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# OAHU InsideOut

MAY/JUNE 2015

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Tasty tid-bits from around the Island



## Molokai Hot Bread

Locals and distant travelers alike visit Kanemitsu Bakery & Coffee Shop for its well known, melt-in-your-mouth “hot bread.”

By Kristen Nemoto

**THE TIME IS** just past 7 p.m. in Kaunakakai, Molokai, and the bleak streetlights along Ala Malama Avenue blink and cast a shadow at quaint mom and pop shops. Many are closed behind deep, dark windows, except for the flash of light that beams from a Chevron gas station. One business shop that’s unexpectedly open is 80-year-old Kanemitsu Bakery & Coffee Shop. Camouflaged by its front lights turned

off, the bakery welcomes a raft of hungry people with the aroma of freshly baked bread and a single neon “Open” sign.

But you can’t get the bread from the front entrance. Locals and prior research on the Internet says to go around back down a dimly lit alleyway. Never mind the abandoned house to your left. Just keep going until you see a string of white Christmas lights, which pulls you up to the back entrance of the

bakery. There you’ll find a painting on the wall of huge red and yellow hibiscus flowers, followed by a sharpie-penned menu that’s taped up to the backside of an open Dutch door.

“You can get any two flavored toppings for \$7,” says worker T.J. Johnson to a couple from Vancouver, British Columbia, as he points to the menu. It reads a list of five flavors: strawberry, blueberry, cinnamon, butter and cream cheese. “Or you can get the ‘works,’” he continues, “which is everything, for \$9.”

After the couple places their order, Johnson whisks back to the bakery’s warehouse space to prep open a new loaf of piping hot bread.

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"I've met people from Japan, Europe, the Philippines," laughs Johnson, as he slips on a pair of plastic gloves. "They say 'Yeah, we just flew down here for the bread.' And I'm like, 'What, come on!'"

To some, Kanemitsu bakery's bread may seem like the average loaf but there's no mistaking the island's famed omiyage gift once it's tasted. After baking in a rotating oven, the pillowy soft loaves are cut in half, slathered in choice toppings, then plopped in a single plastic bag ready for take out. Kanemitsu's old family recipe brings people in great masses to the empty alleyway, regardless of the late hour.

"If you bake the bread later, it lasts longer," says owner George Kanemitsu as he peaks into the hefty rotating oven bed. "Because our products don't have preservatives in it to keep it fresh, we

**"Everyone loves our hot bread ... We've been here for so long, it's kind of a tradition for many people."**

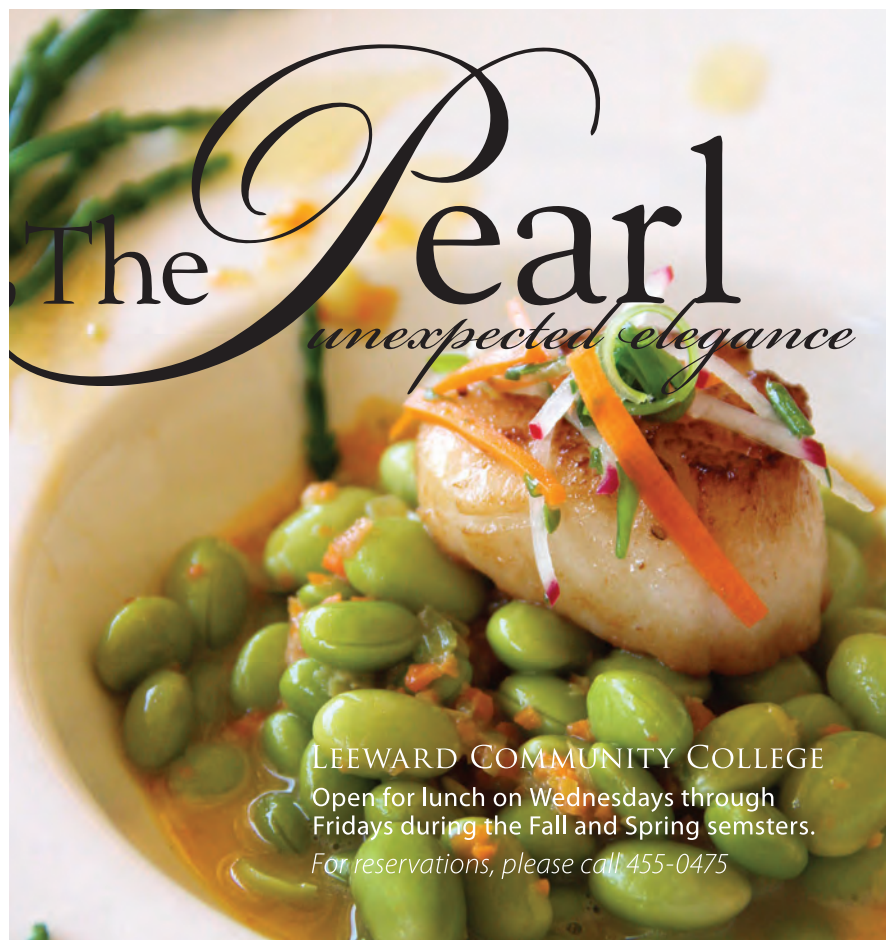
have to make it later in the day so that it'll last longer the next day."

Founded in 1935 by Kanemitsu's father Shigeo and his brother Fred, Kanemitsu's Bakery & Coffee Shop was first located on the outskirts of Kaunakakai but soon moved to Ala Malama Avenue when the foot traffic started to get heavier. Over the years they transformed from a bakery to a restaurant, then a market, a bowling alley and a nightclub. Today, they're a restaurant and bakery by day and a hot bread machine by night.

"Everyone loves our hot bread," Kanemitsu says. "We've been here for so long, it's a tradition for many people."

If you can't seem to find the baker's back entrance, "don't worry," says Johnson, someone will always be around to point you in the right direction. "They don't call us the Friendly Isle for nothing," he says with a hearty laugh.

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