

Italian for hawaiian

THE FLAVORS OF HAWAII AND ITALY MAY SOUND LIKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS, BUT THEY PAIR BEAUTIFULLY IN A SMALL KAUA'I GELATERIA.

BY REBECCA PIKE

Papalani—it may sound Italian, but it's actually a Hawaiian word meaning "heavenly." And according to Papalani Gelato founders Marck and Lauren Shipley, it's the perfect description of their product. "Lauren and I went to Italy in the early 1990s. Like so many others before us, we fell in love with gelato," says Marck. "We were eating gelato every day, several times a day." Seven years and one successful gelato business (Salt Spring Gelato) later, they are now right where they want to be: Kaua'i.







PREVIOUS PAGES: THE COLORFUL AND FLAVORFUL VARIETY OF PAPALANI GELATO'S OFFERINGS. THIS PAGE, ABOVE: A FRESH BATCH OF LILIKO'O'I (PASSION FRUIT) GELATO BEING MADE.

Papalani Gelato is a *piccolo* (“small” in Italian) scoop shop in the Pō'ipu Shopping Village, next to Puka Dog. At first glance, it looks like nothing more. However, all of the gelato is made here, too, and of Papalani's 90-some flavors, 30 are in the scooping counter at any given time.

Off to the side of the shop is a small, windowed room, the domain of gelato-maker Sean Lawrence. Uptempo reggae music dances from a stereo in the corner, and Sean is constantly on the move; scraping, packing the freshly frozen dessert into pans to remove air bubbles, and mixing up the heavenly stuff. “Sean, you gonna do mango?” asks Marck. “Liliko'i sorbet,” Sean shouts over his shoulder as the gelato machine whirs.

I know I'm in for a treat when the *sorbetto* is panned. For those who have experienced sorbet only as an icy, grainy frozen-fruit product, I recommend revisiting your expectations. “The way we make them is different,” promises Marck. “When it hits your palate it is creamy.” It's true: While there's no dairy in the liliko'i sorbet, it's truly creamy, even velvety. And, explains Marck, it's the absence of dairy that makes the flavors “just go wham!”

Along with popular flavors such as Belgian chocolate and the tropical tastes you'd expect from a Hawaiian gelateria—tangy piña colada, for instance, and coconut that transports you momentarily to the inside of an actual coconut—Papalani offers creations that salute island culture and local tastes. *Kūlolo*, for instance, is a tribute to a traditional Hawaiian pudding of taro, brown sugar and coconut. Like much knowledge in Hawai'i, the recipe was passed down orally through the generations; Marck and Lauren learned it from the grandmother of a Papalani employee. Then there's POG, an homage to the popular passion fruit, orange and guava juice blend. (“Why it's POG instead of LOG, nobody knows, since here we call passion fruit ‘liliko'i,’” says Marck.) Papalani makes POG with fresh, tart liliko'i, zingy blood oranges, and sweet pink guava; it's a staff favorite.

Marck is a man of pride and principle. “Our basic philosophy is do it right, and do it local as much as we possibly can. We're in Hawai'i, and at least half of the flavors reflect that. We go to farmers markets, we go to growers, and we even trade with people who have fruit in their

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backyards. Star fruit, mango, liliko'i, guava, pineapple, mountain apple, plum, apple banana."

"We're using really interesting ingredients," he continues. "Most people making gelato in the U.S. are using the same ingredients from a handful of companies. Chocolate, for instance, comes from a huge bag of cocoa powder." Papalani uses cocoa powder, but adds French, Belgian and Hawaiian chocolates and they have yet to exhaust the options for chocolate blends. Marck openly shares his fantasy of "a chocoholics event, with eight different flavors of gelato." He has begun to make his own chocolate, too, and offers tastings of his creations at the gelato shop, every Thursday at 2 p.m.

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—Marck Shipley,
owner of Papalani Gelato

Of the often received compliment "better than in Italy," he says, "It's nice to hear, but it would be pretty arrogant to think that, in seven years, we figured out how to do something better than the people who have been doing it for generations." Surely, though, generations past were not offering the more exotic flavors that are found in the rotating selection here.

There's Lauren's personal favorite, Papalani Pie, a special blend of espresso and coconut mixed with chocolate sauce, pieces of cookies, coffee crunch, and macadamia nuts—your four basic food groups right there. Papalani's version of the ever-popular cookie dough ice cream is Kalaheo Cookie, where the flavor of cookie dough permeates the entire batch of creamy, dense gelato.

In addition to carefully crafting each batch of gelato, Papalani uses sustainable business practices, the most eye-catching of which is their use of 100 percent biodegradable corn containers made in Hawai'i. The containers are used for everything from gelato and drinks to take-out containers and cake trays—as if you'd need a reason to feel any more satisfied after eating this fabulous frozen treat!



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