traditions and new beginnings, that continue to define the Made in Hawai'i Festival.

For many attendees, the event has become an annual reminder that supporting local businesses also means supporting the people, histories and communities behind them. 🌿



FESTIVAL INFORMATION

Buyers Hours

Thursday August 20, 6:30pm – 8:30pm

VIP Access Night Presented

by Huaka'i by Hawaiian

Thursday August 20, 6:30pm – 10pm

Preview Night

Friday August 21, 6:30pm – 10pm

Public Hours – Going on sale August 1

Saturday August 22, 8am – 10pm

Sunday August 23, 8am – 7pm

Check [MadeInHawaiiFestival.com](https://www.MadeInHawaiiFestival.com) for full info!





HAWAIIAN
AIRLINES.

PRESENTS



HFIA MEMBERS AT THE 2026 MADE IN HAWAII FESTIVAL

Be sure to check out our HFIA Members who are also vendors and sponsors of the Made in Hawaii Festival!

TITLE SPONSOR AND OFFICIAL AIRLINE



OFFICIAL BANK SPONSOR



Member FDIC

EXCLUSIVE FARM AND
AGRICULTURAL PARTNER



ADDITIONAL SPONSORS



VENDORS



Here is a taste of what a few of our member vendors have in store.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MANOA CHOCOLATE

MANOA CHOCOLATE

Join us at the Made in Hawai'i Festival to sample our award-winning bean-to-bar chocolates, and visit manoachocolate.com to book an immersive, behind-the-scenes tour of our new factory in Kailua!

SPICY NINJA

This year at the Made in Hawai'i Festival we'll be releasing our new honey line to the world!

Five raw Hawaiian honeys inspired by the Big Island: Kohala Gold, our pure raw honey just as the bees made it; Velvet Volcano, infused with cacao, vanilla, botanicals, warming spices, and a whisper of Hawaiian-grown heat; Mojo Dojo, layered with chaga, chai spices, mushrooms, vanilla, and island heat; Tropical Dreamtime, infused with tropical botanicals, bright citrus, and a gentle kiss of pepper; and A'a Lava, infused with activated charcoal and Hawaiian-grown peppers for a slow volcanic burn.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRADITION COFFEE ROASTERS

TRADITION COFFEE ROASTERS

At Tradition Coffee Roasters, we're brewing more than coffee. We're brewing connection, one cup at a time. What's your Tradition?

NEW MEMBERS



HONOLULU HYDROPONICS AND ALOHA MUSHROOM COMPANY

Honolulu Hydroponics Garden Supply is Hawaii's locally owned source for hydroponic gardening, indoor growing equipment, mycology supplies, and expert cultivation advice. Through our partnership with Aloha Mushroom Company, we grow premium USDA food safety certified gourmet mushrooms, including Lion's Mane, Oyster, and Shiitake, for Hawaii's restaurants, retailers, and consumers. We are committed to supporting local agriculture by providing high-quality growing supplies, educational workshops, and practical training that help individuals and commercial growers succeed. Our mission is to strengthen Hawaii's food security by making sustainable, locally grown produce and mushrooms more accessible while helping build the next generation of farmers.



TOSHIBA

TOSHIBA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Toshiba delivers print, workflow, cloud, and managed services that help organizations improve efficiency, security, and productivity.



ABIDE HAWAII

Out founder, Jenny Wang, started Abide Hawaii from her home office, launching a company that now serves Hawai'i exclusively from its Honolulu base. Abide began in 2020 during a severe toilet paper shortage, which hit Hawai'i especially hard. Jenny committed to supplying the state consistently, pivoting to bamboo fiber, a sustainable option that uses fewer chemicals and is free of PFAS. Abide became Hawai'i's first and only local brand offering bamboo bath tissue, napkins, and paper towels, a unique alternative that also met critical local needs.

MEMBER NEWS



Kauai Coffee Company Secures Future of Land Lease, Reaffirming Commitment to Local Community and Agricultural Heritage

We're pleased to announce the signing of our agricultural lease, officially securing the future of our historic coffee estate and all 140+ employee jobs. Read the full announcement below.

ouncement below.

Mahalo to our employees, Kauai leaders, community members, and customers who have supported us and helped us protect the livelihood of the hundreds of families who are the foundation of Kauai Coffee. We are grateful for your encouragement and honored to continue our tradition of coffee excellence on Kauai. We look forward to being a part of our community for years to come.

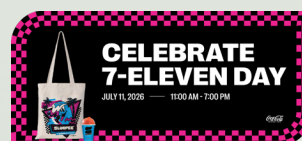
For more information visit KauaiCoffee.com.



Pepsi Pribiotic Cola

Pepsi Prebiotic Cola delivers the classic Pepsi cola taste with a refreshing, smooth flavor profile designed for everyday enjoyment. A balanced sweetness and bubbly carbonation highlight nostalgic cola notes, finishing clean and crisp. This category-defining prebiotic soda tastes like only Pepsi can and contains no artificial sweeteners, only 30 calories, 5g of sugar, and 3g of prebiotic fiber*, offering people a prebiotic drink that blends functional ingredients with the best-tasting Pepsi flavor.

*10g of daily soluble corn fiber, the fiber found in Pepsi Prebiotic Cola, has been shown to provide a prebiotic effect



Hawai'i Celebrates 7-Eleven Day

This past July 11 7-Eleven Hawai'i celebrated 48 years of serving communities across the Hawaiian Islands. As part of the anniversary celebration, all 67 stores will offer a free small SLURPEE® on Saturday, July 11, 2026. In addition to exclusive deals throughout the day, customers who made any purchase received a limited-edition tote bag featuring a design by local artist, Jack Soren. As a tasty bonus, they served up the Original SPAM® Musubi starting at \$1.59 on O'ahu and \$2.19 on Neighbor Islands, available all day long.

To kick off the celebration, 7-Eleven Hawai'i brought back Dollar Deals that will run from July 1 through July 10, featuring a variety of popular items at all 7-Eleven Hawai'i locations.

"7-Eleven Day is one of our favorite ways to celebrate with the customers and communities who have made us part of Hawai'i for 48 years," said Greg Hanna, president and CEO of 7-Eleven Hawai'i. "For generations, our stores have been part of small but meaningful moments across the islands, and this celebration is our way of saying mahalo to the people who continue to make 7-Eleven Hawai'i part of their lives."

Since opening its first store in Kaimukī in 1978, 7-Eleven Hawai'i has grown into a trusted neighborhood destination, open 24/7 and rooted in local values.

This offer is only valid at Hawai'i 7-Eleven locations. 7-Eleven Hawai'i does not participate in the 7Rewards® or Speedy Rewards® programs. To find a location near you, please visit our locations page or follow @7elevenhi on Instagram.



BUILDING HAWAII'S FOOD WORKFORCE: A PATHWAY TO FOOD SECURITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

BY JESSE JONG, MANAGING PARTNER, JONG ENTERPRISE

Hawaii's food system workforce faces a range of challenges including two urgent priorities: strengthening the state's food security and improving economic opportunities for local residents and businesses. This article explores how workforce modernization can help Hawaii develop a more productive and technically skilled workforce while strengthening food security and economic resilience. Hawaii has the highest cost of living amongst all 50 states and this heavily impacts workforce recruitment and retention. In a food sector survey conducted by the firm in 2025, 63% of food manufacturers and 40% of food producers report labor shortages and workforce retention as one of their largest operational challenges. By addressing the root causes of workforce retention challenges and economic conditions in the food sector, local businesses and organizations can build a more skilled and stable talent pool, enabling growth while strengthening Hawaii's economy and food systems resilience.

Hawaii's food sector faces a workforce attraction and retention problem

Based on interviews and conversations with local leaders and business owners, we're able to identify workforce attraction and retention as a key issue that organizations have to deal with on a regular basis. Many roles within the food sector are labor-intensive, offer limited career progression, and provide fewer opportunities to develop transferable technical skills. Research by the OECD identifies low wages, limited career prospects, and negative perceptions of agriculture as the key contributors to the labor and skills shortages across food systems.³ In Hawaii, workforce challenges are further compounded by an aging producer population and workforce housing barriers which make it difficult to attract and retain workers in food and agricultural communities. Put together, these conditions make food-sector careers less attractive for prospective employees relative to opportunities in other industries. This leads to an imbalance between workforce demand and labor supply, creating recruitment and retention challenges for businesses across

Hawaii's food system. Because the underlying constraints surrounding the workforce are structural and slow to change, addressing the gap through recruitment and attraction alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Organizations need a second lever: increasing the output and skill ceiling of the existing workforce.

Technology and modernization of operations can increase workforce productivity, food security, and economic resilience

Based on the 2025 survey conducted by the firm, workforce growth alone may not be sufficient to meet the future needs of Hawaii's food system. The modernization of food-based operations through the use of technology represents another pillar to improve productivity for local businesses while creating opportunities for employees to develop technical and transferable skills. By creating these opportunities, organizations can focus more on oversight, quality assurance, analysis, and management. Digital tools, automation, and data-driven management systems can help reduce the time spent on repetitive, administrative, and operational tasks, and instead allow employees to focus on higher-value activities such as quality assurance, planning, analysis, and management. Given that 57% of local producers reported using no technologies in their operations, modernization through technology and efficiencies represent a significant opportunity to improve workforce productivity and operational efficiency across Hawaii's food system. Improved workforce productivity allows local businesses to expand production, operate more efficiently, and strengthen long-term growth. At a state level, these productivity gains can support greater local food production capacity, contribute to improved food security, and help build economic resilience throughout Hawaii's food system. Meanwhile, a technically empowered workforce can drive organizational and economic growth for the value chain as a whole.

The modernization of the food ecosystem's workforce also strengthens the food security and economic resilience of Hawaii by enabling food-based businesses and organizations to operate more efficiently and

at a greater scale. Through the adoption of technology, automation, training, and modern management practices, employees can become more productive and focus on higher-value and highly technical activities. This increased productivity allows businesses to expand without needing an increase in labor which helps them meet growing demand and improve profitability. As more local food businesses increase production capacity, Hawaii is able to supply a larger portion of local food demand through in-state production leading to reduced vulnerability to disruptions in imported food supply chains. With the modernization of the workforce, a more robust and self-sufficient food system is better positioned to withstand external disruptions, such as shipping delays, supply shortages, and economic shocks, and ultimately improves both food security and long-term economic resilience across the state.

Conclusion

Strengthening Hawaii's food workforce isn't just a labor issue, it's a critical component in building the state's food security and economic resilience. As labor shortages and complications continue to challenge food businesses across the state, workforce growth isn't going to be enough to meet the future needs of Hawaii's food system. Strategic investments into workforce modernization, technical skills development, and higher-quality career pathways can help businesses attract and retain talent while improving productivity and capacity.

A more productive and technically skilled workforce enables food-based businesses and organizations to focus on higher-value activities, expand production, improve competitiveness, and increase local food capacity. As Hawaii works to reduce its dependence on imported foods and strengthen the resilience of its food system, workforce modernization represents one of the most practical pathways toward achieving these goals. The organizations that invest into their workforce today will be better positioned to support future growth, contribute to a stronger local food ecosystem, and help build a more sustainable, resilient, and self-reliant food economy for Hawaii. ❖

THE LAST WORD

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

As always this time of year, I'm just so excited for the Made in Hawai'i Festival. And this year there is so much to be excited about! Expanding the Festival to include the third floor of the Convention Center in addition to the exhibition halls means we have more room, but it's more than that. The third floor is a different space, with opportunities for vendors to create unique new experiences for guests. We can't give away too much, but there will be some very cool new things happening up there that I recommend everyone checks out.

The new hours have also created a chance for us to cultivate a different shopping environment on Thursday and Friday nights. For years we've had people begging us to sell tickets to Buyers Hours. This year we worked with Hawaiian Airlines to create the VIP Access Night Presented by Hua-ka'i by Hawaiian, Thursday August 20, 6:30 – 10pm. We still have Buyers Hours for approved buyers on Thursday 6:30 – 8:30pm. And on Friday we also have Preview Night, 6:30 – 10pm, with CPB offering presale tick-

ets. Working with our sponsors to meet the customer request for some more exclusive shopping hours is such a special part of the 2026 Festival, and we're looking forward to getting Feedback from you all on these new experiences.

For 2026 we also have a huge number of HFIA Members involved as vendors and sponsors, see more on page 27. We also have a ton of new vendors, and vendors launching new products, and of course our great line up of entertainment. These are really the things that make each Festival so special and unique, there are always so many new things to love.

Of course some things never change. The Made in Hawai'i Festival was envisioned to be so much more than just a weekend event supporting individual businesses, and it has truly delivered on that mission. It is an important economic driver for our state. Each year, it generates millions of dollars in economic activity while giving hundreds of local businesses an opportunity to showcase their products to tens of thousands of residents



and visitors. For many of our vendors, the festival is one of their highest-grossing sales events of the year, and it often leads to new wholesale accounts, retail partnerships, and long-term customer relationships. Beyond the direct sales, the festival supports local manufacturers, farmers, restaurants, hotels, transportation providers, and many other businesses, creating a ripple effect that benefits Hawai'i's economy well beyond the convention center. ❖

Wholesale grocery delivery to the most remote parts of the world.

We are dedicated to providing competitive prices, top quality products and excellent customer service. We also live and work in our communities where we share an understanding of the difficulties and needs of our customers. It is this understanding that drives our commitment to supporting our fellow businesses by helping them to grow so that they thrive and are successful in this market as well.



1081 MAKEPONO ST | HONOLULU HI 96819 | TOLL FREE 1 (800) 478-2277 | JBGOTTSTEIN.COM

**Serving Every
Grocer, Club & Retailer,
On Every Island
Every day**

**Source to Shelf
Statewide
Inventory
Management**

**DSD
Guaranteed Sales
Programs**

**Shelf Design
Schematics &
Reset Execution**

**Delivering
OVER 40 LOCAL
Producers to Market
Across All Islands**

**Operating
24 - 7 - 365
Across Hawaii**

**Inter-Island
Consolidation
& Logistics
Services**

**West Coast
Consolidation
To Hawaii
Air and Ocean**

**Statewide
FSMA Compliant
Cold Chain**



HFA

**HAWAII'S
SINGLE SOURCE SOLUTION**



HFAHAWAII.COM



FROM OUR REFRIGERATORS TO YOURS.

Three times a week, Matson delivers Hawaii's produce, dairy, and pharmaceuticals in temperature-controlled, refrigerated containers to ensure consistent top quality. It's all part of our long-standing 24/7 commitment to fulfilling the needs of our community with reliable and efficient shipping services.

For more information, call (800) 4-MATSON or visit Matson.com



Matson®