

» Features

Loco Mobile

Food trucks deliver good grub on the go

By Bonnie Friedman, Christine Thomas, and Joan Conrow

AAA Hawai'i July/August 2011



Big Boy's Food Service's Clinton Ioane Makanani serves up local plate lunches at Nāwiliwili Beach Park.

Years before Kogi BBQ hit the streets of Los Angeles and New Yorkers were craving Cravings, O'ahu's North Shore was dotted with shrimp trucks, and local specialties were dished up from lunch wagons all over the Islands. Granted, these food trucks didn't—and, for the most part, still don't—resemble the sleek, slick, customized rigs driving across the Food Network landscape. As with most Mainland trends, this latest food revolution has taken its time getting here. The splashy truck scene is gaining steam on O'ahu, where mobile chefs make use of social media and stage events such as Eat the Street rallies.

It takes even longer, of course, for trends to reach the neighbor islands, but the trucks have arrived, albeit in an Island kind of way. On Maui and Kaua'i, the scene is definitely less refined—"What's Twitter?"—but, thankfully, just as delicious. Fresh fish, Mexican food, wood-fired pizzas, Filipino specialties, and local grinds dominate.

Maui

Like Poki...?

140 Hobron Avenue and the parking lot at Kahului Trucking & Storage, near Pier 1; Monday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–2 p.m.; \$7–\$9, cash only; 1-808-757-2239; To find it, search "Like Poke" on Facebook

- **The Story:** Former professional surfer/big rig driver/O'ahu native Danny Kalahiki moved to Maui 14 years ago, armed with a degree from the Western Culinary Institute in Portland, Oregon. He worked in a few restaurants, and a year ago, he had a simple, tasty idea: Elevate the food we love to eat. And elevate it he has with his Like Poke...? lunch wagon.
- **What's Special:** Kalahiki works directly with several fishermen and buys only enough to last a couple of days. He hand cuts the fish every morning and mixes the poke to order. And, in what is almost an homage to big rig drivers, Kalahiki picked a trucker-friendly spot for his lunch wagon. "I wanted truck drivers to be able to maneuver easily and get their food fast," he says. Everything on his menu can be made to order quickly. That's good for everyone with lunch-hour time constraints.
- **What to Order:** Best-sellers are your best bets. The fish pieces in the 'Ahi Shoyu–Wasabi Poke are big, and the sauce is sweet-salty-pungent-spicy and delicious. 'Ahi Katsu comes with Kalahiki's "special sauce"—and, no, he won't share the recipe. Kalahiki uses only brisket in his slow-cooked beef stew. Mix and match anything on the menu.

You really can't go wrong; his culinary training and passion are evident on every plate. —*Bonnie Friedman*

The Outrigger Pizza Company

Longs Drugs parking lot in Pukalani (Wednesday 11:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.), Azeka Shopping Center in Kihei (Tuesday and Friday 11:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m.), and across the street from the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center in Kahului (Saturday 11 a.m.–3 p.m.); \$8–\$10 per pizza, cash and credit cards; 1-808-870-7133

- **The Story:** The [Outrigger Pizza Company's](#) Eric Mitchell is a fourth-generation vegetable farmer and a first-generation pizza maker. His business started in a 21st century way. "I always wanted an outdoor pizza oven for my house," says Mitchell. He found a picture online of an Australian standing beside a trailer with four mobile pizza ovens. "But when I Googled 'mobile pizza ovens Hawai'i,' nothing came up," he says. So he contacted the guy in Australia, bought an oven from him, mounted it on a trailer, and presto!
- **What's Special:** It's all in the details. Mitchell makes the dough and sauces. "I cold ferment the dough," he says, which makes the flavors rich and complex. The personal-size thin-crust pizzas bake, literally, in just a couple of minutes in his amazing little 800-degree oven.
- **What to Order:** Get the Liliko'i Pork Pizza, with garlic aioli, kālua pork, sweet Maui onions, peppers, mozzarella, and a drizzle of liliko'i syrup. The Spinach Pizza, with fresh spinach, portobella mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, mozzarella, and feta on a garlic–olive oil crust, finished with a sprinkle of truffle salt is also good. —*B.F.*

Honorable Mentions

These are located at Kahului Beach Road near the small boat ramp, opposite Keōpūolani Park/Maui Arts & Cultural Center.

Geste Shrimp Truck

Four preparations with macaroni/crab salad and rice. \$12 per plate, cash only. Tuesday–Saturday, 11 a.m. until it sells out. 1-808-298-7109.

Lau Hee Chicken Hekka

Family-recipe chicken hekka and chow fun. \$7–\$10, cash and check. Monday–Saturday 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. 1-808-268-4538.

BBQ Stick

Steak and barbecue chicken. \$6–\$10, cash only. Monday–Saturday 9:30 a.m. until it sells out. 1-808-283-8544.
