



Journey through Thyme

Jodi Schneider
Columnist

Hawaiian food for August

On August 29, 1959 Hawaii became the 50th state. Many luau events are held in August around the nation including the Hawaiian Luau that has been held in Sisters' Village Green in past years (canceled this year due to COVID-19).

When you think of Hawaiian food what comes to mind? Poke? Sweet bread? Pineapple?

Hawaii is distinct from the rest of the United States in many ways. The food available on the Hawaiian Islands reflects a rich and diverse culture. Digging down through the layers of Hawaii's home cooking uncovers an account of people, plants, and politics that together build what we think of as Hawaiian cuisine today.

Explorers from Europe, the missionaries from America, the plantation workers from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Portugal, rolled into Hawaii resulting in "local food," a mishmash of cultures that changed the picture of Hawaii's culinary roots.

In Hawaii there's Hawaiian food, usually referring to native Hawaiian fare, and there's local food. But sometimes the distinctions blur, and delving into Hawaii's unique specialties reveals a complex picture of Hawaii's culinary history.

The native Hawaiian foods generally consisted of poi, sweet potato, breadfruit, some fish, limu (seaweed), and fruit. The kalua pig is a whole pig roasted in an underground oven.

Before the arrival of Polynesian voyagers in Hawaii between 300-500 AD, few edible plants existed in the Islands. It is believed that these first settlers brought around 30 plants with them. The most important plant was taro, of which a paste called poi was made. Later settlers from the Marquesas and Tahiti brought breadfruit and baking banana, as well as coconuts, sugarcane, sweet potatoes and yams. They also brought chicken and pigs with them since there weren't any meat animals on these remote islands. What they found plenty of in the new land was fish.

The staple and traditional

filler starch dish in Hawaiian cuisine is poi.

Poi, made from taro root (similar to a yam or potato but with a starchier flavor), is either steamed or baked and pounded. While pounding, water is added to the mixture to create a very sticky pudding-like consistency.

Poi has a unique flavor, it's starchy and slightly sour from the light fermentation in the preparation process.

Traditional Hawaiian food would not be complete without a dish known as laulau.

Taro is a well-respected plant, not only in Hawaii, but also throughout Polynesia and the Pacific islands. While poi is made from taro root, laulau is made from the leaves.

Traditionally, laulau is made with pork wrapped in layers of taro leaves and cooked in an underground hot rock oven for hours until it turns soft and smoky flavored. The meat is tender and juicy while the leaves turn to a spinach-like consistency.

Another giant of Hawaiian cuisine is the famous pork dish known as Kalua Pig.

Cooked in an underground oven (known as an imu), the pork slow roasts so it becomes extremely tender and retains a remarkable smoky flavor.

Found all over Hawaii, poke combines chunks of raw fish, seaweed, roasted kukui nut and sea salt, often atop a bed of rice. The fish is most commonly tuna cut into cubes and marinated in sesame and

soy sauce. However, there are countless variations available.

Lomi-lomi salmon is not originally native to Hawaii but was brought over from other Pacific islands. The dish is now part of most traditional Hawaiian meals and makes a great addition to poi. The raw salmon is cured with salt and diced up along with tomatoes, onions, and normally some chili peppers. The result is a salmon-infused Hawaiian-style salsa garnish or salad.

Lomi-lomi salmon is often served on ice to keep it cold, moist and fresh-tasting. Though salmon are not native to the area, western sailors first brought the fish to the islands centuries ago. The salad has thus become a Hawaiian tradition and is regularly served at luaus.

Sweetened breads (sweet bread) came to the islands with the Portuguese immigrants who flooded Hawaii in the mid-to-late 19th century to work the livestock ranches and sugarcane

plantations. The newcomers were embraced by the business community

By 1910, the Honolulu newspaper, *The Democrat*, counted the number of Portuguese immigrants in Hawaii at more than 20,000. Many of these families baked their own breads using recipes brought from home, but when refined sugar was scarce or expensive (most of the sugar produced on the islands was destined for export), they used local ingredients like honey and pineapple juice as sweeteners.

Topping off a great Hawaiian meal, freshly grown Hawaiian fruit is a refreshing dessert.

The islands of Hawaii were formerly famous for their fruit, but as land and labor became too expensive, the fruit industry in Hawaii started to decline. However, you can still get local fruit and Hawaii is famous for tropical fruits like pineapple and passion fruit (lilikoi).

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A TRIBUTE TO MIKE JOHNSON

December 14, 1946 leaving us August 22, 2020

This is a tribute (not an obituary) to a guy who loved people. He never met a stranger. He was a guy true to his friends, honest, easy going and a hard worker. A guy who loved life.

He was a guy that loved his family, and was so proud of his grandsons. He was a guy that I loved for 53 years.

Our family, who loved him dearly — Jill and husband James Crafton, of Redmond, Brit Johnson, of Sisters, and two grandsons who were the love of his life: Walker Crafton and Grant Johnson. Our sweet granddaughter Meghan we lost a year ago in July after a hard battle with cancer. She leaves behind her daughters Boston and Blakelee. And our newest blessing to our family is Walker's fiancé, Hannah.

Mike is leaving behind a brother and sister who also loved him dearly — Steve Johnson, Mike's twin brother, and Steve's wife Marti Johnson, of Bend. A little sister, Connie Holly and her husband Doug Holly. Mike and Steve loved to get Connie to do their dirty work — like cleaning their fish — when they were little. Connie was always a good sport.

Mike's parents, Vic and Phyllis Johnson, lived in Camp Sherman for many years. Our family has missed them ever since their passing.

Mike went to high school in Lebanon, Oregon, where he still has many close friends. Mike joined the Marine Corps after a year of school (skiing) at COCC. He loved hunting and fishing and he loved his boats, too, which were many. We had boats from drift boats, to a catamaran, both for floating the Deschutes River. We had two ski boats. Then he went for the big one, a 32-foot cabin cruiser. We spent a lot of good times at Lake Billy Chinook. He also enjoyed snowmobiling with the guys. He had all the toys a guy could ask for. We even had horses!

We had a home in Palm Springs where we enjoyed golfing for 21 years. We have so many wonderful close friends from down there. His last journey was having the motor home and traveling around the U.S.

Mike loved Sisters and the people. He worked for many people over his 27 years as owner and operator of Mike Johnson Excavation. Mike and Kathy still own their small storage facility, Mountain High RV & Boat Storage in Sisters.

Mike, with Kathy and his family had a wonderful life together.

Mike is signing off with his wonderful warm smile.

Once a Marine always a Marine: Semper fi... Always faithful.

