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Maui June 2023 Blog Post

When folks think of Maui, they think of lounging on sandy beaches, snorkeling with sea turtles, or catching sunrise on the volcano. While there's nothing wrong with the aforementioned activities, there's so much more to discover on the island.

If you want to go a bit off the beaten path—or simply take a break from the sand and waves, look toward Maui's growing farm-to-table scene, and in some cases, farm-directly-into-your-mouth.

Once a year, Maui County Farm Bureau hosts their AgFest, a gathering showcasing 4-H participants and their livestock, alongside local food vendors, farmers, and other companies in the agricultural industry. This event is a favorite amongst locals, which makes it special to attend.

Maui AgFest is an event that inspires attendees to think about where their food comes from, and learning about how growing your own food can help combat climate change. On the island, some produce and grocery store goods come in by barge. Sometimes the same fruits and veggies at a grocery store on Maui is the exact same food that you're finding at your own grocery store at home. This means the fresh produce is picked to optimize for transport, making a long journey from the mainland to Maui. Because of this, Maui AgFest is also a resource for budding farmers and those learning to grow their own food to both reduce carbon emissions and eat more nutritiously.

It's part showcase, part farmers market, and 100% driven by food. You can shop produce from the various farm stands. You can learn about the challenges of farming on Maui. Many agricultural resources give away free seed packets for residents to begin their own gardens.

Lastly, you can eat. There are a number of delicious food trucks, each sounding incredibly delicious. Don't sleep on the garlic noodles, and grab a popsicle or lemonade if you're feeling a little toasty. Maui AgFest is also home to an event called the Grand Taste, where 11 local chefs prepare a dish and go neck to neck in a competition to be crowned the best chef on island. Attendees sample each chef's meal and cast a vote to determine a winner. Grand Taste is a great way to sample a big budget meal at a fraction of the cost.

Maui AgFest isn't the only way to support local farmers and food. There are a number of farmers markets and fruit stands across the island, like Farmers Market Maui, Olowalu Farmers Market, and Yee's Orchard and Fruit Stand. There are so many small farm stands on the side of the road, just keep your eyes peeled. If you're looking for local, fresh, juicy, sweet fruit, these are the places to stop and stock up. Don't miss the apple bananas, strawberry papaya, and goldenglow mangos—all fruit you won't be able to find outside of Hawaii.

If you want to take it a step further, several farms open their doors to visitors. Take a tour and chocolate tasting at Maui Ku'ia Estate Chocolate. At Maui Ku'ia Estate Chocolate, cocoa plants are grown against all odds in the harsh, desert climate of Lāhainā. The processing facility is just down the street from the farm, and it also happens to be where your tour begins and ends, making it incredibly local. Maui Ku'ia Estate Chocolate also donates proceeds from chocolate sales to various nonprofits on the island.

Ocean Organic Farm and Distillery grows and distills on the slopes of Haleakalā in Kula. Acres of sugar cane are processed into high-end liquors. If you're hungry after your distillery tour and tasting, the Cafe at the Point offers delicious food and even more delicious cocktails, with jaw dropping views of the Kahalawai (West Maui mountains).

Ali'i Lavender Farm is another option if you're looking for less of a tour and more of a place to wander. The farm offers several acres of lavender plants, nooks and crannies with oddities, and various other plants and produce. Also situated in the cooler climate of the slopes of Haleakalā, this is a great spot to beat the heat. The farm offers plenty of seating areas for you to hang out. A nearby paragliding guide operation means you'll see people gliding through the air at times. The location has incredible views. Grab some lavender lemonade or tea for your wander. You won't regret it.

Determined to have both a beach vacation and conscious food adventure? These restaurants across the island source ingredients as locally and sustainably as possible.

Vana Paia prepares Japanese food with a Hawaiian twist. The menu constantly changes as different veggies become available when the season changes. They source all of their ingredients on the island, guaranteeing the freshest fish and produce in each bite. Don't miss the cocktails either!

Paia Fish Market is smack in the middle of Pā'ia. Don't be deterred by the occasional long lines. With produce and fish sourced as locally as possible and large portions, Paia Fish Market is worth the wait.

Is it a Hawaii vacation if you didn't enjoy some shave ice? Ululani's Shave Ice's slogan is "All shave ice is not created equal", and they were not lying. When they say shave ice, they mean the lightest, and fluffiest shave. Each syrup is created with pure cane sugar, using local fruit juices, and the ice cream and mochi add-ons are sourced from local Maui businesses. Ululani's Shave Ice is truly a treat.

100% sustainable and certified ocean-friendly, Seascape Restaurant supports local farmers and island sustainability. The menu showcases seasonal produce, Hawaii's canoe crops brought by Polynesians centuries ago, and fish sourced directly from Ma'alaea Harbor. Seascape Restaurant is attached to Maui Ocean Center, so grab a bite, then pop over to learn more about Maui's history and oceans, which are inextricably linked together.

If you want to know specifically where your food comes from, Island Fresh Cafe has it all listed on the menu. From Maui beef, to Maui bananas and other fruit, to Moloka'i sweet potato, this restaurant really emphasizes the fresh in its name.

Hula Grill might be in a touristy location but the food is anything but! Local fishermen and farmers deliver line-caught fish and fresh produce to this beachside restaurant daily. The menu celebrates local farmers with dishes created around their produce. You cannot go wrong with the poke tacos and a mai tai.

For a midday cocktail and snack break, look no further than Esters Fair Prospect. This woman-owned bar serves farm to table small bites and has an extensive cocktail menu. The bartenders are incredibly knowledgeable and can craft you something off-menu if you're craving something different. Esters is the perfect spot to stop in after hiking 'Īao Valley State Monument Park or a long day at the beach.

Maui isn't just a beach destination. With a growing local farm-to-table food scene, it's also a destination for foodies.

Scroll down for images.



Ocean Organic Vodka



Maui AgFest



Hula Grill



Ocean Organic Vodka



Maui Ku'ia Estate Chocolate Tour



Ocean Organic Vodka



Maui Ku'ia Estate Chocolate



Ali'i Kula Lavendar Farm





Maui AgFest