

# Hawaiian Cuisine

**A**LOHA! Hawaiian regional cuisine highlights a “love of the land.” Poi, pineapple, coconut, mahi-mahi, and Kona coffee are just a few of the popular food and drinks associated with Hawaiian cuisine.

Polynesians were the first to bring their culinary practices to the islands. They were later followed by American, Puerto Rican, Asian, and many other cultures. Hawaiian fusion cuisine is mostly a mash-up of Asian and American culinary practices. Today, Hawaiian regional and fusion cuisines are both thriving. Let’s take a closer look. Aloha!



## Objective:



Summarize Hawaiian cuisine’s influences, common ingredients, and top food choices.

## Key Terms:



ahi tuna	kimchi	pineapple
breadfruit	kukui nuts	pipikuala
chicken long rice	lau lau	poi
coconut	li hing mui	poke
haupia	loco moco	Polynesian arrowroot
Hawaiian fusion cuisine	lomi-lomi	pupu
Hawaiian regional cuisine	luau	shave ice
imu	mahi-mahi	SPAM®
inamona	malasada	SPAM® musubi
kalua pig	mochi	taro
kava	okolehao	ti
	pa’ina	

# Hawaiian Regional and Fusion Cuisine

**Hawaiian regional cuisine** is 'aina-based (based on the homeland) and takes advantage of the freshest island ingredients. This includes cattle raised on the upland pastures of Hawaii Island (Hawai'i, the Big Island), fruits and vegetables grown from rich, volcanic soil in Upcountry Maui, and, from the Pacific, some of the best quality fish in the world. There are twelve chefs who advocated and promoted Hawaiian fusion cuisine: Sam Choy, Philippe Padovani, Roger Dikon, Gary Strehl, Roy Yamaguchi, Amy Ferguson Ota, Jean-Marie Josselin, George Mavrothalassitis, Beverly Gannon, Peter Merriman, Mark Ellman, and Alan Wong.

## HAWAIIAN CUISINE AND INFLUENCES

There are many influences that created the regional and fusion cuisines in this beautiful island chain.

### Location

The state of Hawaii is the only American state located outside of North America—2,000 miles off the west coast in the Pacific Ocean. (Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa are all territories—not states—that have their own unique stories.) Hawaii is the only state located in the Oceanian region of the world, and it is the only one composed entirely of islands. Hawaii is made up of many islands. There are the eight main islands, seven which are inhabited, and 128 smaller, uninhabited islands.

- ◆ Hawaii (the Big Island)
- ◆ O'ahu
- ◆ Maui
- ◆ Kaua'i
- ◆ Moloka'i
- ◆ Lana'i
- ◆ Ni'ihau (under 200 residents)
- ◆ Kaho'olawe (uninhabited)

### Pre-contact Period (300 to 1778 A.D.)

A pre-contact period refers to a time before natives are exposed to modern civilizations. Originally, Polynesian seafarers arrived on the Hawaiian Islands, where they found only a few edible plants. Polynesians introduced about thirty food-based plants to the islands, with the most important plant being taro. For centuries, taro, and the poi made from it, remained the staple of their diet. In addition to taro, Polynesians brought sweet potatoes and yams. They found plenty of fish, shellfish, flightless birds, and eggs to sustain them. Most Pacific islands had no meat animals, but the ancient Polynesians brought pigs, chickens, and dogs as cargo.

Even today, wild boars roam many of the islands—ancestors of the ancient Polynesian pigs. Sea salt was a common condiment in ancient Hawaii. **Inamona** is a relish made of roasted, mashed kukui nuts, sea salt, and sometimes seaweed. Other settlers brought more ingredients as they arrived on the islands.

- ◆ The Marquesans (French Polynesians) introduced breadfruit.
- ◆ Tahitians introduced baking bananas.
- ◆ Other settlers brought coconuts, kukui nuts, and sugarcane.

### **Post-Contact Period (18th and 19th centuries)**

In this era, Americans, Europeans, and Asians began exposing Hawaii to different peoples, food sources, and ways of life.

- ◆ 1778: Captain James Cook visited the island of Niʻihau, leaving seeds for melons, pumpkins, and onions.
- ◆ 1793: Captain George Vancouver brought the first cattle to the islands, and beef was introduced to Hawaiian cuisine.
- ◆ Early 19th Century: In 1813 Honolulu, pineapples were first cultivated by a Spanish botanist, Don Francisco de Paula Marin. In 1815, Marin was later credited with the first Hawaiian vineyard of (now rare) Mission grapes. He also brewed the first beer in 1812, and he planted the first coffee crop in 1817. Marin also experimented with planting oranges, limes, beans, cabbages, potatoes, peaches, melons, maize, and lettuce.
- ◆ Late 19th Century: Pineapple and sugarcane plantations took over much of Hawaii's land. These two crops became the most important sources of revenue for their economy.

### **Territorial Period and Statehood**

In 1898, Hawaii became a United States territory. In 1959, Hawaii became a state. From the mid-1800s to today, America's influence on Hawaii made a lasting impression.

- ◆ 1849: The first restaurant in Honolulu was opened, known as an “eating house.”
- ◆ 1905: Hawaii increased local agriculture production, supplying California with flour, potatoes, and other vegetables.
- ◆ 1970s: Pineapples became cheaper to grow in Southeast Asia, and Hawaiian agriculture began producing a variety of crops, including squash, tomatoes, chili peppers, and lettuce.

### **Other Cultural Influences**

As the demand for labor grew, plantation owners hired immigrants, including Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese laborers. Ethnic groups established farms, groceries, and cuisine that reflected their cultures.

## Chinese

Chinese immigrants brought Cantonese cuisine. Bringing the first stir-fry, sweet and sour, and dim sum dishes to the islands. They replaced poi with rice, adding their own herbs and spices. Chinese rice growers imported familiar fish varieties from Asia to stock local streams and irrigation ditches.

## Korean

Korean immigrants brought **kimchi** (a highly spiced relish of fermented cabbage) and built barbecue pits to cook their marinated meats. Korean-style, boneless meat, with moderately sweet garlic sauce, mixed rice, and seasoned vegetables, became an integral part of Hawaiian cuisine.

## Portuguese

Portuguese immigrants came to Hawaii in the late 19th century, introducing foods with an emphasis on pork, tomatoes, and chili peppers. They built traditional beehive ovens to make Portuguese breads and donuts. Later, whalers introduced salted fish, which ultimately became lomi-lomi salmon.

## Japanese

Japanese immigrants brought bento and sashimi, and although many of their vegetables would not grow in the island climate, they succeeded in making tofu and soy sauce. Japanese cooking relies on frying, steaming, broiling, and simmering, which lead to the popularization of tempura, noodle soups, and fish served in rich broths. Their sushi and sashimi preparations eventually traveled with them to the United States mainland.

## Puerto Rican

Puerto Ricans started immigrating to Hawaii in 1900, and they brought spicy, Spanish-seasoned, thick soups, casseroles, and meat turnovers.

## Filipino

Filipino immigrants arrived in 1909 with peas, beans, and adobo-style vinegar and garlic dishes. Their cuisine relies on boiling, stewing, broiling, and frying foods instead of baking them. Instead of rice, a Filipino staple is the sweet potato.

## Vietnamese

After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, refugees and immigrants from Vietnam arrived, bringing lemongrass, fish sauce, and banh mi sandwiches.

## Geography

The Hawaiian archipelago (a group of islands) is located 2,000 miles southwest of the United States. Hawaii is the southernmost U.S. state and the second westernmost state (after

Alaska). Hawaii and Alaska do not border any other U.S. state. Hawaii is the only state that is not geographically located in North America, completely surrounded by water, and entirely an archipelago. Hawaii's diverse natural scenery, warm tropical climate, sandy beaches, oceanic surroundings, and active volcanoes make it a popular destination for tourists, surfers, biologists, and volcanologists (a geologist that studies volcanoes). This landscape also affords the region great culinary options with lots of fresh ingredients. Tropical fruits and Pacific fish are the main natural resources found in the area.

## Coastal Food Sources

Fishing and harvesting seafood and seaweed are an important part of the Hawaiian food industry. The waters around Hawaii contain hundreds of species of fish, with about 30 percent being native to the islands. From a culinary perspective, the most important of these include the Pacific blue marlin, swordfish, grouper, red and pink snapper, dolphin fish, and moonfish, but the most important fish in Hawaiian cuisine is tuna. Kona coffee is a coastal crop found in the Kona districts of the Big Island (Hawaii). Both the sun-to-rain ratio (about equal) and the rich, volcanic soil of the Kona districts make this coffee strain unique. Hawaii and California are the only two states with the soil conditions to grow coffee beans. (However, Puerto Rico also grows coffee.)

## Culture Gatherings

At important occasions, 'aha'aina, a traditional feast, was held. When a woman was to have her first child, her husband started raising a pig. This would be used for the 'aha'aina celebration at the child's birth. Shrimp, crab, seaweeds, and taro leaves were also required for the feast. The modern name for these feasts is luau.

A **luau** (lu'au) is a traditional Hawaiian party that is usually full of food and entertainment, such as Hawaiian music, fire dancing, and hula dancing. The term "lu'au" comes from the name of a food that is always served at 'aha'aina. The dish consisted of young, tender taro leaves cooked with chicken (or octopus) and coconut milk.

**Pa'ina** is the Hawaiian word for a meal or a gathering. For example, there is a four-month-long, ancient, traditional festival that includes pa'ina at the beginning of each new year.



**FIGURE 1.** A luau is a traditional Hawaiian party that is usually full of food and entertainment, such as Hawaiian music, fire dancing, and hula dancing. Luau comes from the name of a food that is always served at 'aha'aina. The dish consisted of young, tender taro leaves cooked with chicken (or octopus) and coconut milk. This picture shows a typical luau plate.





## BROADENING AWARENESS...

### AMAZING ASPECTS: Kapu Law: Battle of the Sexes

In ancient Hawaii, society was ruled by kapu, a system of ritual laws (taboos). One of these ritual laws had men doing all of the cooking. Food for women was cooked in a separate imu. Afterwards, men and women ate their meals separately. Some food items were even forbidden to women—pork, bananas, and some large fish. A powerful Hawaiian queen, Queen Ka'ahumanu, later abolished kapu law. She wanted Hawaiians to model themselves after the foreigners whose women and men publicly dined together.

Another Hawaiian queen that influenced the lives of everyday people is Liliuokalani. She was the first queen and last monarch of the Kingdom of Hawaii. She composed the song "Aloha Oe" and wrote the autobiography entitled "Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen." For more information, read about her history on Biography's website at <https://www.biography.com/people/liliuokalani-39552>.



### Early Ingredients

All immigrant cultures (as well as American) play major roles in the distinctive cuisine we identify as Hawaiian. Early Polynesian settlers began growing taro, banana, coconut, and breadfruit. Meats were eaten less than fruits, vegetables, and seafood. Some groups did import and raise pigs, chickens, and dogs. Popular condiments included salt, ground kukui nut, seaweed, and sugarcane. Sugarcane was used both as a sweetener and a medicine. These non-native species may have caused various birds, plants, and land snails to become extinct.

## COMMON INGREDIENTS AND CUISINES

Hawaiian cuisines are full of tropical twists on international dishes. With a wide variety of fruits, nuts, fish, and cultural influences, Hawaii's regional and fusion cuisines are uniquely their own. There are many ingredients and styles of cooking that are unique in Hawaiian dishes.

### Spices, Herbs, and Sauces

An Asian influence is obvious in the islands, with teriyaki becoming the most popular way of treating meats (including SPAM®). Other common Asian spices include five-spice powder

from China, wasabi and soy sauce from Japan, and bagoóng (a fermented fish condiment from the Philippines).

- ◆ *Aloha Shoyu*: Aloha Shoyu is a Japanese-inspired soy sauce—pronounced show-you.
- ◆ *Huli-Huli Sauce*: Huli-huli is a cooking technique that means “to turn and turn.” Huli-huli sauce is usually a pineapple, ginger, and garlic barbecue sauce.
- ◆ *Chili Pepper Water*: In Hawaiian chili pepper water, there are chilis, vinegar, ginger, garlic, salt, and of course, water. The chili water, cooking methods, and recipes were introduced by Portuguese immigrants.

## Vegetables, Fruits and Nuts

Hawaii has a number of fruits and nuts that are native to the islands, but also many that were brought by immigrants.

### Taro

**Taro** is a slightly sweet, tropical tuber. Similar in texture to a potato, it is a popular ancient plant that has been harvested for at least 30,000 years (earliest references were by the indigenous people of New Guinea).

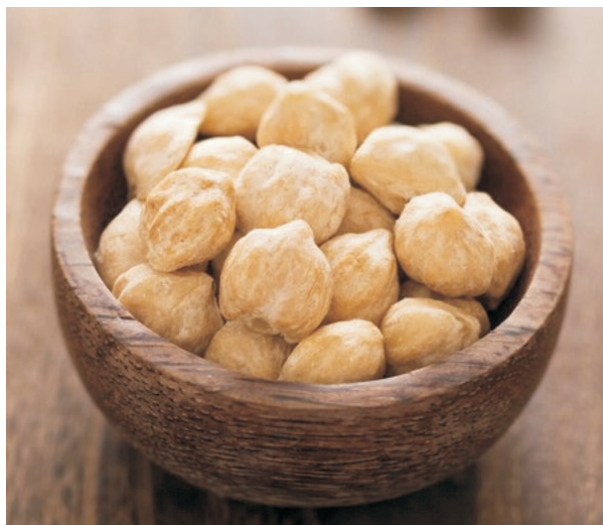
- ◆ There are over 250 varieties of taro, and many that can only be found in Hawaii. There are hundreds of varieties of taro, and some of the wetland varieties are used for poi, taro starch, and flour. The dry-land variety has a crispy texture and is used for making taro chips. The American variety is smaller, and it is used for stewed dishes. The “lehua maoli” is a purple variety that makes the best poi.
- ◆ **Poi** is a thick paste made from taro root that has been steamed or baked (and then pounded). While pounding, water is added to the mixture to create a very sticky, pudding-like consistency. It is often used as a dipping sauce for pork lau lau. Poi is a Polynesian staple food, and it is part of native Hawaiian cuisine.

### Breadfruit

**Breadfruit** is a fruit from the mulberry and jackfruit family that has a potato-like flavor and smells like freshly baked bread when cooked. It is very rich in starches that transform into sugars when ripe. Breadfruit can be roasted, baked, fried, or boiled.

### Kukui Nuts

**Kukui nuts** (also candlenuts) are similar to macadamia nuts, and their roasted kernels produce oils that were traditionally used in candles. Kukui is the main ingredient in the



**FIGURE 2.** Kukui is the main ingredient in the ancient Hawaiian condiment inamona, and inamona is a key ingredient in poke. The kukui is Hawaii’s state tree.

ancient Hawaiian condiment inamona, and inamona is a key ingredient in poke. The kukui is Hawaii's state tree.

## Coconut

A **coconut** (niu) is the large fruit of a coconut palm. It has a fibrous husk surrounding a dense, hard shell (seed) that contains edible white flesh and a fluid-filled, central cavity. Coconuts are used in a wide range of Hawaiian dishes, from coconut rolls to coconut pudding. [NOTE: Depending on the context, coconut can refer to the whole coconut palm, the seed (shell and insides), or the inner fruit (just the insides). A coconut is not a nut—it is a drupe (a fleshy fruit with a hard, stony, seed covering).]

## Arrowroot

**Polynesian arrowroot** is a starchy tuber from the yam family that is primarily used as a thickening agent in puddings. It acts like cornstarch. Cooked arrowroot is often mixed with papayas, bananas, or pumpkins in baked desserts.

## Pineapple

A **pineapple** (hala kahiki) is a large, three-to-nine-pound, tropical mass of berries with juicy, yellow flesh covered by a single, brown skin. It is mildly acidic, has a prickly peel in a diamond-shaped pattern, and offers a sweet aroma. The pineapple plant has multiple, edible fruits consisting of berries (also called pineapples) that are fused on a central stock (covered as one fruit with a thin skin). Pineapple is a famous ingredient in many Hawaiian-inspired dishes, including pineapple upside-down cake, pineapple sorbet, and pineapple chicken.

## Li Hing Mui

**Li hing mui** is a plum-based powder that is salty, sour, and sweet. It is often described as tart and tangy. (Li hing mui can also refer to that actual salted plum the powder comes from.) It is said to have an acquired taste, but locals love to put in on a variety of treats, such as sour gummies, dried mangoes, shaved ice, and popcorn. Some chefs describe li hing mui as tear inducing, because the first blush of flavor is salty, turns quickly sour, becomes savory (like MSG), and finishes a bit like artificial sweetener.



**FIGURE 3.** This image of li hing mui shows the dried, salted plum from which the powder is made. Locals put the powder on a variety of treats, such as sour gummies, dried mangoes, shaved ice, and popcorn. Some chefs describe li hing mui as tear inducing.

## Ti

**Ti** is a tropical evergreen plant, from the asparagus family, whose leaves are used in the making of food wrappers, rain capes, and hula skirts. In Hawaii, it is known as the “good luck plant.”



## Fusion

**Hawaiian fusion cuisine** is a mash-up of primarily Asian, tropical, and American cuisines. Some describe Hawaiian fusion as a refined, regional cuisine, while others describe it as a melting pot of ethnic and cultural dishes. For Hawaiians, it is a way of life.

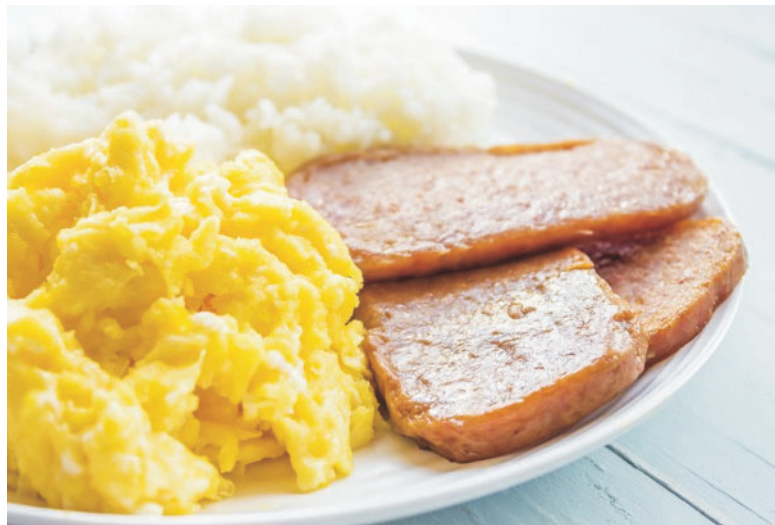
### Mexican Fusion

Chef Mark Ellman's franchise restaurants, Maui Tacos, serve Mexican food with a Hawaiian slant—a fusion cuisine. Offerings include the “Baja Grilled Fish Taco,” the “Wiki Wiki Shrimp Taco” (with mango salsa), or their “Maui Style” taco salad. He combines classic Mexican offerings with fresh greens, fruits, and proteins from the island.

### SPAM®

**SPAM®** is a canned meat product, made by Hormel, containing six ingredients—pork with ham, water, potato starch, sugar, and sodium nitrite. It has been highly popular in Hawaii for decades. Per capita, Hawaiians are the second largest consumers of SPAM® in the world, just behind Guam. Originally brought to Hawaii by American servicemen, it became an important source of protein for locals after fishing around the islands was prohibited during World War II. According to the Hawaii Plan website, Hawaiians consumed more than six million cans of SPAM® each year. They even have a festival every April, the SPAM JAM®. SPAM® is used in a variety of ways.

- ◆ Most commonly, it is served fried, with rice.
- ◆ It is served with eggs for breakfast.
- ◆ Sometimes, it is wrapped in ti leaves, roasted, skewered, deep fried, or stir-fried with cabbage.
- ◆ In Asian-inspired preparations, it can be found added to saimin (a ramen noodle soup; pronounced sigh-min), mashed with tofu, or served cold with somen (thin white Japanese noodles; pronounced soh-men).
- ◆ It might be baked in macaroni and cheese, eaten in sandwiches with mayonnaise, or cooked in guava jelly.
- ◆ SPAM® is sometimes used in a chutney for a **pupu**, a savory appetizer. A pupu platter contains a variety of appetizers.



**FIGURE 4.** SPAM® has been highly popular in Hawaii for decades. This Hawaiian breakfast plate includes fried SPAM®, scrambled eggs, and rice.

## Spam Musubi

**Spam musubi** is a slice of grilled SPAM® that is placed on a block of sushi rice and wrapped with a strip of nori (the Japanese name for dried, edible seaweed sheets). In the 1980s, this popular snack found its way onto island sushi menus.

## Chicken Long Rice

**Chicken long rice** is a dish, similar to a soup or a stew, that is cooked in a wok and combines chicken and Chinese rice noodles (a.k.a. long rice, cellophane, glass, bean, or thread noodles) with mushrooms, green onions, chicken broth, and soy sauce. This can be a slurpy soup, and is sometimes flavored with ginger. Chicken long rice is a Chinese dish that has been adopted by Hawaiians and served at many luaus.



**FIGURE 5.** Chicken long rice is a slurpy soup that is sometimes flavored with ginger. Originally a Chinese dish, it has been adopted by Hawaiians and served at many luaus.

## Seafood

Multiple seafood ingredients and dishes can be found throughout Hawaii.

### Tuna

An **ahi tuna** is the Hawaiian equivalent of a Yellowfin or a Big Eye tuna. It has a light-pink flesh, offers a stronger flavor than most fish, and is the most-used fish in Hawaiian cuisine. It is often eaten raw. Other types of tuna from this area include skipjack and albacore. Tuna is used in the traditional Hawaiian, dish poke.

### Poke

**Poke** is a dish made of raw, diced fish (often ahi tuna) that is usually mixed with soy sauce, sesame oil, kukui nuts, and/or seaweed—much like a ceviche. Poke can be served as an appetizer or a main course. More than 100 varieties of poke dishes are found in the Hawaiian Islands.



**FIGURE 6.** Poke is served as an appetizer or a main course. This image shows an ahi tuna poke appetizer plate—fresh ahi tuna slices with mixed salad greens.

- ◆ Poke Versus Ceviche: Unlike most other raw fish dishes, such

as a Latin American ceviche, Spanish or Polynesian poke recipes don't use vinegar or citrus juice to denature the fish proteins and tenderize the flesh. In Hawaii, soy or sesame sauces are used instead.

- ◆ **Poke Condiments:** Poke condiments exhibit strong Asian influences, especially Japanese. During the 19th century, foreign vegetables, such as tomatoes and onions, were added to the poke mixture. Today, Maui sweet onions are commonly included.

### Lomi-Lomi

Although salmon is not indigenous to Hawaii, a salmon-based dish called lomi-lomi originated on the islands. **Lomi-lomi** is a side dish of freshly-diced, salted salmon with sliced tomatoes, Maui onions (green onions), and, occasionally, red chili peppers or crushed ice. Lomi-lomi is usually mixed by hand with a massaging action, which gives the dish its name—in Hawaiian, lomi-lomi means “to massage.” It is always served cold, usually eaten with poi, and is ritually significant (ancient Hawaiians offered a similar looking red-fleshed kumu fish to their gods).

### Mahi-Mahi

**Mahi-mahi** is a moist fish that has lean, pinkish flesh, a bright-red bloodline, a mild, sweet taste, a moderately firm texture, and (when cooked) large, moist flakes. Mahi-mahi (a.k.a. dolphinfish or dorado) is usually cut into steaks and fried or grilled, but it can also be baked, deep-fried, sautéed, or prepared as sushi. In the Hawaiian language, mahi-mahi translates as “strong-strong.”



**FIGURE 7.** Mahi-mahi translates as “strong-strong” in Hawaiian. In this picture, seared mahi-mahi, coconut rice, and a sweet chili sauce are topped with a green-mango salad.

### Other Fish

Being a state of many islands, there are hundreds of fish varieties. These are some of the fish you are likely to find in a Hawaiian restaurant.

- ◆ A pacific blue marlin is a billfish (has a long horn or bill) that has a very low fat content, and it is often barbecued or grilled (carefully, as it can be easily overcooked).
- ◆ A swordfish (another billfish, a.k.a. broadbill) is high in fat, and its steaks are grilled, broiled, or used in a stir-fry. While it is very popular locally, it is also shipped throughout the U.S. mainland.
- ◆ Groupers are large, big-mouthed fish that typically eat other fish or octopus. When cooked, they are white and flaky, so they can be prepared steamed, grilled, or fried.

- ◆ Long-tail red snapper (onaga) is fish that is typically steamed, poached, baked, or used in sashimi (or sushi). Pink snapper (opakapaka) has a higher fat content than red snapper.
- ◆ Wahoo (or ono, meaning “good to eat”) is a large, game fish that is typically grilled or sautéed. Sports fishermen love hunting this giant due to its size and speed.
- ◆ Moonfish are typically broiled, smoked, or made into sashimi. They are colorful, round fish with pink, red, and orange flesh found in different parts of their body. It’s like eating three fish at once!

## Beef

In the 19th century, Mexican cowboys were brought to the islands to train the Hawaiians in cattle ranching. Cattle ranching grew rapidly, and it continued for the next one hundred years. In 1960, half of the land in Hawaii was devoted to ranching for beef export, but by 1990 that number had shrunk to 20 percent (probably due to property values and the influx of housing). Paniolos are Hawaiian cowboys who chew **pipikaula**, a sun-dried, salted beef that resembles jerky. Pipikaula was usually broiled before serving. There are still many large, successful cattle ranches on these islands.

With the influence of Asian cooking, Hawaiian beef strips are commonly marinated in soy sauce. When beef is dried in the sun, a screened box is traditionally used to keep the meat from dust and flies. Dried meat is often served as a relish or appetizer at a luau.

Another beef dish, **Loco moco**, is (traditionally) a bowl of steamed rice that is topped with a hamburger patty, a fried egg, and brown gravy.

## Pork

Pork is especially popular in luaus and shredded-meat barbecues. Although most mainland Americans envision a pig roasting on a spit, most luaus have pork dishes that are prepared in special, underground ovens.

### Kalua Pig

**Kalua pig** is pulled pork with marinated, steamed cabbage. Kalua (to cook in an underground oven) is a traditional Hawaiian cooking method in which food is wrapped in leaves and steamed over hot rocks in an earthen pit. An **imu** is a type of underground oven. Kalua pig is commonly served at luau feasts.

### Lau Lau

**Lau lau** is food wrapped in ti leaves and steamed or baked—usually with pork (such as SPAM®) or fish. It is a traditional Hawaiian dish that is usually cooked in an imu for hours, until it softens and develops a smoky flavor. The meat is tender and juicy while the leaves turn to a spinach-like consistency.

## Desserts

Momona means sweet. Monamona means dessert.



## Haupia

**Haupia** is a traditional, Hawaiian, pudding-like dessert made from sweetened coconut milk. While heating, it is thickened with ground arrowroot, cornstarch, or unflavored gelatin (in the least-traditional recipes). Then, the mixture is chilled and cubed for serving. Haupia is often served at luaus, weddings, and other local gatherings in Hawaii. It is best described as a coconut pudding or gelatin.



**FIGURE 8.** The monamona pictured here has a modern twist. This chocolate custard pie has a layer of haupia.

## Malasada

A **malasada** is a hole-less, Portuguese yeast donut that is made from egg-rich dough, deep fried, and coated with sugar. A traditional malasada contains no filling.

## Mochi

**Mochi** is sweet, chewy, Japanese treat made from short-grain, glutinous (sticky) rice that is pounded into a paste and molded into various forms and shapes—a rounded dessert ball filled with ice cream or another thickened, flavored filling (such as with red beans, Kona coffee, or plum wine). When forming and handling mochi, the dessert ball is dusted with potato or cornstarch to keep it from sticking.

## Shave Ice

**Shave ice** is a superfine, ice treat, has a snow-like texture (finer than a snow cone), and easily absorbs flavored syrups. It may be found covered in strawberry, banana, peach, pineapple, grape, watermelon, or coconut syrup. Shave ice is often paired with ice cream and topped with a snow cap (a blend of sweetened condensed milk and flavored syrup).

## Drinks

Due to its setting, Hawaii has many drinks based on tropical fruits, but (due to its rich, cultural history, plant life, and climate) there are other surprising options on its islands.

## Kava

**Kava** (kava kava) is a traditional, medicinal or social, psychotropic beverage or extract from the piper methysticum plant. It is popularly used as a social drink similar to alcohol, but the plant, extract, and drinks are also used for many medicinal purposes. Kava is a Polynesian word derived from the word “awa,” meaning bitter. It is thought to have originated in Vanuatu, a



South Pacific island nation. Kava bars have recently experienced some popularity in Hawaii, with commercial kava plantations on Maui, Molokai, Kauai, and Oahu. It is banned in Canada and Europe, due to the psychotropic effect it can have when overused.

### **Okolehao**

**Okolehao** is traditional Hawaiian liquor distilled from the root of the ti plant. It is used in many cocktails, and can be substituted for vodka or gin.

### **Kona Coffee**

Kona coffee originated in the Kona coastal district of the Big Island (Hawaii), and it was derived from an Arabica bean. Since sun and rain in equal measure, rich volcanic soil, and other climatic factors make this coffee unique, it can only be called Kona coffee if it comes from the Kona coast. Kona's flavor is mellow, smooth, and yet robust. It is extremely expensive.

### **Dole Pineapple Juice**

Not only a beautiful place to visit, the historic Dole Plantation has been producing pineapples since the turn of the Twentieth Century. Founded by James Dole, this Oahu farm became instantly successful. By the 1930s, Dole's pineapples and juices were the most recognized brand in the United States, and still are to this day.

### **Cocktails**

Hawaiian, tropical, tiki cocktails, such as the "Blue Hawaii," the "Mai Tai" (the Tahitian word for good), and the "Lava Flow" blended different liquors with a variety of tropical fruit juices and decorative fruits. [NOTE: Henry Yee, a bartender at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, created the Blue Hawaii when Elvis was filming the 1961 classic, "Blue Hawaii," at the hotel.]

### **Wine**

Hawaiian wines are produced mostly on the islands of Maui and Hawaii. As a whole, most Hawaiian wineries mix in tropical fruits, such as pineapple, guava, mango, or passion fruit into their wine blends.

### **Beer**

From 1897, Primo was the first Hawaiian beer. After being discontinued (from a buyout) it resurfaced in 2008. There are now multiple craft brewing companies in Hawaii. Maui Brewing Company is its largest brewery, while Kona Brewing Company is second in beer manufacturing. Maui and Kona distribute their beer throughout the U.S. mainland, whereas all of the other island breweries cater to a smaller, niche market.

## Summary:



Hawaiian regional cuisine is ‘aina-based (based on the homeland) and takes advantage of the freshest island ingredients. This includes cattle raised on the upland pastures of Hawaii Island (the Big Island), fruits and vegetables grown from rich, volcanic soil in Upcountry Maui, and, from the Pacific, some of the best quality fish in the world.

Polynesians were the first to bring their culinary practices to the islands. Those practices have blended with the foods, spices, condiments, and cooking methods of the American, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and other cultures.

Hawaiian fusion cuisine is a mash-up of primarily Asian, tropical, and American cuisines. SPAM®, for example, is a product that came from America. Per capita, Hawaiians are the second largest consumers of SPAM® in the world, just behind Guam. Originally brought to Hawaii by American servicemen, it became an important source of protein for locals after fishing around the islands was prohibited during World War II.

Some describe Hawaiian fusion as a refined regional cuisine, while others describe it as a melting pot of ethnic and cultural dishes. For Hawaiians, it is a way of life.

## Checking Your Knowledge:



1. How does the geographical location of Hawaii affect its cuisine?
2. Describe Hawaiian regional cuisine and how it originated. How does it intersect with Hawaiian fusion?
3. Which cultures had the greatest influence on Hawaiian regional cuisine? List three cultures with examples of their impact.
4. Describe a luau and the typical foods associated with it.
5. How has SPAM® impacted Hawaiian cuisine?

## Expanding Your Knowledge:



Hawaii is made up of eight main islands. Only six of these are available for vacationing. Each island is unique, with their own climate, culture, and spirit. Knowing about these differences can help you select which island you may want to visit. After researching online, make a chart of their similarities and differences by comparing location, topography, climate, culture, cuisine, and tourist appeal. For example, Oahu and Kauai are just 70 miles apart, yet Oahu has an urban feel and Kauai is mostly rural. Based on your chart, which islands would you visit? Provide a rationale for your decisions. Start your research by reading Brenna Swanston's article on

USA Today website at <http://traveltips.usatoday.com/differences-between-hawaiian-islands-4547.html>.

## Web Links:

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### **10 Foods You Must Try in Hawaii**

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/04/hawaii-food-bucket-list\\_n\\_6738518.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/04/hawaii-food-bucket-list_n_6738518.html)

### **16 Mouthwatering Hawaiian Dishes**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2VGTO-LWIY>

### **Hawaii Travel and Food**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL205644134CABDC4F>

### **Poi: Dining on a Dime**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDFHn6B\\_JcQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDFHn6B_JcQ)