

Lee Anne Wong films new online pilot  
Show starts on the North Shore and ends at CookSpace at Ward Warehouse.

# OAHU Inside Out

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## GREEN ACRES

North Shore restaurants partner with area farmers

## TASTE THE RAINBOW

Matsumoto Shave Ice's new Haleiwa location

## ART OF BURLESQUE

Lola Love teaches the basic steps



# Sip+ Savor

Top chefs return to participate in the 5th Annual Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival

# Taste the RAINBOW



From canned goods to syrupy flakes of packed ice, the Matsumoto family has endured and grown their little mom-and-pop store into an entrepreneurial phenomenon. **By Kristen Nemoto | Photos by Jennifer Whalen**

Owner of Matsumoto Shave Ice, Stan Matsumoto, still recalls the days when he had to help his father with the iconic Matsumoto Grocery Store. Hoping to catch late-night moviegoers or workers heading home, Matsumoto's late dad, Mamoru Matsumoto, would bring grocery items to North Shore residents' doorsteps while his wife Helen manned the store in Haleiwa.

"My dad had a panel truck," says the second-generation Matsumoto. "He used to go around the community trying to sell canned goods in the back."

This was Mamoru Matsumoto's life after working in a sugar plantation, the railroad and eventually as a salesman for the Sakai Store in Haleiwa. It had always been his dream of opening up his own business as a way to support his family in Haleiwa and relatives back in Hiroshima, Japan. When Tanaka Store owner Kazuo Tanaka gave Mamoru Matsumoto the chance to take over his store, he jumped at the opportunity. Matsumoto says his father, although grateful for the spot they now call home today, "struggled" at first and had to work "really hard" in order for the family business to stay afloat.

"He had to borrow loaves of bread from a supermarket," Matsumoto remembers, "(he) said he'll return it when the bread man comes the next day. He never took a vacation. He'd go over to the Tanaka's and hand-crank cut their lawn — just to be thankful, to show his appreciation. That's the kind of person he was."

In 1956, five years after Matsumoto Grocery Store first opened its doors to the public, a family friend suggested that the store sell cones of shave ice to help make up for slow business. Mamoru and Helen soon purchased a hand-crank shave ice machine from Japan, attached an electric motor and started making shave ice cones at a nickel a piece.

"I guess we got popular by word of mouth," Matsumoto says. "It took a while at first because it started off with just the local people. Haleiwa was not a busy town back then."

It wasn't until the 1960s when Matsumoto Grocery Store got on the proverbial map and on every visitor's to-do list, thanks to hoards of surf enthusiasts who would flood the beaches of the North Shore. Today, over half a century later, ask any Hawaii resident what shave ice store is the most iconic and they'll more than likely answer "Matsumoto's." The refreshing to-go snack along with the Matsumoto family business grew into an around-the-clock shave ice-making machine. With over 1,200 cones sold on a single hot summer

day, locals and visitors from around the world will gladly wait in a long, snake-like line for a chance to sip and scoop at the many Matsumoto flavors and combinations, from the Rainbow to the Hawaiian.

In 1976, custom-made Matsumoto Shave Ice logo T-shirts became available for purchase. Matsumoto says that it was originally made for the family to wear while working at the shop but due to the demand from customers, they now sell 40 different T-shirt designs. They have become keepsake mementos, which won't melt. Initially, though, Matsumoto had a hard time initiating sales of the T-shirts over the canned good items since his father was adamant on keeping the items that made Matsumoto's store what it was then.



"Oh he was so upset," says Matsumoto, shaking his head. "We had to take one whole row, then the next row the next month ... He worked so hard to build it (the grocery store). But eventually he was OK with it. It was the shave ice that got people coming back. That's what we became known for."

Indeed, many visitors make it a habit to stop by when they come through the laid-back beach town of Haleiwa. A compliment that Matsumoto knows his parents would have been grateful to see.

"If they were alive right now they would be so happy to see how the store is today," Matsumoto says. "They would be so proud to see everyone come to the store and have a nice time."