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Grinds on the Go

These Maui filling stations have fuel for you and your car

By [Bonnie Friedman](#)

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Port Town Chevron in Kahului prepares several types of *bentos* and assorted *musubi*.

It's not uncommon to find hot dogs, nachos, or other processed snack food at many gas stations, and some may offer regional favorites, like yummy tacos in Texas and lip-smackin' barbecue in Kansas City. But I'll bet Maui has more mouth-watering service-station fare than any place of similar size in the country—and these operators don't give short shrift to Hawai'i's multicultural cuisine. Everything you'll read about here is prepared in locally owned and operated kitchens; the food is as inexpensive as it is tempting.

Port Town Chevron

- **Info:** 109 W. Ka'ahumanu Avenue, Kahului. 1-808-877-0455
- **Specialty:** Bentos (they sell more than 150 per day)
- **Setting:** Clean, tight quarters filled with a wide variety of food prepared on-site and by other local kitchens
- **Price range:** \$2.75–\$7.50
- **Service hours:** 4:30 a.m.–midnight, Monday–Saturday, although most prepared food is gone before lunch

The earliest bird gets the best of the *bentos* at 4:30 a.m. at Kahului's Port Town Chevron (everyone still calls it Kitagawa's, although it changed hands more than a decade ago). By about 10 a.m., there's nary a noodle to be found.

"I grew up in bento culture," says current owner Ryuichiro "Riki" Ishida. He's proud that his food has a distinctly light and artistic touch—delicately breaded pieces of mahimahi on seasoned rice, glistening

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glazed *unagi* (eel), and tiny, fluted paper cups of pickled vegetables and seaweed.

Eight varieties of *musubi*, each too big to hold in one hand, continue to be sold in memory of previous owner Mike Kitagawa's son, Curtis, who developed them 20 years ago. For those with a sweet tooth, there's banana bread, banana fritters on a stick, and *cascaron* (the Filipino version of butter *mochi*).

Suda Seafood & Deli

- **Info:** 30 Mana'o Kala Street, Kihei. 1-808-875-6600
- **Specialty:** An excellent *chow fun*—one of Hawai'i's favorite noodle dishes
- **Setting:** A small kitchen/concession inside a Kihei gas station convenience store with businesslike service that allows no time for small talk
- **Price range:** \$2.50–\$7.50 (cash only)
- **Service hours:** 6 a.m.–2 p.m., Tuesday–Friday; 8 a.m.–2 p.m., Saturday

Many locals who mourned the 2003 closing, after 40 years, of the original Suda's were overjoyed when it reopened at this location in 2008. Along with what is arguably the best *chow fun* on Maui—simple with just a few bits of meat, bean sprouts, and green onion—there is a darn good fresh fish sandwich and Maui Cattle Co. burger.

Uptown Chevron Food Mart & Car Wash

- **Info:** 2085 Main Street, Wailuku. 1-808-244-0869. Specialty: Baked 'ōpakapaka plate lunch (fans drive from Lahaina for it)
- **Setting:** Sparkling clean, well organized, well stocked with great locally made fare
- **Price range:** \$2.60–\$10.95
- **Service hours:** 7 a.m.–2 p.m., weekdays

Credit Alvin Makimoto, son of the original owner of what locals know as [Uptown Chevron](#), with transforming this place into one of Central Maui's best take-out joints. "My father, Frank, opened Uptown Repair in 1953," Makimoto says. "He started selling gas and cigarettes in 1970, and by 1989, we were selling packaged bentos, snacks, and candies. I realized people want convenience. We added the kitchen during a major renovation in 2004."

Cheryl Mendez—the station manager since 2007—runs a kitchen that turns out napa cabbage and cucumber kimchi, along with cone and *maki* sushi, manapua, mochi, *manju*, and pastries from local suppliers. In addition to the 'ōpakapaka, plate lunch choices include *char siu* chicken, barbecued ribs, and *pastele* stew with *gandule* rice. Mendez welcomes take-out calls and special requests.

MinitStop

- **Info:** [MinitStop](#) has nine Maui locations, with Lahaina on the way.
- **Specialty:** Maui fried chicken with huge potato wedges
- **Setting:** More mini-empire than mom-and-pop, seven of the Maui locations are at gas stations
- **Price range:** Chicken meals start at \$4.19 for a snack box
- **Service hours:** Opening hours vary; most locations close at 11 p.m.

This chain's raison d'être, crunchy pressure-fried chicken and potatoes, are addictively delicious. Breaded in a "proprietary recipe," they're available in several different-size assortments. If plain old crispy chicken just doesn't do it for you, try the Sweet Chili or Sweet Chili Spicy

varieties. There are also plate lunches, bentos, and daily specials.

Hanzawa's Store

- **Info:** 1833 Kaupakalua Road, Ha'ikū. 1-808-572-8337
- **Specialty:** Fish tacos (call ahead to see if they're the daily special)
- **Setting:** A big, funky, old-fashioned country/general store
- **Price range:** \$3–\$10
- **Service hours:** 6 a.m.–8 p.m., Monday–Saturday; 7 a.m.–8 p.m., Sunday

If your sense of direction is poor, and you find yourself in the wilds of Ha'ikū with an empty gas tank and a growling stomach, there is relief. Fill up at one of the pumps outside, then go inside for chili and rice with a Maui red hot dog or one of the daily specials. They also stock lots of local produce, dry goods, and grocery items.

Certified Pastry Cook Bonnie Friedman operates Tour da Food Maui, which in addition to Wailuku and Upcountry culinary tours, now offers a tour of Maui's gas station delights based on research she conducted for this story.

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