

DINING

O'ahu

in paradise

2015-2016



POKE LORE
BIZARRE FOODS
FOOD TRUCKS

The Guide to great dining from the publishers of **where**®

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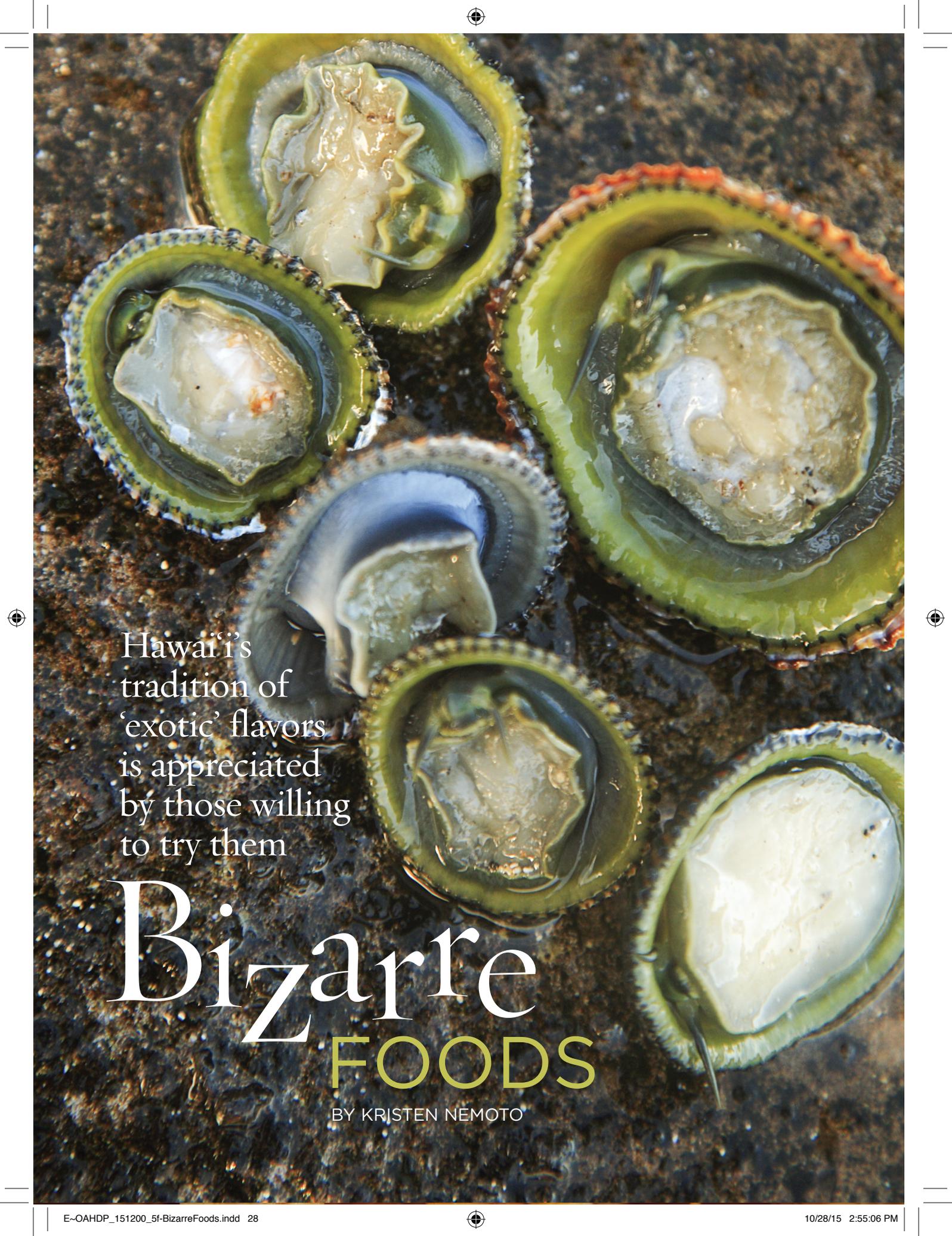
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Guests can savor a cornucopia of seafood while dining at one of chef Roy Yamaguchi's eponymous restaurants.

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Hawai'i's
tradition of
'exotic' flavors
is appreciated
by those willing
to try them

Bizarre FOODS

BY KRISTEN NEMOTO

Perhaps it's the texture. The smell. The way it's made. The way it tastes. Maybe it's the thought of eating "that part" of an animal or an unusual food product that makes people's stomachs turn and faces squint. Call it a delicacy. Call it interesting. Call it anything you'd like but don't — by any means — call it "bizarre" or "gross" until you've actually tried it. It may not be your cup of tea, but to others it's delicious. As early as the plantation days of old Hawai'i, when multi-ethnic field workers would share their tin lunch pails with one another, residents born and raised here have had the privilege of delving into each other's cuisines. Today, ethnic foods from the Pan-Pacific have not only made its way here to the islands, it's also celebrated and revered for future generations to come.

OPIHI

Strong enough to withstand ferocious wave beatings from the ocean against a usually sharp and steep rocky edge, the 'opihi—also known as snails—is a Hawaiian delicacy that's often served at local gatherings such as a family lū'au (Hawaiian feast) or picked and eaten straight off of its dangerous terrain. The price per pound is a bit steep yet for good reason as courageous 'opihi pickers often risk their lives to hand-pick the raw dish—calling the miniature creatures Hawai'i's deadliest catch. Other than traditionally shucking out the snail and popping it in your mouth, 'opihi tastes delicious with a splash of vinegar, garlic, shoyu (soy sauce) and chili pepper water.

NATTO

If the words pungent and goopy were to marry, their offspring would produce a traditional Japanese dish known as natto. Often shunned from the palates of those who cannot get over its overpowering fermented smell or long strings of glue-stick-gelatinous goodness, natto has been satisfying the appetites of local Hawai'i (mainly Japanese) residents since the early 1900s. It's traditionally made by wrapping small quantities of boiled or steamed soybeans in rice straw, which is then vaccinated with a bacterium, and then left to ferment for a day under hot, humid conditions. Readily found at any local grocery store and largely available at Japanese restaurants, natto can be eaten straight out of the package or, as many *kama'aina* (local residents) prefer,



NATTO HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF JAPAN'S MOST UNIQUE TRADITIONAL HEALTH FOODS.

served atop a hot bed of steaming hot white rice with a splash of shoyu and freshly chopped green onions.

COW TONGUE

When you get past the idea of tasting a part of an animal that, if it were alive, would be tasting right back at you, grilled cow tongue—a favorite Korean dish—is a tender and tasty delicacy that's often savored after a minute or two on the grill and dunked in a bath of salt, pepper and sesame oil. Perhaps the rise in popularity is due to an increase of Korean yakiniku restaurants opening later in the evening, catering to the semi-young crowd of intoxicated youngsters looking to avoid a hangover the next day by filling their bellies with rice and some protein. These days that something is looking more like thinly sliced cuts of cow tongue than a traditional steaming hot bowl of bibimbap.

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CHICKEN FEET ARE A DELICACY OFTEN SERVED FOR DIM SUM. SISIG IS A SNACK SERVED WITH BEER.

Even “Bizarre Foods” host Andrew Zimmern might shy away from some of these dishes but for the adventurous diner, get ready for a treat.

If you can't get over the fact that you're eating tongue, have the waiter or waitress cook it for you (as most yakiniku joints will offer) until it's nice and crisp. Pretend you're eating a thin slice of meat and voila, delicious.

CHICKEN FEET

If the look and texture of cow tongue deters you, Chinese-style chicken feet might be a problem. You'd be missing out, however, on its sweet yet savory chewy cartilage, skin and bones that are served from bustling dim sum carts in Chinese restaurants. Luscious smells of star anise, fresh ginger, oyster and black bean sauce consumes your appetite and soon the entire plate is left with just tiny parcels of bone remnants. Even if you cannot stand the literal sight of feet that's placed on your plate, take

a moment to at least try this labor-of-love dish and appreciate its combination of flavors and spices.

SISIG

Anthony Bourdain calls it the perfect beer match. Filipinos call it sisig, which means to snack on something sour. In its present popular form, sisig is composed of a holy trinity of ingredients in Filipino cuisine: pork ears, cheek and jowl, which are slowly braised then grilled over charcoal. The dish is believed to have originated from local residents who bought unused pig heads — since they were inexpensive — from the commissaries of Clark Air Base in Angeles City, Philippines. Today, the dish is a popular *pulutan* (any food that accompanies beer) and is often served on a sizzling platter.

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