

[culinary treats]

The Original Oceans 13

Hawaii's Culinary Revolution BY BEKAH WRIGHT



Duck tostada at the Hali'imaile General Store in Maui

In 1992, Peter Merriman, owner and executive chef of Merriman's Restaurant on the Big Island, decided to channel his frustration over a lack of available local ingredients by convening 13 of Hawaii's top chefs for a meeting of the minds. The chefs shared a vision of creating a bridge between Hawaii's agricultural and culinary communities. That vision became known as the Hawaii Regional Cuisine (HRC) movement — a cooking style that features local produce and recipes. Visitors to Hawaii can enjoy the fruits of these labors at restaurants throughout the islands.

» Big Island

Walk into **Merriman's Restaurant** in upcountry Waimea and the respect for local farmers is apparent. "Almost everything served here is from Hawaii," said Merriman. His minimalist culinary approach

is highlighted in dishes such as ponzu-marinated mahi mahi, made from fish caught daily by a local troll boat and then sautéed with sesame-grilled shiitake and complemented with upcountry onion relish.

» Oahu

When Chef George Mavrothalassitis moved to Oahu 19 years ago, he was daunted by a magazine article that declared: "Enjoy your food on the plane, it's the best you'll have while on vacation in Hawaii." Upon receiving Merriman's call, he immediately came on board as one of HRC's founding members. Now, diners at his **Chef Mavro** savor entrées such as roasted lamb loin medallions served with baked ali'i mushrooms.

» Lana'i

Local fisherman troll for something in addition to daily seafood

for Oliver Beckert, executive chef at **Four Seasons Lana'i at Manele Bay** and its companion property, **The Lodge at Koele**. They also fish for lava rock. "Our waiters cook Lana'i venison at guests' tables on a hot lava rock," Beckert said. The dish is accompanied by celery and Granny Smith apple salad, red wine-poached figs and saba dressing.

» Maui

The cuisine at native Texan Bev Gannon's restaurant, the **Hali'imaile General Store**, is an amalgamation of local flavors and childhood memories. "On my menu there's an Asian duck tostada that's a take on the Mexican food I grew up with," she said. "[I've added] an Asian flair with Asian pears [and] duck marinated in a Chinese five-spice mixture, cooked with a ginger chili dressing and [topped with] corn tortillas." www.gohawaii.com

Hawaiian Munch

Nestled between Maui's verdant backcountry and its dramatic western coastline lies Lahaina, home to one of the island's preeminent eateries: **David Paul's Lahaina Grill**. Proclaimed "Maui's Best Restaurant" for 14 consecutive years by Honolulu magazine readers, the restaurant offers a flawless fusion of global flavors and local ingredients. Chef-Owner Jurg Munch, who purchased the establishment from David Paul in 1999, deftly integrates Asian and European cuisine with local flavors to create such tantalizing dishes as Kona lobster crab cakes and a truly devilish dessert called Road to Hana — chocolate cake topped with hazelnut liqueur, macadamia nut caramel and sour cream mousse draped in a decadent chocolate ganache. Add to this the gentle caress of the trade winds and the smell of salt-water in the air and this feast for the senses is complete.

www.lahainagrill.com



Chef-Owner Jurg Munch of Lahaina Grill