


# Dining Out

AN EDITION OF  
Star  Advertiser

*Leiden Specials*



Barigus Sisig  
(Sizzling Boneless Milkfish Belly)

**Max's**  
RESTAURANT & BAR  
Culinary Arts Program

Costco Iwilei Complex • 801 Dillingham Blvd.  
Honolulu, HI 96817 • (808) 599-5033

Waipahu Shopping Plaza • 94-300 Farrington Hwy.  
Waipahu, HI 96797 • (808) 676-1504

Head chef Chu Arai and chef Toru Mitake serve up freshly made bentos.

A TASTE  
OF JAPAN

The fine ingredients and full flavors offered at J-Shop, like these Wagyu Yakiniku and Sashimi bentos, come to island diners straight from Japan.

SEE PAGE 8 | LAWRENCE TABUDLO PHOTO

**Chai's**

WAIKIKI  
HAWAIIAN FUSION

1910 Ala Moana Blvd.  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815  
(Across the street from  
Hilton Hawaiian Village)

Parking on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
of Canterbury Place  
Tel (808) 941-9200  
www.ChaisWaikiki.com

CHEF  
**Chai**

1009 Kapiolani Blvd.  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Valet Parking  
Tel (808) 585-0011  
www.ChefChai.com



## THIS WEEK'S EARLY BIRD SPECIAL BEFORE 5PM

### STARTER

Chicken Sate' with Thai Peanut Sauce,  
Cucumber Salad and Asian Flat Bread

### FIRST COURSE

#### Combination Appetizer Platter:

Fresh Ahi Katsu with Wasabi Curry Sauce  
Kataifi and Mac Nut Encrusted Jumbo Black Tiger Prawns  
Gravlax Salmon Roulade  
with Cream Cheese and Crab Meat  
Roasted Butternut Squash and Lobster Bisque Shooter

### MAIN COURSE

#### Choice of One

Grilled Fresh New Zealand King Salmon with  
Kabayaki Sauce and Spicy Pineapple, Steamed White Rice  
Spicy Lemongrass Oxtail Soup with Steamed White Rice  
Vegetable Terrine with Thai Green Curry Sauce  
and Steamed Brown Rice

### DESSERT

Heart Shaped White Chocolate Gelato Truffle  
with Raspberry Guava Puree

Star's Choice  
**ILIMA**  
AWARDS  
Best New Restaurant

REG. \$60  
NOW  
**\$40**  
PER PERSON





Head chef Chu Arai and chef Toru Mitake with some supreme Wagyu meat and red snapper. In addition to these top-picks, the shop had yellowtail, tako (octopus), flounder and grouper in stock when *Dining Out* stopped by.

DINING OUT

COVER STORY

# AUTHENTIC JAPANESE FLAVORS ARRIVE IN HONOLULU

BY ALI RESICH | PHOTOS BY LAWRENCE TABUOLO



Beef  
Curry and  
Rice  
(\$8.50)



Katsu  
Don  
(\$9.50)

For most people in the importing business, price is a key factor when determining which products to ship from point A to B. Industry veteran Hideyoshi Takasawa is known to break away from the norm, however, holding on to a different set of priorities when choosing which edible goods to bring from Japan to sell at his Young Street store J-Shop.

"Lots of people ask, 'Who chooses these products?'" says Takasawa, when describing his Japanese grocery store stocked with 95 percent imported items from Japan. "I do."

Many in the community trust his selections, seeing as he has been importing goods from Japan to Hawaii and the mainland for more than 40 years. Now that he's able to supplement his ongoing job as an importer with a store of his own, he's earned the right to be picky about what he wants to sell — a

good quality to have when you are aiming to share the rich diversity of healthy and high-quality ingredients Japan has to offer with island residents and chefs.

"Sometimes it's hard because for

every item, I find what it contains, who makes it, does it look OK and taste good? Is it organic and what ingredients are they using?" says Takasawa, adding that he constantly flies to Japan to hand-select and

sample the products, keeping his focus on taste rather than price. "That's the kind of research needed."

At J-Shop, the fruits of Takasawa's labor may be found in a finely curated selection of fish, various

cuts of highly rated A5 Wagyu beef, and prime fruits and vegetables, depending on what's available seasonally. The owner and president is able to offer unmatched freshness with his imported goods — items like fish and natto are never frozen — because he has the products flown in three times a week, instead of by lengthy sea freight. As a result, he doesn't need to keep an extensive back stock either, since he's always replenishing shelves with new, fresh merchandise.

A great way to get introduced to



## STRAIGHT A IN QUALITY

J-Shop offers only A5-rated Japanese Wagyu beef, the tip-top rank possible from Japan Meat Grading Association. Some of the qualities on which the meat is rated include color and brightness, firmness, texture and fat marbelization.





Tonkatsu  
Bento  
(\$8.50)



Sashimi  
Bento  
(\$9.75)

Wagyu  
Yakiniku  
Bento  
(\$14.50)

## J-SHOP

1513 Young St., Honolulu | 200-5076  
Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.  
Closed Sunday | jshop-hawaii.com

J-Shop's offerings is through its bento corner, a petite eatery located within the shop that serves affordable meals made with ingredients from the store (open from 10 a.m. to about 3 or 4 p.m.). Those who have never tasted the distinct flavor that comes from the beautifully marbled fat content of Wagyu beef will be in heaven with Wagyu Yakiniku Bento (\$14.50), featuring meat from Japanese cattle. Classics such as Tonkatsu (\$8.50) and Sashimi (\$9.75) bentos also are made fresh there.

"We don't want to pile up the ready-made bentos to just take; no. When people come down and (order), then the chefs are going to start preparing it," explains Takasawa.

Bentos are straightforward with rice and authentic sides, but they're complex in flavor. Patrons enjoy the unique taste Japanese meat brings to Beef Curry and Rice (\$8.50), as well as the sizzling pork perfection of Katsu Don (\$9.50).

The one-and-a-half-year-old shop also offers seasonings not found in other Asian grocers, fresh bread baked specifically for the

shop and an exclusive brand of tofu produced by Aloha Tofu using Japanese soybeans.

While such first-class products can come with a higher price tag at times, Takasawa says his customers immediately taste the difference in the quality and find assurance in the research he has put into his products. In fact, the friendly owner can often be found engaging with his patrons, telling them about a particular piece of red snapper or rare seasoning that has just arrived.

And with that, a true taste of Japan now thrives in Honolulu.

Umeshirasu  
Tsukudani

Clam  
Tsukudani

Kombu, Tarako  
and Clam Tsukudani

### EXCLUSIVE MERCHANDISE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Many of the imported Japanese products sold at J-Shop can't be found elsewhere on Oahu. One such treasure is *tsukudani*, which can be made by stewing various ingredients, from seafood to vegetables, with soy sauce and sugar.

J-Shop owner and president Hideyoshi Takasawa recently brought a variety of *tsukudani*

into the shop, which you'll want to try before they sell out. He advises customers to try it the traditional ways: with sake, on top of warm rice or with boiling water as *ochazuke*.

Some of the *tsukudani* he imported is produced by Shinbasi Tamakiya, a famous Japanese retailer that has been around since 1782.