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MAUKA TO MAKAI



## From Farm to Fork

*One possible solution to our local food system*

BY MELANIE BONDERA | JUN 8, 2011



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**MAUKA TO MAKAI** / Imagine: It's Saturday morning. You take the kids and head down to your local farmers market to pick up your weekly box of fruits, vegetables, taro and sweet potatoes from your ahupuaa co-op. You were able to get add-ons of mahimahi, Island beef, eggs, milk, bread, ohelo

berry jam, and Kona coffee to round out your meals for this week.

This envisioned ahupuaa co-op is an example of a multi-stakeholder co-op. You choose the farmers and fishermen and fair wages honor the ways they protect our common resources for the future.

"Exploring the Hawaiian relationship to the land reveals a service relationship; not the land serving people, but people serving the land," says Sam Gon from The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii.

### Multi-stakeholder Cooperative

More and more local residents envision living a modern ahupuaa lifestyle as a multi-stakeholder in a cooperative ecosystem. The multi-staker co-op makes sense for Hawaii.

### This week

#### Food & Drink 2011

Believe it or not, Honolulu is a foodie destination. There are rumblings in the culinary community that more change is on the way.

#### Places

Peace Cafe Photo Credit: John Chisolm Honolulu has not been a vegetarian-friendly town, much less vegan. Enter Peace Cafe, an oasis on King Street.

#### Dishes

Soup dumplings at Jin Din Rou It's mesmerizing watching the cooks shape dumplings through Jin Din Rou's street-side window. It's even more mesmerizing to bite into these delicate dumplings encasing meat and hot, porky broth.

#### Desserts

Desserts at Morimoto The last course best captures the creative spirit and the whimsical presentations Morimoto is known for. Save room for desserts like pineapple spiked with sansho pepper paired with buckwheat soba sponge cake and toasted-rice ice cream or the haupia semifreddo—coconut ice cream sandwiched between two crisp matcha wafers and fluffy moss-like clouds of green tea cake.

#### Other Bites

Lehua honey The white truffle of the honey world, lehua honey is creamy like butterscotch pudding, opaque and delicately floral and utterly perfect scooped from the jar or

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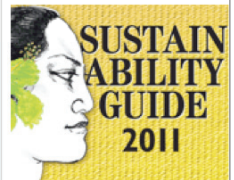
Kawehi Kanui

Wow Eric that was great...hey you write wonderful and true articles...You should create your own newspaper...

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Many of us are worried that we are importing 85 percent of our food to the most remote island chain on the planet, when just 60 years ago we provided most of our own food. None of us like paying over \$4/gallon for gas now, but we may not realize that food production and shipping require gas at every stage. Food is already expensive and will inevitably become more difficult to grow. Furthermore, we all know locally grown and produced food tastes better.

### Who Feeds Whom?

We have 5,500 farmers in Hawaii, and some of them were able to make the transition to diversified family farms after the big plantations closed. But farming in Hawaii is expensive, and we must help farmers to reduce their costs for water and labor in order to sustain a robust local food system for our residents.

Cooperatives are a fast-growing segment of the eat-local food movement across the United States, largely because they are locally owned, democratically controlled and responsive to the community. Consumer food cooperatives like Kokua Market on King Street emphasize locally produced and processed foods.

An increase in the number of farmers cooperatives focused on processing and marketing are allowing more island-based, direct marketing initiatives, such as the Hawaii Cattle Producers Co-ops' Cooperative, located in Kamuela, which arranges transportation and marketing services for local grass-fed beef sales. Online and on-the-ground food hubs are connecting local producers with wholesale buyers, such as schools, restaurants and supermarkets.

### Who's Invited

Providing a seat at the table for different stakeholders in the food system leads to a better understanding of the perspectives of others involved in the food system. Instead of competitive negotiations exclusively focused on cost, multi-stakeholder cooperatives tend to work toward the same mission and are more likely to consider all stakeholder perspectives. This group is often responsive to unique local needs and values. While still a new approach, it shows great promise for communities working together to meet their food needs in a cooperative business format, versus our current food system, which pits consumers against producers.

### Around the Country

One multi-stakeholder cooperative, Producers & Consumers Cooperative, was sparked when a hospital in Wisconsin decided to put 20 percent of their food budget into the local food system. Their goal was healthier food for their patients and revitalization of the local rural economy. Their multi-stakeholder cooperative has farmers, processors, consumers, and the hospital in separate membership classes.

Maple Valley is a large maple syrup multi-stakeholder cooperative. They included producers, customers, investors, and employees in their membership classes. Each has specified roles and benefits. Weaver Street Market in North Carolina, Fifth Season Cooperative in Wisconsin and Oklahoma Food Co-op in Kansas are excellent examples of food system multi-stakeholder cooperatives.

Fortunately, the pieces are already in place in our ahupuaa. We can invite eaters, farmers, fishermen, ranchers, bakers and investors to organize the nuclei of viable food systems, bringing local and healthful food back into the everyday lives of our communities.

Melanie Bondera is a Rural Cooperative Development Specialist at Hawaii's first cooperative development center, the Laulima Center, a program of The Kohala Center that opened in January 2011. She and her husband have been farming their certified organic farm in South Kona for the last decade. Visit [[www.kohalacenter.org](http://www.kohalacenter.org)] to learn more about the Laulima Center and The Kohala Center.

spread thickly on toast. Available from multiple producers, including Royal Hawaiian Honey, Volcano Island Honey, Big Island Bees.

### Correction

[June 1: "Dog Slaps Man"] The Weekly regrets using the headline "Dog Slaps Man" in last week's Diary section regarding the alleged altercation between MauiTime publisher Tommy Russo and the A & E Television crew who is associated with Duane "Dog the Bounty Hunter" Chapman. Chapman was not involved in the altercation whatsoever—as our headline falsely suggests.

### Eating Statistics

Childhood obesity statistics have caught the attention of every aspect of our nation. Currently, between 16 and 33 percent of children and adolescents are obese.

### From Farm to Fork

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### Mending the Mortgage Mess

On a rainy January morning in downtown Honolulu, a small group of dejected homeowners met in a coffeehouse to commiserate with each other about the impending foreclosures on their family homes. Each blamed large, deceptive Mainland mortgage lenders for a variety of dishonest actions—and in some cases outright fraud—for the "wrongful" loss of their homes.

### The Best Part of Waking Up...

Shawn Steiman's mother apparently wasn't worried about her son rocketing off the walls from heavy caffeine dosage. Her lax

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