



# maui's *greener* side

*Nestled on the slopes of Haleakala—high above the sea and sunbathers—lies an idyllic organic farm that's leading the island's shift toward locally grown food*

BY STEFANIE ELLIS



**M**auí is famous for its beaches, surfing and sunshine, but head into the upcountry—an elevation of 3,500 feet—and you're in an entirely different universe: trees and grass blanket the hills, the color so green it looks like an Instagram filter; abundant rain helps cool the air 10 to 20 degrees below the more populated parts of the island; and cattle graze on verdant pastures.

In the heart of this botanical wonderland, set on the side of Haleakala volcano, is O'o Farm. Its 8 acres of fruits and

RECIPES ADAPTED FROM  
**CHEF GREG HARRISON,**  
PACIFIC'O RESTAURANT

LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHY  
by **DANA EDMUNDS**

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY  
by **LEIGH BEISCH**



“We grow 1,000 pounds of produce a month directly for our chefs based on what they want to serve,” says farm manager Ancil Clancy (*near right*). Those fruits and veggies star in wood-fired dishes at O’o Farm as well as at the oceanside restaurant Pacific’O. Co-owner Stephan Bel-Robert (*below right*) says the farm’s unique altitude is ideal for growing both tropical produce, such as papaya, and things like leeks normally found in cooler U.S. climates.



Coconut-Crusted Ahi with Tropical Salsa & Peanut Sauce



vegetables—figs, pears, finger limes, root vegetables, purple Romanesco cauliflower, citrus, apples—and coffee trees are part of a business model larger than just food production. O’o also opens its fields for breakfast and lunch tours. Visitors are guided through the rows of produce—say, picking lettuce for a salad to be tossed with a smoked tangerine vinaigrette—then sit down to a three-course meal under an arbor and a canopy of trees, with the mountains and farm as a backdrop.

It’s hard to imagine that this thriving farm, which first grew roots in 2000, might never have existed. Back in 1993, when business partners Stephan Bel-Robert and Louis Coulombe were looking to open a restaurant in Lahaina, farming was the farthest thing from their minds. Bel-Robert had come to Maui for the surfing, but was raised in a restaurant family in France and always knew he wanted to open his own place someday. And when he and Coulombe were scouting beachfront locations, they had just one requirement: it must be near prime surfing. However, soon after Pacific’O opened—serving inventive seafood dishes, like the Coconut-Crusted Ahi with Tropical Salsa & Peanut Sauce on page 81—they grew disenchanted with the fact that nearly all of their produce had to be shipped in from the mainland.

At the time, Hawaii’s regional food movement was just getting its foothold, and the demand for produce was higher than the local supply chain could support. “The agricultural industry on Maui in the ’90s was based on sugarcane, papaya

and pineapple,” recalls Bel-Robert. “It was frustrating, because everything we got from the mainland was picked too early and was unripe or unsweet. We noticed the lack of freshness and flavor, and our customers were noticing as well.” So the duo added another mandate: to grow their own fruits and vegetables. They purchased O’o in 2000, becoming the first restaurateurs on the island to also farm their own produce. Today, the farm supplies most of the fruits and veggies for Pacific’O, along with their other businesses, Feast at Lele luau, Aina Gourmet Market and the O’o farm tours.

Like its owners, the land has also benefited from some pretty big changes. “When we started, my son was just learning to walk. We were farming conventionally and there were skull signs everywhere indicating chemical spray. I knew there was something better we could do,” says Coulombe. “We visited Ono Organic Farms in Hana, and got so inspired we decided to use the same practices. We knew organic would be good for the vegetables, the farmer, the soil, the water and the customer. Seeing my son walking through the orchard—suddenly, everything looked right.” Adds Bel-Robert: “Having a farm changes you. It helps you slow down and appreciate everything that comes from that natural process. When I’m there, even for just a day, I feel like I’ve had a week’s vacation.”

**STEFANIE ELLIS** is a Seattle-based food and travel writer.

## WHERE TO STAY AND OTHER MAUI MUST-DOS

For convenient access to O’o Farm, and an authentic feel of Maui’s up-country allure, stay at **Lumeria Maui**. Its secluded Zen environment, including on-site garden and yoga classes make it a restful home base after a day of island activities. Rooms from \$279 per night; [lumeria-maui.com](http://lumeria-maui.com)

In a tiny parking lot on Omaopio Road and the Kula Highway, the **Wednesday Farmers’ Market** is not to be missed. This often-overlooked gem offers rare finds like Buddha’s hand citron, poha berries, cherimoya and yacon, a tuber commonly used as a natural sweetener, as well as homemade Indian food. Open Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Set in the laid-back surfing community of Paia—a quick drive from upcountry Maui—the **Paia Inn** is a charming boutique hotel steps from the water, with private beach access. It’s the perfect place to stay if you want to be near the beach but have easy access to greener pastures. Rooms from \$199 per night; [paiainn.com](http://paiainn.com)

While visiting Paia, check out **Flatbread Company**, whose build-your-own No Boundaries salad is as fresh as you can get, with local beets, goat cheese, green papaya and other add-in options from local farms. [flatbreadcompany.com/maui](http://flatbreadcompany.com/maui)





Kula Pickled Beet Salad



Jasmine Rice Gnocchi with Red Pepper Puree



Huli Huli Chicken with Pineapple-Ginger Sauce



## Jasmine Rice Gnocchi with Red Pepper Puree

**ACTIVE:** 1¼ hrs **TOTAL:** 1 hr 25 min

*These may look like Italian gnocchi with red sauce, but one bite reveals more Japanese than Italian influence, because these “gnocchi” are made with jasmine rice. To make sure they hold together, form them while the rice is still quite warm and use glutinous sweet rice flour.*

### GNOCCHI

- 2½ cups water
- 1½ cups brown jasmine rice
- ¼ cup sliced fresh ginger
- 1 3-inch stalk lemongrass, halved lengthwise
- 3 ounces sweet rice flour (mochiko), plus more for rolling
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup canola oil, divided

### RED PEPPER PUREE

- 3 large red bell peppers (about 1½ pounds)
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1¼ cups diced yellow onion
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 tablespoons dry white wine
- 1½ tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- ¼ cup water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup shaved Pecorino cheese

**1. To prepare rice for gnocchi:** Combine water, rice, ginger and lemongrass in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until the rice is tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed, about 35 minutes. Discard the ginger and lemongrass.

**2. Meanwhile, prepare pepper puree:** Position rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler.

**3.** Place bell peppers on a baking sheet and broil, turning every 5 minutes, until charred and softened, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl, cover and steam for 10 minutes.

**4.** Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and tomatoes; cook, stirring occasionally and reducing the heat if necessary, until the onion is golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add wine and cook, scraping up any browned bits, until it has evaporated, about 1 minute. Remove from heat and add vinegar.

**5.** Peel, seed and chop the peppers. Transfer to a blender along with the onion mixture, water and salt; puree until smooth. Transfer to a medium saucepan; set aside.

**6. To prepare gnocchi:** Transfer the hot rice to a stand mixer with a paddle attachment. Add 3 tablespoons flour and salt; beat on medium speed until the mixture begins to clump and come together as a sticky dough. Transfer the dough to a cutting board lightly dusted with flour. Shape into a 10-by-4 inch rectangle about 1 inch thick. Using a sharp chef’s knife or pastry cutter, cut the dough crosswise into 1-inch strips. Flour your hands lightly with flour and roll each strip into a 6-inch-long log about 1 inch wide. Cut the logs into 1-inch pieces. Place the gnocchi on a baking sheet lightly dusted with flour.

**7.** Heat the sauce over low heat, stirring occasionally.





**“We knew organic would be good for the vegetables, the farmer, the soil, the water and the customer.”**

**—Louis Coulombe**

**8.** Wash and dry the skillet. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in the skillet over medium heat. Cook half of the gnocchi, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to a plate. Repeat with the remaining oil and gnocchi. Serve the gnocchi with the pepper puree and Pecorino.

**SERVES 5:** 1 cup gnocchi &  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup sauce each

**CAL** 492 / **FAT** 20G (SAT 3G) / **CHOL** 6MG / **CARBS** 68G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 8G / **FIBER** 6G / **SODIUM** 354MG / **POTASSIUM** 314MG.

## Ceviche

**ACTIVE:** 15 min **TOTAL:** 6 $\frac{1}{4}$  hrs (including 6 hrs marinating time)

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate for up to 1 day.

*An acidic combination of citrus juices “cooks” fresh fish to make ceviche. Yuzu looks like a bumpy lemon and is prized in Japanese cuisine for its distinctly aromatic juice and rind. Buy yuzu juice in Asian markets and online, or substitute more lemon juice.*

**1 pound skinned firm white fish, such as mahi-mahi or cod, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup lemon juice**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup lime juice**

**2 tablespoons yuzu juice**

**$1\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoons kosher salt, divided**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup diced seeded cucumber**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped seeded tomato**

**$\frac{1}{3}$  cup minced red onion**

**3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro**

**1-3 teaspoons minced serrano or jalapeño**

**1.** Combine fish, lemon, lime and yuzu juices and 1 teaspoon salt in a large nonreactive bowl. Cover and refrigerate, stirring occasionally, until the fish is opaque, about 6 hours or up to 1 day.

**2.** Drain the fish and return to the bowl. Add cucumber, tomato, onion, cilantro, chile to taste and the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt.

**SERVES 8:**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup each

**CAL** 56 / **FAT** 0G (SAT 0G) / **CHOL** 41MG / **CARBS** 2G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 1G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 11G / **FIBER** 0G / **SODIUM** 138MG / **POTASSIUM** 294MG.

## Coconut-Crusted Ahi with Tropical Salsa & Peanut Sauce

**ACTIVE:** 1 hr 10 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr 10 min

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate peanut sauce (Steps 1 & 2) for up to 3 days. Thin with water to desired consistency.

*A fragrant peanut sauce sends this tropical tuna dish over the top in terms of flavor power per bite. To make the sauce quickly and easily in a blender, we’ve bumped up the volume of ingredients so you’ll have some leftovers. It works great for making peanut noodles or as a dipping sauce for just about anything. (Photo: page 76.)*

### PEANUT SAUCE

**1 tablespoon canola oil**

**1 3-inch piece lemongrass, coarsely chopped**

**3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**

**1 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped**

**1 Kaffir lime leaf or 1 teaspoon chopped jarred leaves**



Ceviche

**$\frac{1}{2}$  bunch fresh cilantro, stems and leaves separated, chopped**

**1 tablespoon sake**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup low-sodium chicken broth**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup coconut milk**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup unsalted roasted peanuts**

**3 tablespoons smooth natural peanut butter**

**1 tablespoon fish sauce**

**2 tablespoons lime juice**

**1 tablespoon sambal oelek**

### TROPICAL SALSA

**$1\frac{1}{2}$  cups diced pineapple, mango, papaya and/or dragon fruit**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup diced red onion**

**2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  jalapeño, seeded if desired, diced**

**1 tablespoon lemon juice**

**1 tablespoon lime juice**

**Pinch of kosher salt**

### FISH

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup panko breadcrumbs, preferably whole-wheat**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded unsweetened coconut**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped unsalted macadamia nuts**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup rice flour**

**2 large egg whites, lightly beaten**

**6 4-ounce ahi tuna steaks**

**(1-1 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches thick)**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon kosher salt**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground pepper**

**3 tablespoons canola oil, divided**

**1. To prepare peanut sauce:** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add lemongrass, garlic, ginger, lime leaf and cilantro stems. Cook, stirring frequently, until soft and fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Add sake and cook, stirring, until almost evaporated, about 10 seconds. Add broth, coconut milk, peanuts, peanut butter and fish sauce; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes.

**2.** Off the heat, stir lime juice, sambal oelek and the cilantro leaves into the sauce. Puree the sauce in a blender until smooth. (Use caution when pureeing hot liquids.) Return to the pan and cover to keep warm.

**3. Meanwhile, to prepare salsa:** Combine fruit,



onion, 2 tablespoons cilantro, jalapeño, 1 tablespoon each lemon and lime juice and pinch of salt in a medium bowl. Set aside.

**4. To prepare fish:** Combine panko, coconut and macadamias in a shallow dish. Place flour in another dish and egg whites in a third dish.

**5.** Sprinkle tuna with salt and pepper. Dredge in the flour, shaking off excess, then dip in egg white, letting excess drip off, then coat with the coconut mixture. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the tuna and cook until browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Turn the tuna and add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Cook 4 to 5 minutes more for medium-rare. Serve with some of the peanut sauce and salsa.

**SERVES 6:** 3 oz. tuna, 3 Tbsp. sauce & ½ cup salsa each

**CAL** 426 / **FAT** 25G (SAT 8G) / **CHOL** 44MG / **CARBS** 17G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G (ADDED 0G) / **PROTEIN** 34G / **FIBER** 3G / **SODIUM** 504MG / **POTASSIUM** 749MG.

### Kula Pickled Beet Salad

**ACTIVE:** 45 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr 5 min

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate pickled beets and kale puree (Steps 2-4) for up to 2 days. *Quick-pickled beets are topped here with a namasu (a lightly pickled vegetable salad) made with carrot, cucumber and daikon radish. Dishes like this reflect the influence of Japanese immigrants who came to Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations in the 1800s.* (Photo: page 78.)

- 1 cup julienned carrots
- 1 cup julienned cucumber
- 1 cup julienned daikon
- 2½ cups water plus 5 tablespoons, divided
- 1¼ cups sugar, divided
- ½ cup rice vinegar
- 2 pounds beets, trimmed, peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 cups red-wine vinegar
- 2 stalks lemongrass, pale yellow part only
- 1½ tablespoons sliced fresh ginger
- 1¾ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 4 tablespoons sesame oil, divided
- 6 cups chopped kale
- 1 clove garlic, minced

**1.** Place carrots, cucumber and daikon in a medium heatproof bowl. Combine ½ cup each water, sugar and rice vinegar in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil and cook, stirring, until the sugar is dissolved. Pour over the vegetables. Let marinate, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Drain and set aside.

**2.** Meanwhile, bring 1 inch of water in the saucepan fitted with a steamer basket to a boil over high heat. Add beets, cover and steam until tender, 20 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl.

**3.** Add 2 cups water, the remaining ¾ cup sugar, red-wine vinegar, lemongrass, ginger and 1½ teaspoons salt to the pan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and stir in the beets. Let marinate, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes.

**4.** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add kale, garlic and 3 tablespoons water; cook, stirring, until the kale is wilted, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a blender or food processor. Add the remaining 3 tablespoons oil, 2

tablespoons water and ¼ teaspoon salt; puree until the consistency of pesto.

**5.** Spread the kale puree on a serving platter. Drain the beets and arrange on top of the kale. Serve topped with the marinated vegetables.

**SERVES 8:** ¾ cup each

**CAL** 127 / **FAT** 7G (SAT 1G) / **CHOL** 0MG / **CARBS** 14G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G (ADDED 3G) / **PROTEIN** 2G / **FIBER** 3G / **SODIUM** 191MG / **POTASSIUM** 378MG.

### Huli Huli Chicken with Pineapple-Ginger Sauce

**ACTIVE:** 35 min **TOTAL:** 6¼ hrs

(including 6 hrs marinating time)

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Brine chicken (Step 1) for up to 1 day.

*“Huli” is a Hawaiian word that means to turn over. Traditional versions of this dish are grilled, constantly turning the chicken back and forth as a rotisserie would. This elbow-grease saver is made in the oven.* (Photo: page 79.)

#### CHICKEN

- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 head garlic, halved
- 3 4-inch stalks lemongrass, smashed and diced
- 1 3-inch piece fresh ginger, chopped
- 4 cups ice water
- 1 cup reduced-sodium tamari
- 1 orange, sliced
- 8 bone-in chicken thighs (about 4 pounds)

#### SAUCE

- ¾ cup pineapple juice
- ⅓ cup chopped pineapple
- ⅓ cup reduced-sodium tamari
- 3 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1½ tablespoons minced garlic
- 1 scallion, sliced
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons minced shallot
- 1½ tablespoons rice vinegar

**1. To prepare chicken:** Heat oil, garlic halves, lemongrass and ginger in a medium skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring, until starting to brown, about 2 minutes. Immediately transfer the mixture to a large bowl and add water, 1 cup tamari and orange. Add chicken, cover and refrigerate for at least 6 hours and up to 1 day.

**2. Meanwhile, to prepare sauce:** Puree pineapple juice and pineapple in a blender until smooth. Transfer to a medium saucepan and add tamari, brown sugar, garlic, scallion, ginger, shallot and vinegar. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced by half, 8 to 10 minutes.

**3.** Position rack in upper third of oven; preheat to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil.

**4.** Remove the chicken from the marinade and pat dry with paper towels. (Discard the marinade.) Place on the prepared pan. Bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part without touching bone registers 160°F, about 25 minutes. Brush with 2 tablespoons of the sauce. Increase oven temperature to broil. Broil on high until charred in spots, 2 to 3 minutes.

**SERVES 8:** 1 thigh each

**CAL** 358 / **FAT** 20G (SAT 6G) / **CHOL** 173MG / **CARBS** 11G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G (ADDED 5G) / **PROTEIN** 32G / **FIBER** 0G / **SODIUM** 777MG / **POTASSIUM** 390MG.

### Coconut-Butter Mochi Cake with Lime Curd

**ACTIVE:** 45 min **TOTAL:** 2 hrs 25 min

**EQUIPMENT:** Parchment paper

*Mochi (made from sweet glutinous rice flour) is a pillow-like dough that the Japanese fashion into all kinds of confections. In Hawaii it's made into this simple, rich cake with the addition of eggs. At Pacific'O restaurant, the chef adds his own touch with a zesty lime curd topping.*

#### CAKE

- 3 large eggs
- 1 15-ounce can coconut milk
- ¾ cup reduced-fat milk
- 1 pound sweet rice flour (mochiko)
- 1½ cups light brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ cup avocado oil

#### CURD

- 2 large eggs
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons grated lime zest, plus more for garnish
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, diced
- Pinch of salt
- 6 thin slices pineapple (about 8 ounces; see Tip), brûléed if desired

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9-by-13-inch metal baking pan with cooking spray. Line with parchment paper and coat the paper with cooking spray.

**2. To prepare cake:** Combine eggs, coconut milk and milk in a blender. Puree until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl. Whisk rice flour, brown sugar, 1 cup granulated sugar and ¼ teaspoon salt in another large bowl. Sift the flour mixture over the egg mixture and whisk gently until smooth. Whisk in melted butter and oil. Transfer to the prepared pan.

**3.** Bake the cake until set and browning on the edges, about 45 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Turn out onto the rack and let cool completely, about 1 hour.

**4. To prepare curd:** Bring 1 inch of water to a bare simmer in a medium saucepan. Combine eggs, sugar, lime zest and lime juice in a metal bowl large enough to rest in the pan without touching the water. Set the bowl over the water and whisk constantly until the mixture is very thick, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat; whisk in butter and salt until smooth.

**5.** Place a fine-mesh sieve over a medium bowl and strain the curd into the bowl. Place a piece of plastic wrap directly on the surface of the curd and refrigerate until cold, about 1½ hours.

**6.** Spread the curd over the cake and top with pineapple slices. Garnish with more lime zest, if desired. Cut the cake into 24 squares.

**SERVES 24:** 1 square each

**CAL** 280 / **FAT** 12G (SAT 7G) / **CHOL** 51MG / **CARBS** 42G / **TOTAL SUGARS** 26G (ADDED 25G) / **PROTEIN** 3G / **FIBER** 1G / **SODIUM** 56MG / **POTASSIUM** 97MG.

**TIP:** To see how to cut a pineapple (plus a helpful tool), turn to page 116. 🍍