

**Cook**

# Hawaiian

**in America**

Recipes with love from

**The Robot Book  
Club**

# **Cook Hawaiian in America**

*Authentic Island Flavors for the Mainland Kitchen*

The Robot Book Club

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# Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Hawaiian Home Cooking.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

# Prologue

Forget the postcards, the staged luaus, and anything wearing a plastic lei. This isn't a souvenir. This is about Hawai'i, the real one, the one locals live. It's where the ancestral, sacred *poi* and *laulau* of the Kānaka Maoli converge with the vibrant, unapologetic fusion forged in plantation fields—the *Local food* that fuels the islands today. This book isn't for tourists; it's for those who know the difference.

For anyone who's moved stateside, the yearning for true island *grindz* is a visceral ache. It's not a craving for an idealized vacation, but a deep, primal hunger for the taste of home, of family, of memories simmering in a pot. It's Auntie's macaroni salad, perfectly soft and tangy, or the tender, smoky promise of *kalua pig*—flavors that tether you to an identity, to a community, even thousands of miles away. It's a culinary lifeline, a quiet defiance against homogenization in America.

This cookbook understands that challenge. It acknowledges the specific alchemy required to coax those exact flavors from a standard mainland kitchen using accessible ingredients. We're talking the crucial Best Foods mayonnaise, a slow cooker working the magic of an *imu*, and the utterly essential *nori komi furikake* to crown a snack. No apologies for the pragmatic methods, only reverence for the authentic results.

What follows is a roadmap to that taste, to those memories. From the daily rhythm of the *Plate Lunch* to the communal spirit of the *Ohana Potluck*, these chapters are designed to bring the true heart of Hawaiian local cooking to your table. Go on, get your hands dirty. Cook. Remember. Taste the Hawai'i you know, wherever you are. It's profoundly *ono*, this much is guaranteed.



# Two Scoop Rice: The Daily Plate Lunch Rhythms

*Core weeknight dinners replicating the ubiquitous local plate lunch, featuring accessible proteins and the strict, immutable rules for authentic Hawaiian macaroni salad.*

The plate lunch is the undisputed, blue-collar engine of the islands. It's not a luau; there are no grass skirts here. It is the daily fuel of the mechanic, the auntie, the surfer, and the kid walking home from school. The architecture is sacred and immutable: two heavy scoops of hot white rice, a tight dome of

macaroni salad—overcooked pasta, aggressive amounts of Best Foods mayonnaise, zero high-minded mainland embellishments—and a protein that brings the noise.

These are the rhythms of a local weeknight, reproduced in whatever kitchen you find yourself. The crackle of mochiko chicken hitting hot oil, the sharp, vinegary sting of chicken adobo reducing in the pot, the charred, sweet-savory smoke of huli huli. This is pure sustenance. This is home. Just don't mess with the mac salad.





# Hawaiian Macaroni Salad

If you order a plate lunch anywhere in Hawaii, you're guaranteed three things: a styrofoam clamshell, two scoops of sticky rice, and one perfect scoop of mac salad. To the uninitiated mainlander, it might look like standard picnic fare, but one bite reveals a creamy, deeply savory side dish that operates on a completely different plane of existence. The secret isn't found in tossing in chunks of pineapple—a cardinal sin. The magic lies in three absolute mandates from the local aunties who perfected it: you must aggressively overcook the pasta so it drinks the dressing, you must grate the onion to an invisible pulp, and you absolutely must use Best Foods mayonnaise. Serve it ice-cold right next to something hot, salty, and charred.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	dry elbow macaroni	<b>1/4 cup</b>	whole milk
<b>1/4 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1 1/2 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 med</b>	sweet yellow onion <i>peeled and grated to a fine liquid pulp</i>	<b>2 tsp</b>	Kosher salt
<b>2 med</b>	carrots <i>peeled and finely shredded</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>2 1/2 cup</b>	Best Foods or Hellmann's mayonnaise <i>divided</i>	<b>5 oz</b>	canned albacore tuna in water <i>thoroughly drained and flaked to a fine dust (optional)</i>

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the macaroni three to four minutes past the package instructions.**  
Ignore the Italian rules of al dente; you want the elbows fat, puffy, and soft enough to act as a porous sponge for the dressing.
- 2. Drain the hot pasta and immediately toss it with the apple cider vinegar.**  
Do not rinse the noodles. Tossing them while they are still steaming hot forces the expanding starches to drink the acid, flavoring the pasta from the inside out and preventing the milk from curdling later.
- 3. Whisk two cups of the mayonnaise with the milk, grated onion pulp, sugar, salt, and pepper.**  
Stir until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture is silky. If you are using the local secret of adding canned tuna, fold the highly flaked fish into the dressing now.
- 4. Fold the mayonnaise dressing and shredded carrots into the cooled macaroni.**  
Gently mix until every noodle is coated. It will look overly wet and soupy at this stage, which is exactly what you want.
- 5. Cover tightly and refrigerate for at least four hours.**  
This resting phase is non-negotiable. It gives the thirsty macaroni time to absorb the massive amount of dressing, though leaving it overnight is the true local way.

**1. Stir in the reserved half cup of mayonnaise just before serving.**

The salad will look a bit dry or clumpy after its rest; folding in the last bit of mayonnaise restores that luxurious, scoopable texture.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The mayonnaise brand is a non-negotiable law.**

Authentic local flavor strictly dictates Best Foods (sold as Hellmann's east of the Rockies). Sweeter brands like Kewpie or spiced ones like Miracle Whip will completely ruin the flavor profile.

● **Grate the onion, do not chop it.**

Chopped onions create a raw, crunchy bite that disrupts the smooth texture. Grating the onion to a liquid pulp infuses the entire emulsion with savory depth without the harshness.

● **Embrace the cross-contamination.**

When plating, allow the savory, sugary drippings from your teriyaki beef or kalbi to bleed into the cold mac salad. The contrast is a profound culinary pleasure.



## Quick Local-Style Teri Beef

The smell of shoyu and sugar caramelizing on a searing hot griddle is the undeniable scent of a Hawaiian weekend. Born on the sugar plantations when Japanese immigrants adapted their traditional fish glazes to include abundant local cane sugar and robust aromatics, this working-class staple isn't the sticky, cornstarch-laden mall food you find on the mainland. It is a fast, savory-sweet flash in the pan that relies on just a few perfect ingredients and high heat. Serve it with two scoops of sticky rice to soak up the juices, and a scoop of creamy mac salad to balance the salt.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	beef loin flap meat or flank steak	<b>1 inch piece</b>	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely grated</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	Aloha shoyu	<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil
<b>1/2 cup</b>	cane sugar	<b>1 tsp</b>	toasted sesame oil
<b>3 med cloves</b>	garlic <i>peeled and finely grated</i>	<b>2 med</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>
		<b>2 cup</b>	medium-grain white rice <i>steamed</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Chill the beef for razor-thin slicing.**

Place your cut of beef in the freezer for 30 to 45 minutes until firm to the touch but not frozen solid, then use a very sharp chef's knife to slice it against the grain into thin strips about 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Dissolve the sugar into the marinade.**

In a large bowl, combine the shoyu, sugar, grated garlic, grated ginger, and one tablespoon of neutral oil, whisking vigorously until you can no longer feel the grit of the sugar at the bottom of the bowl.

- 2. Coat and marinate the beef.**

Add the thinly sliced beef to the marinade and toss well to ensure every single slice is coated. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 to 45 minutes for a quick weeknight meal, or up to 24 hours for the deepest flavor.

- 3. Get the pan smoking hot.**

Heat a large cast-iron skillet or carbon-steel flat-top griddle over medium-high to high heat and add a thin sheen of neutral oil.

**1. Flash sear the beef in batches.**

Once the oil is shimmering and just beginning to smoke, use tongs to lay the beef slices flat in the pan without crowding them. Let cook undisturbed for 1 to 2 minutes until a dark, caramelized crust forms, then flip and cook for one more minute before transferring to a platter.

**2. Serve immediately with the daily plate lunch rhythms.**

Pile the hot beef next to two generous scoops of sticky white rice and garnish with a sprinkle of green onions.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Adjusting mainland soy sauce.**

Authentic Hawaiian food relies on Aloha brand shoyu, which is lighter and slightly sweeter than standard mainland soy sauces. If you only have Kikkoman, dilute a half cup of it with two tablespoons of water and add an extra tablespoon of sugar to replicate the local island flavor profile.

● **The pineapple tenderizer trick.**

If you are utilizing a very cheap, tough cut of meat like a bottom round, add a quarter cup of canned pineapple juice to the marinade. The natural bromelain enzyme will break down the tough proteins, but do not marinate longer than four hours or the meat will turn to mush.

● **Boiling down the leftover marinade for sauce.**

Traditional Teri Beef is not meant to swim in gravy, but if you want extra sauce to drizzle over your rice, pour the leftover marinade into a small saucepan. Boil it vigorously for 3 full minutes to kill bacteria, then thicken it with a slurry of one tablespoon cornstarch mixed with one tablespoon cold water until glossy.



# Meat Jun

육전

*yuk-jeon*

Meat Jun is a masterclass in immigrant ingenuity. When early Korean plantation workers in Hawaii couldn't find the resources for traditional ceremonial yukjeon, they adapted. They took cheap, paper-thin beef, soaked it in a sweet, garlicky shoyu marinade born of the local teriyaki culture, and fried it in a traditional egg batter to stretch the protein and feed a hungry family. The result is a profoundly nostalgic, savory-sweet envelope of pure plate-lunch comfort. The secret isn't some mythical island ingredient; it's the technique. Shaking off the excess flour ensures the egg clings like a second skin, trapping the juices inside.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	beef (ribeye, top sirloin, or bulgogi cut) <i>thinly sliced (1/8-inch thick)</i>	<b>4 large</b>	eggs <i>beaten very well</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	soy sauce	<b>3 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil <i>plus more as needed for frying</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	water	<b>1/4 cup</b>	soy sauce
<b>1/3 cup</b>	granulated or light brown sugar	<b>2 tbsp</b>	rice vinegar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	toasted sesame oil	<b>1 tbsp</b>	sugar
<b>3 med</b>	garlic cloves <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	toasted sesame oil
<b>2 med</b>	scallions <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	gochugaru (Korean chili flakes) <i>or standard red pepper flakes</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1 med</b>	scallion <i>finely chopped</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Freeze and shave the beef if you can't buy it pre-sliced.**

Sourcing 1/8-inch thick beef is the only real barrier to entry here. Asian markets sell perfect 'shabu shabu' cuts, or you can ask a local butcher to run a sirloin through their deli slicer. Otherwise, freeze the steak for 45 minutes until firm and shave it yourself with a sharp chef's knife.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk together the soy sauce, water, sugar, sesame oil, garlic, and scallions, then submerge the beef.**

Let it sit in the fridge for at least an hour. The addition of water is a crucial grandma secret—it prevents the thin beef from curing and becoming overwhelmingly salty if you leave it overnight.

**1. Combine the dipping sauce ingredients and set aside.**

Mixing the second measure of soy sauce, rice vinegar, sugar, sesame oil, gochugaru, and scallion now lets the flavors meld at room temperature while the meat marinates.

**2. Set up a breading station next to your stove with three shallow dishes: the beef, the flour, and the beaten eggs.**

**3. Lift a piece of beef, let the excess marinade drip off, and coat it completely in flour, shaking off the excess vigorously.**

The meat should look dusty, not caked in paste. If there are wet, bald spots, the egg won't stick, and if it's clumpy, the coating turns gummy.

**4. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, dip the floured beef into the egg, and fry for one to two minutes per side.**

You're looking for a bright, golden-yellow egg casing with slightly caramelized brown edges. Don't overcrowd the pan, and wipe it out with a paper towel if the sugar starts to burn between batches.

**5. Drain on paper towels, snip into strips with kitchen shears, and serve immediately.**

This demands a massive mound of hot white rice and a side of mac salad, exactly how they plate it on the islands.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Upgrade the flour for a traditional chew.**

While all-purpose flour is the Hawaiian standard, traditional Korean cooks use sweet rice flour (chapssalgaru) for a subtle, elastic chew. Potato starch also works brilliantly for a slightly crispier edge.



# Hilo Loco Moco

Forget the resort luaus and the plastic leis. If you want to understand the true heart of local Hawaii food, look to the plate lunch, and its undisputed king: the Loco Moco. Born in a rainy, working-class town on the Big Island in 1949 to feed hungry teenagers, this is a masterpiece of immigrant culinary fusion. Recreating it on the mainland isn't about tracking down rare tropical fruit; it's about nailing the exact textures and smells of a Hilo diner on a Tuesday night. That means Japanese sticky rice, a tender panko-laced hamburger patty, a glossy pan gravy built right out of the beef drippings, and a sunny-side-up egg. It is pure, working-class weeknight salvation.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 cup</b>	cooked short-grain or medium-grain rice <i>kept warm</i>	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	black pepper
<b>1 lb</b>	ground chuck	<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil
<b>1/4 cup</b>	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>divided</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	panko breadcrumbs	<b>1/2 cup</b>	sweet onion <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>1 large</b>	large egg	<b>1 cup</b>	button mushrooms <i>sliced</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	soy sauce <i>divided</i>	<b>2 cup</b>	beef broth
<b>2 tsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce <i>divided</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	beef bouillon paste
<b>1 tbsp</b>	ketchup	<b>2 tbsp</b>	cornstarch <i>mixed with 2 tbsp cold water</i>
<b>1 small clove</b>	garlic <i>minced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	heavy cream
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>4 large</b>	large eggs
		<b>2 med</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare the rice.**

Rinse the Calrose rice under cold water until it runs clear, and start it in the rice cooker before you begin prepping the beef patties.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix and form the patties.**

In a large bowl, gently mix the ground beef, diced yellow onion, panko, the single egg, 1 tablespoon of soy sauce, 1 teaspoon of Worcestershire, ketchup, garlic, salt, and pepper. Do not overwork the meat. Divide into 4 equal portions, form into half-inch thick patties, and press your thumb into the center of each to create a shallow indent so they don't dome while cooking.

**1. Sear the meat.**

Heat the neutral oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Sear the patties for 3 to 4 minutes per side until a deep, dark crust forms. Transfer to a plate and cover loosely with foil, ensuring you leave all the rendered fat and browned bits in the pan.

**2. Sauté the gravy aromatics.**

Lower the heat to medium and melt 1 tablespoon of butter into the beef drippings. Add the sliced sweet onions and mushrooms, cooking for 3 to 5 minutes until softened and scraping up the beefy fond.

**3. Build and thicken the pan gravy.**

Pour in the beef broth, bouillon paste, remaining 1 tablespoon of soy sauce, and remaining 1 teaspoon of Worcestershire sauce. Bring to a simmer, then whisk in the cornstarch slurry. Cook for 60 seconds until the liquid thickens into a rich, glossy brown gravy. Turn off the heat and stir in the heavy cream.

**4. Fry the eggs.**

In a separate non-stick skillet, melt the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter over medium-low heat. Fry the four eggs sunny-side up until the whites are fully set but the yolks remain completely runny.

**5. Assemble the Loco Moco.**

Place a generous, flat mound of sticky rice in the center of each plate and top with a beef patty. Ladle a heavy pour of hot gravy over the meat so it cascades down and soaks into the rice, then carefully crown with a fried egg and garnish with green onions.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Sourcing the right rice.**

A canonical Loco Moco strictly requires short-grain Japanese or medium-grain Calrose rice. Standard long-grain white rice or Jasmine will not hold the gravy properly and ruins the structural integrity of the dish.

- **Shoyu versus soy sauce.**

Local Hawaii recipes rely on Aloha brand shoyu, which is slightly sweeter and less aggressively salty than mainland equivalents. If you can't find it at an Asian market, standard low-sodium soy sauce is a perfectly acceptable weeknight substitute.

- **How to eat it.**

Do not be polite. Break the egg yolk immediately and mix a little bit of the liquid gold, the brown gravy, the beef, and the rice together in every single bite.



## Mochiko Fried Chicken

If there's a dish that instantly yanks a local kid back to the islands, it's Mochiko Chicken. Born from Japanese plantation workers adapting their heritage to the realities of a new world, this isn't Southern fried chicken, and it certainly isn't Tokyo karaage. The secret is the mochiko—a sweet glutinous rice flour that, when whisked into a wet marinade with soy sauce and sugar, creates a crust that is shatteringly crisp and unmistakably chewy. There are no fussy breading stations here, no culinary school pretension. Just mix it, let it sit, fry it hard, and serve it with two scoops of rice. It's a masterpiece of working-class utility, and exactly what home tastes like.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 lb</b>	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>trimmed of excess fat and cut into 1 1/2-inch bite-sized pieces</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	mochiko flour	<b>5 med cloves</b>	garlic <i>finely minced</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	cornstarch	<b>1 tsp</b>	fresh ginger <i>grated</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	soy sauce	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/4 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	toasted sesame seeds
<b>2 large</b>	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>	<b>2 qt</b>	neutral oil

## PREPARATION

- **Plan ahead for the overnight marinade.**

While you can technically fry this after 4 hours, doing it the local way means mixing the batter the night before. Frying it off the next day takes barely twenty minutes and yields a much better crust.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the wet batter together.**

In a large bowl, combine the mochiko, cornstarch, soy sauce, sugar, eggs, green onions, garlic, ginger, salt, and sesame seeds. Whisk vigorously until the slurry is entirely smooth and no dry lumps remain.

- 2. Coat the chicken.**

Add the chicken pieces to the bowl. Use your hands or a large spoon to thoroughly toss the meat, ensuring every single piece is heavily coated in the thick batter.

**1. Let it marinate in the refrigerator.**

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours, or ideally overnight. This extended time allows the starches to fully hydrate so the batter tightly clings to the chicken during frying.

**2. Set up a wire rack and bring the chicken to room temperature.**

Pull the chicken out of the fridge 20 minutes before cooking to take the chill off. Set a wire cooling rack over a baking sheet. Never use paper towels for draining, as they trap steam and ruin the delicate crunch.

**3. Heat the frying oil.**

Fill a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven or pot with about two inches of neutral oil. Heat over medium until a thermometer registers 325°F. Do not let it get too hot, or the high sugar content in the batter will burn before the chicken cooks through.

**4. Fry the chicken in batches.**

Give the batter one last stir to redistribute any settled starches. Lift the chicken pieces one by one, letting the massive excess drip off, and gently lower them into the oil. Fry 6 to 8 pieces at a time for 5 to 7 minutes, turning occasionally, until deeply golden brown and 165°F inside.

**5. Rest the chicken on the wire rack.**

Transfer the fried chicken to the prepared wire rack. Let it cool for 5 to 10 minutes to allow the crust to set and shatter perfectly when bitten. Serve hot with steamed white rice.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Memorize the grandma ratio.**

The brilliance of this dish lies in its mathematical simplicity. For every two pounds of chicken, use exactly 1/4 cup each of mochiko, cornstarch, soy sauce, and sugar. It is perfectly balanced and infinitely scalable.

- **Use the right flour.**

Seek out Koda Farms 'Blue Star' Mochiko in the Asian aisle. Do not substitute regular wheat flour or standard non-glutinous rice flour; the sweet, chewy texture of mochiko is the entire soul of the recipe.



# Huli Huli Chicken

*hoo-lee hoo-lee*

If you grew up anywhere near a Hawaiian community, your weekends were scented with the intoxicating, sweet smoke of Huli Huli chicken. Born in the fifties as a fundraising staple, locals would set up massive grills in school parking lots, flipping giant grates of chicken over glowing kiawe wood coals. You'd hand over a ticket and walk away with a greasy, smoky half-chicken that tasted like absolute heaven. You don't need a parking lot or exotic island wood to make this at home; the magic lies in a classic local fusion of Japanese shoyu, fresh ginger, mainland ketchup, and the technique of relentless turning. Just heed Grandma's golden rule: use pasteurized canned pineapple juice, or the fresh enzymes will turn your bird into unpalatable mush.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 lb</b>	bone-in skin-on chicken thighs	<b>2 tbsp</b>	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely grated</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	canned pineapple juice	<b>4 med cloves</b>	garlic <i>minced</i>
<b>3/4 cup</b>	low-sodium soy sauce	<b>1 tsp</b>	toasted sesame oil
<b>3/4 cup</b>	ketchup	<b>1 cup</b>	mesquite wood chips <i>soaked in water for 30 minutes</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	light brown sugar <i>packed</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	applewood chips <i>soaked in water for 30 minutes</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	unseasoned rice vinegar		

## PREPARATION

- **Whisk together the master marinade.**

In a large bowl, combine the canned pineapple juice, soy sauce, ketchup, brown sugar, rice vinegar, grated ginger, minced garlic, and sesame oil. Whisk vigorously until the brown sugar is completely dissolved.

- **Reserve the clean basting glaze.**

Before the raw chicken comes anywhere near the bowl, measure out exactly 1 cup of the marinade and store it in the refrigerator. This is your clean baste for the grill; you cannot baste with the contaminated liquid the raw chicken soaked in.

- **Marinate the chicken thighs.**

Submerge the chicken in the remaining marinade, toss to coat, and seal in a heavy-duty bag. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to 8 hours. Do not exceed 24 hours, or the heavy sodium in the soy sauce will begin to cure the meat.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Set up your grill for two-zone cooking.**

You need a medium-high direct heat side and a cooler indirect side. If using charcoal, bank all the lit coals to one side. Scatter the soaked mesquite and applewood chips directly over the heat source to generate that crucial sweet smoke.

### 2. **Sear the chicken over direct heat.**

Remove the chicken from the marinade, let the excess drip off, and completely discard the used marinade. Place the thighs skin-side down directly over the flames for 3 to 5 minutes to render the fat and establish strong grill marks. Keep an eye out for flare-ups from the rendered fat.

### 3. **Move to indirect heat and begin the huli.**

Transfer the chicken to the cooler, indirect side of the grill, turning them skin-side up. Brush the meat generously with the clean, reserved cup of marinade and close the lid to capture the smoke.

### 4. **Turn and baste every five minutes.**

Every five minutes, you must huli (turn) the chicken. Flip the pieces, paint the newly exposed side with the reserved glaze, and close the lid. Repeat this relentless process for 20 to 25 minutes to build up a thick, sticky, caramelized lacquer without scorching the sugar.

### 5. **Test for doneness and rest.**

The chicken is ready when an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reads 165°F to 175°F. Pull the chicken, tent it loosely with foil, and let it rest for 10 minutes before serving alongside two scoops of sticky white rice and a generous mound of creamy macaroni salad.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Pineapple Imperative.**

Never use fresh pineapple juice for this marinade. Fresh pineapple contains bromelain, an active enzyme that will rapidly digest the meat proteins and turn your chicken into a chalky, unpalatable mush. Pasteurized canned juice tenderizes the meat perfectly without destroying its structural integrity.

- **The Winter Oven Hack.**

When a Midwestern winter prevents outdoor grilling, bake the chicken at 400°F. Place the thighs on an oiled wire rack set inside a foil-lined baking sheet for 35 to 40 minutes, turning and basting every 10 minutes. Finish them under the broiler for 2 minutes to simulate the grill char, adding a half teaspoon of liquid smoke to your reserved baste if desired.



# Hawaiian-Style Pineapple Chicken Adobo

*ah-doh-bong mah-nok sah peen-yah*

Adobo is a brilliant, brutally pragmatic survival mechanism from the old country—a way to preserve meat in tropical heat using vinegar and salt. But when Filipino plantation workers arrived in Hawaii, their beloved adobo met Japanese shoyu and the island's endless fields of pineapple. The secret to making it taste exactly like it did at the plate lunch counter comes down to three unshakable rules: sear the chicken until golden, use whole peppercorns, and never, ever stir the pot right after you pour in the vinegar. You let it boil untouched so the harsh acid cooks off, leaving behind a sticky, savory, sweet-and-sour glaze that demands to be eaten over a massive scoop of hot white rice.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	bone-in skin-on chicken thighs and drumsticks	<b>1 small piece</b>	fresh ginger <i>peeled and sliced into thick coins</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	Aloha Shoyu or low-sodium soy sauce	<b>1 tsp</b>	whole black peppercorns
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>4 med</b>	dried bay leaves
<b>20 oz</b>	canned pineapple chunks in juice <i>juice and chunks separated</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	brown sugar
<b>1 med head</b>	garlic <i>peeled and roughly smashed</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil
		<b>1/2 cup</b>	water
		<b>2 med</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Marinate the chicken to infuse the flavor.**

In a large bowl, combine the chicken, soy sauce, apple cider vinegar, reserved pineapple juice, smashed garlic, ginger, whole peppercorns, bay leaves, and brown sugar. Toss to coat and marinate in the refrigerator for 1 to 3 hours, but no longer, or the pineapple enzymes will turn the meat to mush.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sear the chicken skin-side down to build the foundation.**

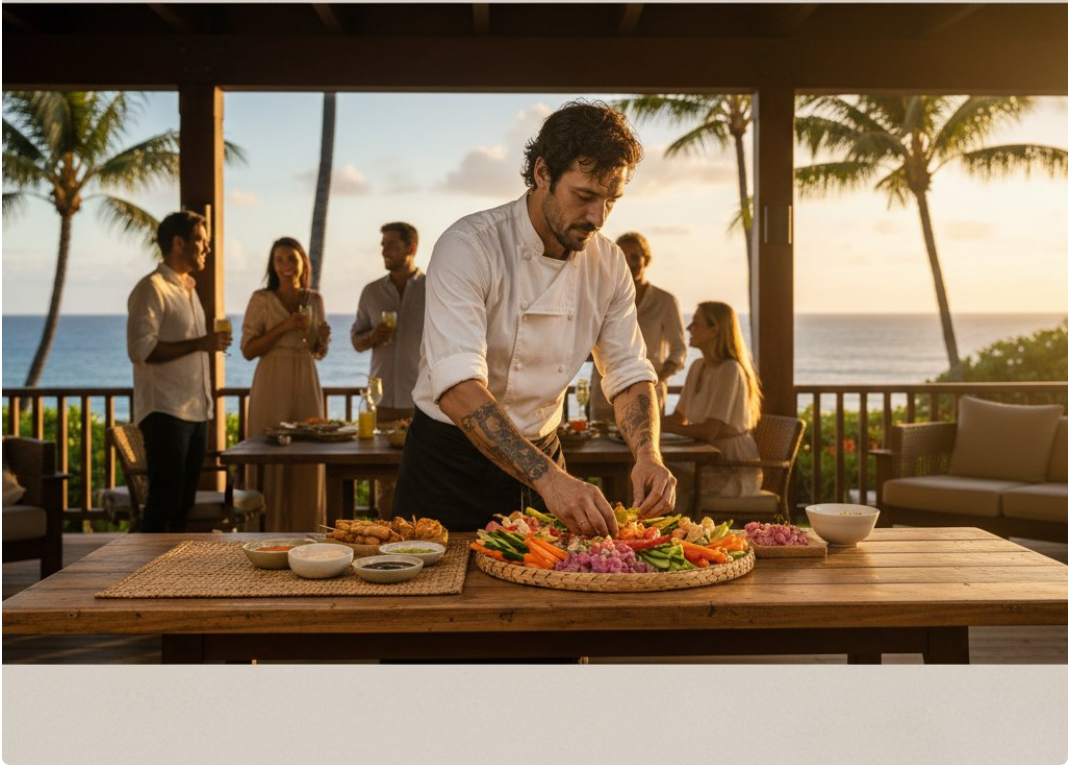
Remove the chicken from the marinade, reserving all the liquid and aromatics, and pat the skin relatively dry. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat, and sear the chicken in batches for 4 to 6 minutes until deeply golden-brown, then flip for 2 minutes and transfer to a plate.

- 1. Boil the reserved marinade without stirring to mellow the vinegar.**  
Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of rendered chicken fat from the pot, then pour in the reserved marinade along with all the garlic, ginger, and spices. Bring to a rapid boil and let it boil completely untouched for 3 to 4 minutes to cook the raw edge off the acetic acid.
- 2. Simmer the chicken gently until incredibly tender.**  
Stir the bubbling liquid, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom, and nestle the chicken back in skin-side up. Add the water, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes.
- 3. Fold in the reserved pineapple chunks and reduce the sauce.**  
Remove the lid and, if the sauce is watery, boil it over medium-high heat for a few minutes to concentrate the flavors. Stir in the pineapple chunks and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes to heat them through without turning them to mush.
- 4. Serve immediately over massive scoops of hot white rice.**  
Discard the bay leaves and ginger slices, spoon the dark, sticky adobo glaze generously over the chicken and rice, and garnish with sliced green onions.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Don't skimp on the whole peppercorns.**  
Biting into a softened whole peppercorn is a nostalgic hallmark of an authentic adobo; do not substitute with ground black pepper.
- **Leftovers are even better.**  
Adobo functions chemically as a preservation method, meaning the flavors meld and deepen beautifully in the fridge for up to 4 days.





# Pau Hana: Sunset Bites & The Pūpū Platter

*Quick late-afternoon snacks and appetizers to celebrate the end of the workday, perfect for happy hour spreads and weekend grazing.*

The workday ends, the sun dips, and the real business of living begins. Pau hana isn't a mere happy hour; it's a hard-earned exhale. The cooler cracks open in the driveway, the folding chairs come out, and the pūpū platter hits the table.

No pineapple wedges or paper umbrellas here. This is salty, fatty, unapologetic sustenance.

It's a warm slab of Spam musubi fresh from the pan, the sharp, icy bite of lomi salmon, and ahi poke piled ruthlessly onto crispy chips. These aren't fussy canapés. They are the essential, deeply satisfying bites that fuel the transition from the daily grind to the sanctuary of the evening—engineered for maximum pleasure with whatever you can find at the local mainland grocer, best shared with cold beer and the people who matter.





# Spam Musubi

Spam Musubi is the undisputed king of Hawaiian comfort food. Born out of wartime rationing when fresh fish was heavily restricted, the Japanese-Hawaiian diaspora applied their traditional knowledge of portable onigiri to military-issued canned pork. Today, it's the ultimate working-class snack, found at every local gas station and beach potluck. For a first-generation American longing for the tastes of a Hawaiian childhood, this is exactly what it tastes like at home. No fancy sushi vinegar, no complex marinades—just the magic of salty rendered meat, sweet shoyu glaze, and a warm, blank canvas of sticky white rice.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>12 oz</b>	Spam (25% Less Sodium) <i>sliced lengthwise into 8 even slabs</i>	<b>2 sheet</b>	roasted nori <i>cut lengthwise into 4 strips each</i>
<b>2 cup</b>	medium-grain or short-grain white rice <i>rinsed well, cooked, and kept warm</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	shoyu or soy sauce
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark brown sugar <i>packed</i>
		<b>1 tbsp</b>	furikake seasoning

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare the free musubi mold.**

You do not need a special acrylic press to make this dish. Thoroughly wash and dry the empty Spam can, then line the inside with a large piece of plastic cling wrap, leaving plenty of overhang.

- **Whisk the glaze.**

In a small bowl, whisk together the shoyu and dark brown sugar until the sugar is mostly dissolved.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Crisp the meat naked.**

Place the Spam slices in a large dry skillet over medium-high heat. Fry them without any added oil until they develop a beautiful, crispy golden-brown crust, about 3 minutes per side. Do not add the sauce yet, or the high sugar content will quickly burn.

- 2. Simmer the sticky island glaze.**

Turn the heat down to medium-low and pour the shoyu-sugar mixture directly over the meat. It will bubble furiously; let it reduce for 1 to 2 minutes, flipping the slices so they act like sponges, soaking up the dark, sticky, caramelized syrup before removing the pan from the heat.

## 1. Engineer the rice block.

Lay a strip of nori on your cutting board, shiny side down. Place your plastic-lined Spam can directly in the center of the strip, scoop about 1/3 cup of warm rice into the can, and press it down firmly with wet fingers until it forms a tight, flat block. It needs to hold its shape, but don't mash it into a dense paste.

## 2. Assemble and wrap.

Sprinkle a pinch of furikake over the compressed rice, then lay a warm, glazed slice of Spam directly on top. Pull the edges of the plastic wrap upward to lift the perfect block out of the can, set it back on the nori, and fold the seaweed ends tightly over the meat. Seal the seam with a single grain of cooked rice or a dab of water.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Respect the unseasoned rice.**

A common mainlander mistake is treating musubi like sushi and adding vinegar to the rice. Don't do it. The beauty of this dish relies on the intense savory-sweet meat contrasting against pure, plain, unseasoned white rice.

- **Use Calrose, never long-grain.**

Long-grain rice like Jasmine lacks the starch content to stick together. Medium-grain Calrose rice is widely available in mainland supermarkets and is exactly what you need to keep the musubi from crumbling in your hands.

- **Reviving day-old musubi.**

The rice will naturally harden in the refrigerator overnight. To bring it back to life, leave the musubi wrapped in plastic, drape a slightly damp paper towel over it, and microwave for 30 to 45 seconds until the steam restores the sticky texture.



## Small-Kid Time Shoyu Hot Dogs

In Hawaii, "small-kid time" means childhood, and nothing evokes the latchkey ingenuity of the islands quite like these sticky, savory hot dogs. Born in the Japanese-style delicatessens of the plantation era, the dish takes a wildly unpretentious American staple and treats it to a classic teriyaki-style reduction. There are no pineapples or macadamia nuts here. This is simply a fiercely beloved, grandmother-approved technique of frying meat on the bias and letting soy sauce and brown sugar bubble into a dark, clinging glaze. It requires fifteen minutes, a few pantry staples, and exactly zero pretense.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>16 oz</b>	hot dogs	<b>1/4 cup</b>	brown sugar <i>firmly packed</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral oil	<b>2 med</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh ginger <i>minced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	toasted sesame seeds
<b>1/4 cup</b>	Japanese-style soy sauce		

## PREPARATION

- **Slice the hot dogs on the bias.**

Hold a knife at a steep forty-five-degree angle and cut the hot dogs into elongated oval pieces to maximize the surface area for the glaze to cling to.

- **Mince the ginger.**

Peel and finely mince enough fresh ginger to yield one tablespoon.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sear the hot dogs in a hot skillet.**

Place a medium skillet over medium-high heat with the neutral oil, adding the hot dogs in an even layer to cook undisturbed until a deep, blistered crust forms on the bottom.

- 2. Toss and finish browning.**

Toss the hot dogs to sear the other sides for another two minutes until the edges are beautifully caramelized.

- 3. Sauté the aromatics.**

Push the hot dogs to the edges of the pan, drop the minced ginger into the center well, and cook for just under a minute until highly fragrant.

**1. Deglaze the pan with soy sauce and sugar.**

Pour in the soy sauce and brown sugar, stirring constantly to dissolve the sugar, and bring the liquid to a lively bubble. Add a splash of water here only if using a fiercely salty mainland soy sauce.

**2. Reduce to a sticky glaze.**

Lower the heat to medium and let the sauce simmer for three to five minutes, stirring frequently until the water evaporates and the sugars transform into a dark, glossy syrup that tightly coats the meat. Remove from heat immediately to prevent burning.

**3. Garnish and serve.**

Transfer the hot dogs to a platter, drizzle with any remaining sticky glaze from the pan, and scatter the green onions and sesame seeds over the top.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Brand matters, but any good hot dog works.**

Authentic Hawaiian preparations use neon red Redondo's hot dogs, but any high-quality all-beef or pork-and-beef frankfurter from a mainland supermarket perfectly captures the necessary savory snap.

● **Serve over rice or as a snack.**

Plate these hot over steaming short-grain white rice to absorb the excess sweet soy sauce, or pile them on a platter with toothpicks as a casual appetizer.



# Auntie's Kamaboko Dip

*kah-mah-BOH-koh*

In Hawaii, the end of the workday isn't just a time on the clock; it's *pau hana*, a sacred transition marked by cold beers, folding chairs, and the *pūpū* platter. If you find yourself at a backyard barbecue or a beachside potluck, someone's Auntie is guaranteed to have brought a tub of Kamaboko Dip alongside a bright red box of Ritz crackers. It's an unpretentious, brilliant collision of the Japanese diaspora and mid-century American pantry staples. Grating the bouncy, pink-rimmed fish cake into a rich emulsion of cream cheese and mayonnaise creates a profoundly savory spread. But the real secret—the invisible engine that instantly transports this from a mainland kitchen to an Oahu backyard—is a tiny, non-negotiable pinch of *hondashi*.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 oz</b>	pink-rimmed kamaboko <i>removed from wooden base and grated on the large holes of a box grater</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	canned water chestnuts <i>finely diced</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	cream cheese <i>thoroughly softened to room temperature</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced, plus a pinch more for garnish</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	Best Foods mayonnaise	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	hondashi
		<b>1 box</b>	Ritz crackers <i>for serving</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Grate the kamaboko manually.**

Resist the urge to use a food processor, which risks pureeing the fish cake into a gritty paste and destroying its bounce. Using the large holes of a standard box grater yields uniform, pillowy shreds that fold perfectly into the dairy base.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the creamy, umami-rich base.**

In a medium mixing bowl, combine the softened cream cheese and the mayonnaise. Whisk them vigorously until completely smooth and free of lumps. Sprinkle in the hondashi powder and stir to dissolve the savory umami into the fats.

- 2. Fold in the grated fish cake and aromatics.**

Add the grated kamaboko, diced water chestnuts, and sliced green onions to the bowl. Switch to a rubber spatula and gently fold the mixture together until the pink flecks and greens are evenly distributed.

- 3. Chill the dip to marry the flavors.**

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. This chilling period is mandatory—it allows the cream cheese to firm back up slightly and gives the hondashi time to bloom and permeate the dip.

## 1. Garnish and serve.

Transfer the cold dip to a serving bowl, scatter the reserved green onions over the top, and serve alongside a mountain of buttery Ritz crackers.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Mayo Mandate.**

If you live east of the Rocky Mountains, 'Best Foods' mayonnaise is sold under the name 'Hellmann's'. Do not substitute sweet miracle whips or tangy Greek yogurts—the specific savory fat profile of this brand is the backbone of Hawaiian local salads and dips.

- **Sourcing Kamaboko.**

You can find the pink-rimmed semi-circles of kamaboko in the refrigerated section of almost any Asian supermarket across America. If you absolutely cannot find it, substitute an equal weight of high-quality imitation crab meat (surimi), pulled into fine strings and chopped.

- **The Hondashi Secret.**

Hondashi is sold in jars or boxes in the international aisle of most standard supermarkets. Do not skip this; it is the invisible engine of the dish.

- **Auntie's Presentation Trick.**

If you want to impress locals, wash and dry the wooden block that the kamaboko came on. Mound the mixed dip back onto the wooden block, shaping it with a spatula to perfectly resemble a giant, overstuffed version of the original kamaboko dome before chilling.



# Lomi Lomi Salmon

*loh-mee kah-mah-no*

A proper Hawaiian lū'au demands that heavy, smoky pork be balanced by the freezing-cold crunch of Lomi Lomi Salmon. This dish is a beautiful culinary mutt—Pacific Northwest salmon, Spanish tomatoes, and English onions—brought together by Native Hawaiian sailors in the 1800s. The secret isn't a hard-to-find island ingredient; it's a technique. Lomi means to massage. By gently squeezing the tomatoes and onions with your bare hands, you release their juices to create a bright, savory brine. It tastes exactly like home, requires zero actual cooking, and relies on staples you can find in any mainland supermarket.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1/2 lb</b>	Coho or Atlantic salmon fillet <i>skinless, boneless, and patted completely dry</i>	<b>1 med</b>	sweet onion <i>peeled and diced into 1/4-inch cubes</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	coarse sea salt or Kosher salt	<b>1/2 cup</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>3 med</b>	Roma tomatoes <i>cored, seeded, and diced into 1/4-inch cubes</i>	<b>4 large</b>	ice cubes
		<b>1 tsp</b>	Hawaiian chili pepper water or red pepper flakes

## PREPARATION

- **Plan ahead for the cure.**

The salmon requires 24 to 48 hours to cure in the refrigerator before the dish can be assembled.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Cure the salmon.**

Lay the salmon in a small glass dish and pack the coarse salt all over the fish, coating the top, bottom, and sides. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 to 48 hours. The salt will draw out the moisture, firming and preserving the flesh.

- 2. Soak and dice the cured fish.**

Remove the salmon from the fridge and rinse it thoroughly under cold running water to wash away all surface salt. Submerge the fillet in a bowl of ice-cold water for 45 to 60 minutes to draw out the excess salt, then pat dry. Dice the salmon into uniform 1/4-inch cubes, exactly matching the size of your diced tomatoes and onions.

## 1. **Lomi the ingredients.**

Place the diced salmon, tomatoes, and sweet onions into a large glass bowl. Put down the wooden spoon and use your clean hands. Gently squeeze and massage the ingredients together for about a minute to bruise the tomatoes and onions. They will release their cellular water, blending with the salt of the fish to create a natural, savory dressing.

## 2. **Chill and serve over ice.**

Cover the bowl and let it rest in the fridge for at least 1 hour so the flavors marry. Just before serving, fold in the sliced green onions and add the ice cubes directly into the bowl. As the ice melts, it slightly dilutes the saltiness and creates an icy broth at the bottom of the bowl that you will want to drink with a spoon.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Never use iodized table salt for the cure.**

It will impart a harsh, metallic chemical flavor and completely ruin the fish. Stick to coarse sea salt or Kosher salt.

- **Uniformity is everything.**

Take the time to cut the salmon, tomatoes, and onions to the exact same 'pencil-eraser' size so every spoonful yields a perfectly balanced bite.

- **The ice is non-negotiable.**

Lomi Lomi Salmon must be served freezing cold. The melting ice is a crucial ingredient that tempers the salt and creates the signature savory broth.



# Local-Style Spicy Garlic Edamame

When the work is done and the sun dips low in Hawaii, this is what you are handed alongside a cold beer. It is loud, messy, and unapologetically bold—a far cry from the polite, salted pods of traditional Japanese sushi bars. The secret to recreating that authentic, sticky Honolulu bar-snack magic in a mainland kitchen isn't some rare island ingredient; it is pure heat control. You punish the pods in a scorching pan to get that essential wok-char, then drop the heat to gently coax the garlic before deglazing with shoyu. Prepare to get your hands dirty.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	frozen edamame in the pod <i>rinsed under hot tap water and patted completely dry</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	low-sodium soy sauce
<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral oil	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Sambal Oelek
<b>5 large cloves</b>	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	light brown sugar
		<b>1 tsp</b>	toasted sesame oil
		<b>1 pinch</b>	coarse sea salt

## PREPARATION

- **Thaw and dry the pods.**

Run hot tap water over the frozen edamame in a colander for about a minute just to knock off the ice crystals. Shake vigorously, then pat them completely dry with a kitchen towel to prevent painful splattering when they hit the hot oil.

- **Mix the glaze.**

In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, Sambal Oelek, and brown sugar. Set it right next to the stove alongside your minced garlic and sesame oil so you are ready to move fast.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blister the edamame.**

Heat a large, heavy skillet or wok over medium-high heat until it is smoking hot. Add the neutral oil, swirl to coat, and add the dried edamame. Do not stir. Let them sit completely undisturbed for 1 to 2 minutes to develop dark, charred spots, then toss once and char the other side.

- 2. Bloom the garlic.**

Turn the heat down to low. Push the charred pods to the edges of the pan and drop the minced garlic into the center. Let it sizzle for 15 to 30 seconds until intensely fragrant, taking care not to let it brown and turn bitter.

**1. Deglaze and reduce.**

Immediately pour the soy sauce mixture over the edamame. Toss the pods continuously for 30 to 60 seconds as the liquid rapidly boils and reduces into a sticky, glossy glaze that coats every pod.

**2. Finish off the heat.**

Remove the pan from the heat entirely. Drizzle with the toasted sesame oil, toss one last time, and transfer to a serving bowl. Sprinkle with coarse sea salt and serve hot, with an extra bowl on the side for the discarded pods.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The Shoyu Secret.**

Hawaiian cooks swear by Aloha brand shoyu, which is slightly sweeter and less salty than standard mainland soy sauce. Using low-sodium soy sauce with the light brown sugar in this recipe perfectly replicates that island profile.

● **The Umami Upgrade.**

For an even stickier, deeper glaze, stir 1 tablespoon of oyster sauce into your soy sauce mixture before adding it to the pan. It is a classic Chinese-Hawaiian household trick.

● **Dialing back the heat.**

If cooking for kids, simply omit the Sambal Oelek. The garlic, sweet soy sauce, and sesame profile stands beautifully on its own.



# Pipikaula-Style Kalbi

*pee-pee-kow-lah*

Before the plate lunch, there was the paniolo—the Mexican cowboys brought to the islands to wrangle wild cattle, who hung salted beef over their saddles to dry in the trade winds. Generations later, plantation cooks swapped the harsh salt for sweet shoyu and ginger, and modern locals perfected the form by trading tough flank steak for rich, fatty, flanken-cut short ribs. This is the grandma-approved, two-step secret to a proper Honolulu pau hana: an agonizingly slow, low-temp oven dehydration to concentrate the marinade into a sticky lacquer, followed by a screaming hot, last-minute sear. The result is

profoundly savory, sticky-crisp on the outside, and meltingly tender against the bone—the exact taste of a Kalihi sunset, right in your own kitchen.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	flanken-cut bone-in beef short ribs <i>cut between the bones into individual pieces</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh ginger root <i>peeled and finely grated</i>
<b>3/4 cup</b>	Aloha or Kikkoman soy sauce	<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse kosher salt
<b>1/3 cup</b>	dark brown sugar <i>packed</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>6 med</b>	garlic cloves <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	red pepper flakes
		<b>1/2 tsp</b>	hickory liquid smoke

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Whisk together the marinade.

In a large bowl, whisk the soy sauce, brown sugar, garlic, ginger, salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes, and liquid smoke until the sugar is completely dissolved.

### 2. Marinate the beef overnight.

Place the individual short rib pieces into a large heavy-duty zip-top bag, pour the marinade over them, massage to coat, and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours to let the tough meat break down.

### 3. Prepare the oven and drying rack.

Preheat your oven to its lowest possible setting, ideally 170F or 180F. Line a large baking sheet with foil and place a wire cooling rack directly on top.

### 4. Arrange the ribs for dehydration.

Remove the beef from the marinade, shaking off any excess liquid, and arrange the pieces on the wire rack with space between each piece to allow 360-degree air circulation.

**1. Slowly dry the meat in the oven for three to five hours.**

Place the tray in the center of the oven, cracking the door open about an inch with a wooden spoon so moisture can escape. They are ready when tacky and darkened—about 75 percent dry—but still slightly squishy and moist inside.

**2. Flash-fry the ribs right before serving.**

Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat with a drizzle of neutral oil, and sear the semi-dried ribs for 1 to 2 minutes per side until the residual sugars caramelize and the intramuscular fat renders.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Serve it right.**

Serve immediately alongside steamed white rice, an ice-cold beer, and thick slices of raw sweet onion dipped in coarse Hawaiian sea salt to cut the heavy fat.

● **Make it ahead.**

You can do the dehydration step up to a week in advance; just keep the semi-dried ribs in an airtight container in the fridge until you are ready to pan-fry them for happy hour.



## Pūpū-Style Portuguese Sausage & Pineapple Skewers

There is a massive gulf between the flaming, umbrella-laden 'Tiki' food of the mid-century mainland and what locals actually eat in Hawai'i. When it's time for pau hana—the sacred hour to unwind after work—the food needs to be unpretentious, highly satisfying, and rooted in the island's plantation-era melting pot. Portuguese immigrants brought heavily spiced *linguiça* to the islands, where it quickly evolved, mingling with Asian staples like *shoyu* and local cane sugar. This pupu platter mainstay relies on a dead-simple, two-step method: pan-fry the sausage to render the fat, then broil it to caramelize the pineapple. If you're thousands of miles from a market that sells real Hawaiian

brands, the quick shoyu-brown sugar glaze here effortlessly transforms standard mainland smoked sausage straight back into the taste of home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	Hawaiian-style Portuguese sausage or smoked kielbasa <i>sliced on the bias into 1/2-inch pieces</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	brown sugar <i>packed</i>
<b>20 oz</b>	canned pineapple chunks in juice <i>drained, juice reserved</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	shoyu or soy sauce
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	reserved pineapple juice

## PREPARATION

- **Preheat the broiler.**

Move an oven rack to the top position and preheat your broiler to HIGH. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil for easy cleanup.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Render the fat.**

Heat the cooking oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage slices in a single layer and fry for 2 to 3 minutes per side, until the edges crisp and the fat begins to render.

- 2. Glaze the sausage.**

Lower the heat to medium-low. Whisk the brown sugar, shoyu, and reserved pineapple juice in a small bowl, then pour directly over the browned sausage. Toss continuously for 1 to 2 minutes until the liquid reduces into a sticky glaze coating the meat, then remove from heat.

**1. Assemble the skewers.**

Lay the glazed sausage slices flat on the prepared baking sheet. Top each piece with a single pineapple chunk and drive a plain wooden toothpick straight down through the center to secure them.

**2. Broil to caramelize.**

Place the baking sheet under the broiler for 2 to 4 minutes. Watch them closely—you want the edges of the pineapple to just begin to char and the sausage to aggressively sizzle. Let cool for 2 minutes before serving.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Use plain wooden toothpicks.**

Do not use frilly plastic cocktail picks under any circumstances; they will melt into your food under the broiler.

● **The pineapple rule.**

Canned pineapple isn't just a pantry shortcut; it's authentic to local home cooking and avoids the bromelain enzyme found in fresh pineapple, which turns meat to mush if assembled in advance.

● **Mind the sugar.**

When applying the glaze, keep the heat medium-low and the sausage moving. Brown sugar and shoyu will scorch violently in an overheated pan.



# The Backyard Ohana Potluck: Scaling for the Gathering

*Large-format weekend dishes designed to feed a crowd, featuring clever kitchen hacks to replicate traditional lū'au flavors away from the islands.*

The backyard potluck is never just a meal; it is a tactical operation. It is folding tables buckling under the sheer, unapologetic weight of aluminum half-pans, cooler lids snapping shut, and the scent of something profound and slow-

cooked. But what happens when you're stuck in a mainland kitchen, thousands of miles from a proper imu and a steady supply of ti leaves? You don't surrender. You adapt.

You plug in the slow cooker. You hit a cheap pork shoulder with sea salt and liquid smoke, trusting time to do the heavy lifting. You soak the glass noodles for the chicken long rice, and you fold together the ambrosia salad—because somebody's aunty will absolutely notice if the mini marshmallows are missing. These aren't compromises. They are survival mechanisms for feeding the people you love, wherever the hell you happen to be.





# Kalua Pig

*kah-loo-ah poo-ah-ah*

If you ask a Hawaiian grandmother how to make kalua pig without digging a four-foot imu in a suburban backyard, she won't hand you barbecue sauce or pineapple juice. She'll tell you the secret is patience, good salt, and capturing the earthiness of the islands. This canonical adaptation relies on just three mandatory ingredients and the magic of banana leaves, using the steady heat of a slow cooker to perfectly replicate the smoky, vegetative steam of a traditional underground oven while you sleep.

## INGREDIENTS

**5 lb** bone-in pork butt  
*untrimmed*

**1 1/2 tbsp** Hawaiian Alaea red sea salt

**2 tbsp** liquid smoke  
**2 large** banana leaves  
*thawed and wiped clean*

**1 large** green cabbage  
*chopped into 2-inch squares*

## PREPARATION

- **Thaw and clean the banana leaves.**

Frozen banana leaves are readily available at most Asian or Mexican grocers; wipe them with a damp towel to remove any frost or residue before using.

- **Pierce the pork butt relentlessly.**

Use a sharp knife or a carving fork to stab the meat deeply all over, creating channels for the salt and smoke to penetrate.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Season the pork aggressively with liquid smoke and salt.**

Rub the liquid smoke thoroughly over the entire surface of the meat, then massage the Hawaiian Alaea salt directly into the pierced holes and across the fat cap.

- 2. Swaddle the pork in banana leaves inside the slow cooker.**

Line the bottom and sides of your slow cooker insert with the banana leaves. Place the seasoned pork inside, fat-side up, and fold the overhanging leaves over the top to completely envelop the meat.

- 3. Cook on low for twelve to sixteen hours.**

Do not add a single drop of water or broth. The pork will release a massive amount of its own rendered fat and juices as it cooks under the leaves.

- 4. Shred the meat and reintroduce it to its own juices.**

Carefully transfer the pork to a large tray, discarding the leaves and bones. Shred the meat with two forks, then ladle one to two cups of the hot, smoky cooking liquid back over it.

**1. Simmer the cabbage in the remaining pork broth.**

To stretch the dish for a backyard gathering the local way, pile the chopped green cabbage into a large pot. Top it with the shredded pork, pour over another ladle of the slow-cooker juices, and simmer until the cabbage yields.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Leave the fat cap alone.**

The melting fat continuously bastes the meat during the long cook, perfectly replicating the self-basting nature of a whole roasted pig in an imu.

● **Do not add water.**

It feels wrong to turn on a slow cooker completely dry, but trust the process; the pork will surrender plenty of liquid on its own.

● **Respect the minimalist seasoning.**

Resist the mainland urge to add garlic, onions, or soy sauce, as true kalua pig relies entirely on the interplay of pork fat, mineral salt, and hardwood smoke.



# Aunty's Chicken Long Rice

*moh-ah lye-kee loh-loh-ah*

If mainland America has chicken noodle soup, Hawaii has chicken long rice. Born on the sugarcane plantations of the 1800s when Chinese immigrants shared their traditional mung bean soups with Native Hawaiians, this dish quickly evolved into a non-negotiable fixture at any serious backyard lū'au. Despite the name, there is no rice in 'long rice'—just delicate glass noodles acting as slurpy sponges for a brilliantly savory, ginger-heavy chicken broth. It scales effortlessly, demands no obscure island produce, and is the absolute perfect palate-cleansing sidekick to a paper plate piled high with Kalua pork and macaroni salad.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 cup</b>	low-sodium chicken broth	<b>4 tbsp</b>	soy sauce
<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	boneless skinless chicken thighs	<b>1 tsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1 med piece</b>	fresh ginger root <i>peeled and sliced into thick coins</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>3 large</b>	garlic cloves <i>smashed</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper
		<b>8 oz</b>	bean thread noodles
		<b>1/2 cup</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Never boil the noodles raw directly in the soup.**

Boiling bean thread noodles from raw in the pot makes them mushy and clouds your beautiful golden broth with excess starch. Soaking them in a separate bowl of warm water is the essential grandma secret to getting that perfect, slurpy texture.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Hydrate the delicate glass noodles in warm tap water.**

Place the dried bean thread noodles in a large heat-proof bowl, submerge them entirely in warm tap water, and let them soak for 20 to 30 minutes while you build the soup. Once soft, drain the water and snip the noodles a few times with kitchen shears into manageable 4-inch lengths so you aren't fighting foot-long strands at the table.

- 2. Simmer the aromatics and chicken to build the foundation of the broth.**

In a large Dutch oven, combine the chicken broth, chicken thighs, smashed garlic, thick ginger coins, soy sauce, and sugar. Bring to a lively boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to medium-low, cover, and gently simmer for 30 to 35 minutes until the chicken is meltingly tender.

**1. Remove and shred the chicken thighs.**

Using tongs, transfer the cooked chicken to a cutting board and let it cool briefly. Shred the meat into bite-sized pieces with two forks, leaving the ginger and garlic in the pot to continue perfuming the broth.

**2. Marry the shredded chicken and softened noodles in the simmering broth.**

Return the broth to a gentle simmer and add the shredded chicken back in, immediately followed by the drained, pre-soaked noodles. Stir gently to submerge.

**3. Cook until the noodles turn completely translucent and glassy.**

Let the mixture simmer uncovered for 5 to 8 minutes. The noodles will soak up the savory broth and transition from stark white to clear, leaving a consistency that is saucy rather than watery.

**4. Garnish with fresh green onions and serve hot.**

Remove the pot from the heat, stir in the sliced green onions, and adjust the seasoning with a pinch of salt or an extra splash of soy sauce if needed. Serve scooped next to a generous mound of white rice and pork.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Use a spoon to peel your ginger.**

Ditch the vegetable peeler. Use the back edge of a standard teaspoon to easily scrape the paper-thin skin right off the ginger root without wasting any of the flesh.

● **Account for overnight absorption if making ahead.**

This dish actually tastes better the next day as the ginger permeates the starch. Store it in the fridge, but keep an extra cup of chicken broth on hand; the noodles act like sponges overnight, so you'll need to splash some extra liquid in when reheating to loosen them back up.



## Plantation-Style Somen Salad

Born from the diverse lunch pails of Hawaii's sugar plantations, this is the ultimate expression of backyard potluck culture. It's a brilliant, localized evolution of Japanese chilled noodles, scaled up and fortified with crispy SPAM, shredded egg, and whatever else the neighbors brought to the fields. The secret to grandmother-approved authenticity lies in two things: a sweet, sesame-laced emulsion that clings perfectly to the noodles, and an aggressive ice-water shock to keep the delicate somen from turning to paste. It's practical, perfectly suited for a mainland kitchen, and tastes exactly like a warm summer evening on the islands.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1/2 cup</b>	soy sauce	<b>1 large</b>	carrot <i>peeled and julienned</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	unseasoned rice vinegar	<b>3 med</b>	green onions <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>6 oz</b>	kamaboko or imitation crab <i>thinly sliced into half-moons</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	neutral oil	<b>8 oz</b>	SPAM or Chinese char siu <i>diced into small cubes</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	toasted sesame oil	<b>4 large</b>	eggs <i>whisked smoothly</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	MSG or dashi powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	neutral oil
<b>1 lb</b>	dried somen noodles	<b>2 tbsp</b>	toasted sesame seeds
<b>1/2 large</b>	iceberg lettuce <i>finely shredded</i>		
<b>1 med</b>	cucumber <i>julienned into thin matchsticks</i>		

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare the toppings and dressing a day in advance.**

The egg crepes, vegetables, crispy SPAM, and dressing can all be prepped and stored in the fridge up to 24 hours before the potluck. Only boil the noodles on the day you plan to serve.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the dressing ingredients until the sugar completely dissolves.**

In a jar or bowl, combine the soy sauce, rice vinegar, sugar, and MSG. Shake or whisk aggressively until no sugar granules remain, then slowly stream in the neutral oil and sesame oil to create a smooth, clingy emulsion. Set aside.

- 2. Fry the whisked eggs into paper-thin crepes.**

Lightly grease a non-stick skillet over medium-low heat. Pour in just enough egg to coat the bottom, cooking until dry. Remove, let cool, then roll into a tight cigar and slice crosswise into delicate ribbons.

**1. Pan-fry the diced SPAM until deeply golden and crispy.**

If using SPAM instead of char siu, fry the cubes in a bare skillet over medium heat until the fat renders and the edges crisp up. Drain on a paper towel.

**2. Boil the somen noodles briefly, then aggressively shock them in cold water.**

Boil the noodles in a large pot of unsalted water for exactly 2 to 3 minutes.

Immediately drain and plunge them under cold running water, vigorously rubbing them with your hands to strip away the surface starch so they don't turn into a gummy paste.

**3. Layer the salad in a wide, shallow dish to protect the noodles.**

Spread the shredded iceberg evenly across the bottom of a 9x13 inch dish, then lay the cold, well-drained somen over the top. Artfully arrange the egg ribbons, SPAM, kamaboko, cucumbers, and carrots in distinct rows.

**4. Garnish with green onions and sesame seeds, dressing only right before serving.**

Pour half the re-emulsified dressing over the platter just before guests dig in, serving the remainder on the side to prevent the lettuce from wilting.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **Don't skimp on the cold water shock.**

Somen cooks incredibly fast. The difference between a perfect noodle and a starchy paste is the vigorous cold water rinse. Rub the noodles between your hands until the water runs completely clear.

● **Use a wide, shallow dish for serving.**

Deep bowls cause the delicate somen at the bottom to crush under the weight of the toppings. A 9x13 pan protects the structure of the noodles and ensures an even dressing distribution.



# Uncle's Spam & Kamaboko Fried Rice

Skip the tiki torches and hollowed-out pineapples. Real Hawaiian local food was born in the plantation fields and perfected in backyard ohana gatherings. It's working-class, unapologetically rich, and built on the strategic rendering of canned pork and the profound umami of oyster sauce. The bright pink half-moons of kamaboko aren't just for texture—they're the visual flare that tells everyone in the room it's time to eat.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 cup</b>	cooked medium-grain white rice <i>chilled overnight and clumps broken up</i>	<b>3 large</b>	eggs <i>lightly beaten with a pinch of salt</i>
		<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral oil

<b>4 large</b>	thick-cut bacon <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	frozen peas and carrots <i>unthawed</i>
<b>12 oz</b>	Spam <i>diced into 1/4-inch cubes</i>	<b>4 med</b>	green onions <i>thinly sliced, green and white parts separated</i>
<b>4 oz</b>	kamaboko <i>cut into bite-sized half-moons</i>	<b>4 tbsp</b>	oyster sauce
<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>3 tbsp</b>	shoyu
<b>4 small</b>	garlic cloves <i>minced</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	toasted sesame oil
		<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper

## PREPARATION

- **Cook and chill the rice the day before.**

Moisture control is the entire ballgame here. Fresh, hot rice will instantly steam in the wok and turn to mush. If you are in a weeknight pinch, spread freshly cooked medium-grain rice onto a sheet pan and place it in the freezer for twenty minutes to rapidly evaporate the surface moisture.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Scramble the eggs in hot oil until just set, then immediately pull them off the heat.**

Cooking them first keeps them bright yellow and prevents them from turning into muddy flecks later. Set them aside on a clean plate.

- 2. Render the bacon in the wok until crispy, then fry the Spam in the resulting fat until the edges are beautifully caramelized.**

You are building the flavor base of the entire dish right here over medium-high heat, so do not rush the caramelization.

- 3. Sauté the diced onion and the white parts of the scallions in the pork fat until translucent.**

Clear a space in the center of the wok, drop in the garlic, and let it sizzle for thirty seconds just until fragrant without burning.

- 1. Toss in the kamaboko and the frozen vegetables.**  
Stir-fry for another minute or two until the fish cake is heated through and the vegetables are vibrant and fully defrosted.
- 2. Crank the heat to high and fold in the chilled rice.**  
Use a wok shovel or wide spatula to press and fold the grains continuously into the rendered fat for about three minutes until steaming hot and separated.
- 3. Drizzle in the oyster sauce, shoyu, and black pepper, tossing aggressively until uniform in color.**  
Taste for seasoning right here. Add a splash more shoyu if it needs salt, or a dab more oyster sauce for depth.
- 4. Fold the scrambled eggs back in, kill the heat, and finish with toasted sesame oil and the green scallion tops.**  
The residual heat will soften the raw scallions without destroying their fresh bite. Serve immediately or transfer to a large catering tray.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Substitute standard soy sauce properly if Aloha shoyu isn't available.**  
Aloha brand shoyu has a slightly sweeter, less salty profile than mainland stalwarts like Kikkoman. If you're using Kikkoman, add a half teaspoon of white sugar to the sauce mix to replicate the local flavor.
- **Leave the pineapple at the tiki bar.**  
Authentic local fried rice is a savory, umami-driven dish built on working-class plantation meats and fats. Adding fruit disrupts the flavor profile and marks the dish as a tourist gimmick.



# Hawaiian Potluck Ambrosia Salad

To mainlanders, a bowl of canned fruit, marshmallows, and sour cream might look like a mid-century fever dream. But to anyone raised around local Hawaiian backyard potlucks, this high-low masterpiece is pure nostalgic brilliance. The genius lies in the juxtaposition: the lactic tang of sour cream cuts the aggressive sweetness of the syrup, turning what should be a cloying dessert into a refreshing, necessary counterpunch to smoky Kalua pig and salty soy marinades. Respect the aunties who perfected this dish and heed their one absolute law: drain and dry your fruit mercilessly, or suffer a soupy, weeping mess.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>20 oz</b>	canned pineapple tidbits in juice <i>drained thoroughly and patted dry</i>	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	mini marshmallows
<b>15 oz</b>	canned mandarin oranges <i>drained thoroughly and patted dry</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	sweetened shredded coconut
<b>10 oz</b>	maraschino cherries <i>rinsed, patted completely dry, and halved</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	macadamia nuts <i>chopped</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	fresh green grapes <i>halved lengthwise</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	full-fat sour cream
		<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	frozen whipped topping <i>thawed</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Drain the canned fruit.**

Place the pineapple and mandarin oranges in a colander for at least 15 minutes, then pat them completely dry with paper towels to prevent the dreaded watery salad.

- **Rinse and dry the cherries.**

Rinse the cherries under cold water to remove the heavy red syrup, then pat them aggressively dry so they don't turn your bright white cream a muddy pink.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the sour cream and whipped topping.**

In a large mixing bowl, gently fold the sour cream and thawed whipped topping together until smooth, taking care not to deflate the fluffiness.

- 2. Fold in the fruit and dry ingredients.**

Add the thoroughly dried pineapple, mandarins, cherries, grapes, coconut, marshmallows, and macadamia nuts to the bowl, using a large rubber spatula to gently fold everything together until each piece is coated in the creamy dressing.

**1. Chill the salad overnight.**

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, though overnight is heavily preferred. As it sits, the marshmallows absorb the ambient moisture from the cream and swell into soft, melt-in-the-mouth pillows.

**2. Garnish and serve cold.**

Give the salad one gentle stir to revive the texture before transferring it to a proper serving bowl, finishing the top with a reserved sprinkle of coconut and a few cherry halves.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Make it from scratch if you must.**

If you refuse to use store-bought whipped topping, whip one cup of heavy cream to stiff peaks with a tablespoon of powdered sugar and half a teaspoon of vanilla extract, then fold that into your sour cream instead.

● **The Filipino Buko Salad pivot.**

Hawaii's deep Filipino roots mean Ambrosia is a close cousin to Buko Salad. Swap the sour cream and whipped topping for sweetened condensed milk and table cream, and add young shredded coconut (buko) to transform the dish.



## Star Anise Boiled Peanuts

To understand the local Hawaiian diet is to look at what happens when diverse cultures are thrown together in the sugar cane fields. The boiled peanut is a direct descendant of the Chinese shui zhu hua sheng, stripped of an elaborate spice pantry and distilled to just star anise, fresh ginger, and the earthy punch of coarse red salt. To get that nostalgic, melt-in-your-mouth texture in a modern mainland kitchen, you don't need a four-hour stovetop vigil; you just need a pressure cooker and the patience to let them steep. The true secret of the aunties is that the flavor doesn't penetrate the shell while boiling, but in the cooling, when the dying heat pulls the dark, spiced brine straight into the kernel.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	raw in-shell dried peanuts	<b>3 inch</b>	fresh ginger root <i>scrubbed clean and sliced into 1/4-inch coins</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	Hawaiian red alaea sea salt		
<b>8 large</b>	whole star anise pods	<b>1 tbsp</b>	whole black peppercorns
		<b>12 cup</b>	cold water

## PREPARATION

- **Wash the peanuts until the water runs completely clear.**

Raw peanuts grow in the dirt. Vigorously agitate them in a large bowl of cold water, discarding any broken or floating empty shells.

- **Soak the peanuts in cold water overnight.**

Cover the clean peanuts with fresh water, weigh them down with a plate to keep them submerged, and let them hydrate for at least four hours. This rehydrates the dried mainland peanuts so they cook evenly.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine all the ingredients in an electric pressure cooker.**

Drain the soaked peanuts and transfer them to the pot along with the sea salt, star anise, ginger, peppercorns, and the cold water.

- 2. Weigh down the peanuts to ensure total submersion.**

Peanuts float, which leads to uneven cooking. Place a stainless steel steamer trivet or a heat-safe heavy plate directly on top of them so they remain completely underwater.

- 3. Cook on high pressure for fifty-five minutes.**

Seal the lid and cook on manual high pressure. Once the time is up, allow the machine to release its pressure naturally for about twenty to thirty minutes.

**1. Steep the peanuts in the cooling brine for at least two hours.**

This is the ultimate secret to the dish. Turn off the machine and let the peanuts sit in the hot liquid. As the water cools, it creates a vacuum that physically pulls the salty, spiced brine right through the shell and into the kernel.

**2. Drain and chill overnight before serving.**

Discard the aromatics and the liquid. Transfer the peanuts to a sealed container and refrigerate them. In Hawaii, they are meant to be eaten cold, cracked open by hand at the beach or the backyard potluck.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Sourcing the right salt makes or breaks the brine.**

Hawaiian red salt is coarse and milder than standard salt. If you cannot find it, use a coarse Kosher salt like Diamond Crystal. Never substitute with fine table salt, or the batch will be inedibly salty.

● **Do not attempt this with roasted peanuts.**

You must use raw, dried peanuts. The cellular structure of a roasted peanut is permanently altered, and boiling it will only result in unpalatable mush.



# Filipino-Hawaiian Pork Guisantes

In Hawaii, lunch on the sugar plantations meant cracking open a double-decker kau kau tin. Inside, a mountain of white rice waited for whatever savory, rich okazu the guy sitting next to you had brought to share. This is the beautiful collision of Filipino resourcefulness and local Hawaiian flavor—a deeply savory, working-class stew that relies on the magic of matching the briny depth of patis with the mellow salt of shoyu. It requires no obscure island produce and no pretension. Just one pot, cheap cuts of pork, and the patience to let it simmer down into the ultimate nostalgic comfort food.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 lb</b>	pork shoulder or pork belly <i>cut into 1-inch strips</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	patis
<b>2 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil	<b>1 tbsp</b>	shoyu
<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>2 whole</b>	dried bay leaves
<b>5 clove</b>	garlic <i>peeled and minced</i>	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	frozen petite sweet peas <i>kept frozen</i>
<b>8 oz</b>	plain tomato sauce	<b>4 oz</b>	sliced pimientos <i>drained, reserving a splash of the juice</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	tomato paste	<b>1 tsp</b>	sugar
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	water or low-sodium chicken broth	<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly cracked</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Make a large pot of steamed white rice.**

Do this before you even start the pork. This dish is fundamentally a delivery system for rice, and you will want it ready the second the stew comes off the stove.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, then sauté the onions and garlic until translucent.**

Push the aromatics to the edges and add the pork in an even layer. Leave it entirely alone for a few minutes to develop a serious, golden-brown crust. You want the fat to render and the edges to caramelize—this Maillard reaction is the absolute foundation of the stew's flavor.

- 2. Pour in the patis and shoyu, letting them aggressively sizzle and cook into the meat for about a minute.**

This burns off the harsh, fishy funk of the patis and locks the umami directly into the pork fat. Once reduced, stir in the tomato sauce, tomato paste, water, and bay leaves.

- 1. Bring the liquid to a rolling boil, then immediately drop the heat, cover tightly, and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes.**

Stir it occasionally so the bottom doesn't scorch. You are looking for the pork to become incredibly fork-tender and for the braising liquid to reduce into a thick, glossy, lip-smacking gravy. If it looks dry before the meat surrenders, add a splash of water.

- 2. Stir in the sugar, a heavy dose of black pepper, the frozen peas, and the pimientos with a splash of their juice.**

Simmer uncovered for exactly 2 to 3 minutes more. Not a second longer. You just want to heat the vegetables through. Overcook them, and the peas will turn a depressing, mushy gray.

- 3. Remove from the heat and let the pot rest for 5 minutes before serving.**

The gravy will thicken slightly as it settles. Serve this piping hot in deep bowls over a massive, unforgiving scoop of steamed white rice.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Brown the pork in batches if scaling up for a crowd.**

If you overcrowd the pot when making a massive batch for a potluck, the meat will steam instead of sear. It takes longer, but browning in batches is entirely mandatory for that deep, authentic flavor.

- **Make it a day ahead.**

Like all great working-class stews, this tastes profoundly better the next day after the tomato and pork fat have had a night to get to know each other in the fridge.



# Spicy Tofu & Edamame Poke

*poh-keh*

Look past the kalua pig at a real island potluck, and you'll find the plastic deli containers. Poke isn't some trendy, overpriced mainland salad bowl; it's a humble, working-class tradition of preserving and honoring simple proteins. This local staple trades tuna for tofu, tossing it in a fiery, creamy mix of shoyu, sesame, and chili. It requires no cooking, scales beautifully for a backyard crowd, and tastes exactly like a Honolulu supermarket deli counter, built entirely from a midwestern grocery aisle.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>30 oz</b>	extra-firm tofu <i>pressed for 20 minutes and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	macadamia nuts <i>very finely chopped and lightly toasted</i>
<b>16 oz</b>	frozen shelled edamame <i>thawed and patted completely dry</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	dried wakame seaweed <i>rehydrated, squeezed fiercely dry, and roughly chopped</i>
<b>1/2 large</b>	sweet yellow onion <i>sliced into paper-thin crescents</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	mayonnaise
<b>4 med</b>	green onions <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>3 tbsp</b>	Sriracha
<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh ginger <i>peeled and finely grated</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	Aloha Shoyu
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	toasted sesame oil
		<b>1 tsp</b>	coarse sea salt

## PREPARATION

- **Press the tofu.**

Wrap the drained tofu blocks in a clean kitchen towel and place a heavy skillet on top for 15 to 20 minutes to expel excess water before cutting them into neat half-inch cubes.

- **Rehydrate the seaweed.**

Soak the dried wakame in cold water for 5 minutes, drain it, and squeeze it fiercely in your fist to remove absolutely all water before chopping it roughly.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Soak the onions in ice water.**

Place the sliced onions in a bowl of cold water and ice for 10 minutes to draw out their harsh, pungent sulfur bite, then drain and pat them completely dry.

- 2. Whisk the spicy sauce base.**

In a large mixing bowl, aggressively whisk together the mayonnaise, Sriracha, shoyu, toasted sesame oil, ginger, and salt until entirely smooth.

**1. Fold with a gentle hand.**

Add the cubed tofu, thawed edamame, dried sweet onions, green onions, toasted macadamia nuts, and chopped wakame. Fold everything together with a rubber spatula gently—poke means to cut into distinct pieces, so treat the tofu with respect and do not mash it.

**2. Chill to meld the flavors.**

Cover the bowl and refrigerate for exactly 20 to 30 minutes. This tight window allows the flavors to penetrate the tofu without drawing out too much moisture, keeping the dish perfectly crisp for the party.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The shoyu substitute.**

Aloha Shoyu is the island standard, but if you only have standard Kikkoman, use three tablespoons of soy sauce mixed with one tablespoon of water and a tiny pinch of sugar to mimic that mild, sweet profile.

● **The macadamia crunch.**

Traditional Hawaiian poke demands inamona, or roasted candlenut. Finely chopped, toasted macadamia nuts are the culturally accurate, highly accessible mainland substitute that provides the exact same buttery crunch.

● **Asian market upgrade.**

If you have access to a good Asian grocer, swap the extra-firm tofu for atsUAGE (deep-fried tofu blocks). Pour boiling water over them to wash away stale oil, pat dry, and cube—the porous exterior soaks up the spicy mayo like a sponge.



# Big Island Local-Style Hamburger Curry

ひき肉カレー

*hikiniku karē*

If you grew up in Hawaii, the smell of S&B Golden Curry dissolving into a pot of browned hamburger and onions is the exact smell of a Tuesday night. It isn't the complex, coconut-infused curry of a Thai restaurant or an intricately spiced Indian vindaloo. This is local Hawaiian food—a brilliant, working-class adaptation of Japanese plantation cooking that became the undisputed king of the elementary school cafeteria and the backyard potluck. It requires zero hard-to-find

island produce. Just grab a box of Japanese curry roux from the Asian aisle of your Midwestern supermarket, brown some ground beef, and you're home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 tbsp</b>	vegetable oil	<b>2 med</b>	russet potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>diced</i>	<b>2 med</b>	carrots <i>peeled and diced</i>
<b>4</b>	garlic cloves <i>finely minced</i>	<b>4 cup</b>	water
<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	80/20 ground beef	<b>4 oz</b>	Japanese curry roux blocks <i>broken into individual squares</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	frozen mixed vegetables <i>thawed slightly</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper	<b>4 cup</b>	short-grain white rice <i>steamed, for serving</i>

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the oil and sauté the onions until translucent.**  
Place a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat with the vegetable oil, cooking the onions for about 3 to 4 minutes.
- 2. Brown the beef completely.**  
Add the ground beef, salt, and pepper. Break the meat apart with a wooden spoon and cook for 5 to 7 minutes until deeply browned and no pink remains.
- 3. Drain the excess fat.**  
Turn off the heat and tilt the pot, using a spoon to remove about 80 percent of the rendered fat so your curry doesn't end up an oil slick. Leave just enough to coat the vegetables and carry the flavor.

**1. Simmer the root vegetables until fork-tender.**

Return to medium heat. Stir in the minced garlic, potatoes, and carrots for a minute, then pour in the water. Scrape up any browned bits, bring to a boil, then cover and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes.

**2. Turn off the heat and melt the roux.**

Do not drop the blocks into boiling water. Kill the heat entirely, drop in the curry blocks, and stir gently until they dissolve completely into a rich, glossy gravy.

**3. Fold in the frozen vegetables and thicken.**

Turn the heat back to medium-low, add the frozen mixed vegetables, and simmer for 5 final minutes. This heats the delicate veggies without turning them to mush while the starches fully thicken the liquid.

**4. Serve immediately over hot rice.**

Scoop a generous mound of steaming, sticky white rice onto a plate and ladle the curry directly over the top.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Manage the fat.**

Ground beef releases a lot of tallow. Failing to drain it before building the gravy ruins the texture of the finished dish and leaves a greasy film.

● **Kill the heat before adding the roux.**

Boiling the Japanese curry blocks makes the starches clump and the spices turn bitter. Always melt them completely off the heat before returning to a simmer.



# Auntie's Weekend Stove: Local Breakfasts & Morning Comforts

*Hearty, comforting weekend morning meals rooted in Hawai'i's plantation history  
and beloved local diner culture.*

Weekend mornings in the islands don't wake up to delicate pastries. They wake up to the aggressive hiss of fat in a hot skillet. This is the food of the old plantation camps and the vinyl-booth diners—heavy, honest breakfasts built to sustain a body through a long day in the cane fields or a slow Sunday in the garage. It's Portuguese sausage blistering at the edges, eggs with lacy, crisped

whites, and the unapologetic perfection of a proper Loco Moco: a glorious, messy collision of hamburger, rice, fried egg, and thick brown gravy. It's not diet food. It's survival food that evolved into pure, undeniable comfort.





# Okazuya-Style Corned Beef Hash Patties

ポテトハッシュ

*poteto hasshu*

Behind the glass counter of every local okazuya—the Japanese-Hawaiian mom-and-pop delis born from plantation-era ingenuity—sits the undisputed king of comfort food: the corned beef hash patty. It is a brilliant, unpretentious marriage of the Japanese korokke and canned military rations. This is frugal, grandmother-approved cooking that demands nothing more than mainland pantry staples and a little patience. The secret to perfection isn't artisanal beef; it's managing the moisture of your potatoes, letting the patties rest, and trusting the can.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	Russet potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>
<b>12 oz</b>	canned corned beef <i>crumbled</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	yellow onion <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	all-purpose flour
<b>1/4 cup</b>	green onions <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>4 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Cook and dry the potatoes.

Boil the cubed potatoes in salted water over medium-high heat until fork-tender, about 10 to 15 minutes, then drain and let them sit in the colander for 5 minutes to steam off excess moisture.

### 2. Mash coarsely.

Transfer the warm potatoes to a large bowl and mash them, leaving some small, pea-sized chunks for that rustic, authentic deli-case texture.

### 3. Mix the patty base.

Fold in the crumbled corned beef, minced yellow onion, green onions, beaten egg, and black pepper, mixing gently but thoroughly until evenly distributed.

### 4. Shape and chill to set the structure.

Form the mixture into roughly 3-inch, 3/4-inch thick ovals, place them on a parchment-lined sheet, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to firm up the fats and starches.

### 5. Apply a whisper of flour.

Lightly dredge each chilled patty in the all-purpose flour, tapping off the excess to create a thin, savory seal.

**1. Pan-fry to golden perfection.**

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and fry the patties completely undisturbed for 4 to 5 minutes per side until deeply caramelized.

**2. Drain and serve hot.**

Transfer the fried patties to paper towels to drain excess oil, and serve immediately while the exterior is violently crunchy.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The mandatory plating.**

To serve this the true local way, plate the patties next to two scoops of steamed white rice and top with over-easy eggs, adding a mandatory squeeze of tomato ketchup.

● **The Panko upgrade.**

If you want to replicate the elite texture found at famous Kaneohe okazuyas, swap the bare flour dredge for a full breading station: dust in flour, dip in beaten egg, and press firmly into Japanese panko before frying.



# Portuguese Sausage, Eggs, and Rice

Born in the sugarcane fields where Portuguese, Japanese, and Chinese laborers traded their lunches, this holy trinity of smoky pork, soft eggs, and hot sticky rice is the undisputed king of island mornings. If you grew up anywhere near a Hawaiian household, this is the taste of home. The secret isn't complicated: slice the sausage on a sharp bias to maximize the crispy, caramelized edges, and fry your eggs right in that glorious, paprika-stained rendered fat. Whisking a little soy sauce into the eggs is an old Auntie trick that elevates the plate from a generic breakfast into something distinctly local.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 cup</b>	short or medium-grain white rice <i>rinsed until water runs clear</i>	<b>1 1/2 tbsp</b>	soy sauce
<b>1 lb</b>	Hawaiian-style Portuguese sausage or Silva brand Linguiça <i>sliced on a sharp 1/4-inch bias</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	whole milk or heavy cream
		<b>1 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	furikake
<b>8 large</b>	large eggs	<b>2 med</b>	scallions <i>finely sliced</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Wash the rice thoroughly.**

Place the rice in a bowl, cover with cold water, and swish with your hands until milky. Drain and repeat 3 to 4 times until the water runs clear. This removes surface starch and is crucial for achieving the correct sticky texture.

- **Execute the auntie cut.**

Slice the sausage on a sharp diagonal bias into elongated ovals. This geometrically maximizes the surface area of the meat for maximum caramelization.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Cook the rice.**

Cook the rinsed rice according to your rice cooker's instructions, or simmer on the stove with 2 1/2 cups of water for 20 minutes before letting it rest.

- 2. Caramelize the meat.**

Heat a large non-stick or cast-iron skillet over medium heat without any added oil. Fry the bias-cut sausage ovals in an even layer for 3 to 4 minutes per side until the edges are curled, deeply browned, and slightly charred.

**1. Save the rendered fat.**

Transfer the crisped sausage to a paper towel-lined plate, but leave the smoky orange fat in the skillet and reduce the heat to medium-low.

**2. Whip the shoyu eggs.**

In a mixing bowl, vigorously whisk the eggs, soy sauce, and milk until uniform and light tan in color.

**3. Scramble the eggs in the sausage fat.**

If the pan looks dry, melt the butter into the remaining pan fat. Pour in the egg mixture, let it sit for a few seconds, and gently push it across the pan in long ribbons until you have soft, glossy curds. Remove from the heat immediately.

**4. Plate the local way.**

Use an ice cream disher to serve two tight domes of hot rice on each plate, laying the crispy sausage and soft eggs alongside.

**5. Garnish and serve.**

Generously sprinkle the rice with furikake and scatter the sliced scallions over the eggs.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Finding the right sausage on the mainland.**

True Hawaiian Portuguese sausage is softer and slightly sweeter than the traditional European variety. Look for Silva brand Linguiça, or substitute a mild, high-quality smoked Andouille. Avoid raw Mexican chorizo entirely, as the flavor profile will completely alter the dish.



## **Boots-Style Banana Macadamia Nut Pancakes**

If you've ever stood in the grueling hour-long line on the windward side of Oahu for a plate of Boots & Kimo's pancakes, you know the magic isn't in the batter—it's the sauce. It's a thick, luscious cascade of macadamia nut cream that coats the hot cakes without turning them to mush. Locals will tell you the ultimate auntie trick is simply melting a tub of macadamia nut ice cream and stirring in condensed milk. Since you can't exactly find island-brand mac-nut ice cream in a midwestern suburb, this recipe leans on a simple, stabilizing roux sweetened with

condensed milk—the ultimate secret weapon of the Asian-Pacific pantry. It delivers the exact structural integrity and sticky-sweet nostalgia of a Kailua Sunday morning, right from your own stove.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 cup</b>	raw macadamia nuts <i>unsalted</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter	<b>2 tsp</b>	baking powder
<b>2 tbsp</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	baking soda
<b>1 cup</b>	whole milk	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/2 cup</b>	heavy whipping cream	<b>1 1/4 cup</b>	buttermilk
<b>1/4 cup</b>	sweetened condensed milk	<b>2 large</b>	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract	<b>3 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>
<b>1/8 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>optional, omit if using salted nuts</i>	<b>2 large</b>	very ripe bananas <i>thoroughly mashed</i>
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1 tbsp</b>	vegetable oil <i>for the griddle</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Mash the bananas in a sealed zip-top bag to save time and cleanup.**

This is a great, mess-free task to hand off to kids while you build the sauce on the stove.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Pulse the macadamia nuts in a food processor until finely chopped with some texture left intact.**

Alternatively, place them in a heavy-duty bag and crush them with a rolling pin. Heat a dry, medium saucepan over medium heat and toast the nuts for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly until they are golden and fragrant. Remove half the nuts and set them aside for garnish.

- 2. Build the roux and simmer the macadamia nut sauce until thick.**

Turn the heat down to medium-low, add the 1 tablespoon of butter to the remaining nuts in the pan, and once melted, stir in the 2 tablespoons of flour for one minute to cook out the raw taste. Slowly whisk in the whole milk and heavy cream to prevent lumps, then stir in the sweetened condensed milk, vanilla, and the pinch of salt. Simmer gently for 3 to 5 minutes until it heavily coats the back of a spoon, then remove from heat and cover to keep warm.

- 3. Mix the dry and wet ingredients in separate bowls, then gently fold them together.**

Whisk the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. In another bowl, whisk the buttermilk, eggs, melted butter, and mashed bananas. Fold the wet mixture into the dry just until combined, leaving the batter slightly lumpy.

- 4. Let the pancake batter rest untouched for at least twenty minutes.**

This is a critical grandmother secret. Letting the batter rest on the counter or in the fridge relaxes the gluten and ensures your pancakes will be incredibly fluffy and tender.

- 5. Cook the pancakes on a hot, greased griddle until golden brown.**

Heat a large non-stick skillet over medium heat with a little oil or butter. Scoop a third of a cup of batter per pancake, cooking for 2 to 3 minutes until the edges dry and bubbles burst, then flip and cook another 1 to 2 minutes.

- 1. Stack the hot pancakes and smother them generously with the warm sauce.**  
Do not use maple syrup. Ladle the thick macadamia nut cream directly over the top so it pools heavily over the sides, then scatter the reserved toasted nuts across the top. Serve immediately.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **If you cannot find buttermilk, you can easily make a substitute using standard dairy.**  
Whisk 1 cup of whole milk with 1/4 cup of plain yogurt to mimic the tang and tenderizing lactic acid of buttermilk.
- **The sauce will thicken considerably as it cools.**  
If it becomes too thick or paste-like while you are cooking the pancakes, simply whisk in a small splash of milk right before serving to loosen it up.



# Crispy-Chewy Mochiko Waffles

If you grew up anywhere near a Hawaiian or Japanese-American kitchen, that bright blue box of Koda Farms Mochiko was a permanent fixture. It's the magic dust behind butter mochi, but when weekend mornings roll around, that same sweet rice flour gets repurposed. By cutting the dense, gluten-free mochiko with just enough wheat flour and a hit of cornstarch, you get a shatteringly crisp, golden shell that yields to a wildly satisfying, bouncy chew. It's genuine island comfort engineered to work flawlessly in a snowy Ohio kitchen.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 1/2 cup** mochiko sweet rice flour

**3/4 cup** all-purpose flour

**1 tbsp** cornstarch

**1/4 cup** granulated sugar

**2 tsp** baking powder

**1/2 tsp** kosher salt

**1 1/2 cup** whole milk

**2 large** eggs  
*room temperature*

**4 tbsp** unsalted butter  
*melted and slightly cooled*

**1 tsp** pure vanilla extract

## PREPARATION

- **Preheat your waffle iron to medium-high.**

You want the iron hot enough to flash-sear the outside of the batter, locking in the crispness before the chewy interior overcooks.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the dry ingredients vigorously.**

In a large bowl, whisk together the mochiko, all-purpose flour, cornstarch, sugar, baking powder, and salt, ensuring the baking powder is evenly distributed.

- 2. Combine the wet ingredients.**

In a separate jug or bowl, whisk the milk, eggs, melted butter, and vanilla extract until completely smooth.

- 3. Fold the wet mixture into the dry.**

Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and whisk just until the lumps disappear. Because mochiko has zero gluten, you can mix this until it is perfectly smooth without any fear of making the waffles tough.

- 4. Bake the waffles until deeply golden.**

Pour the batter onto the hot iron and close the lid, cooking for 4 to 5 minutes. Do not open the iron early; mochiko takes longer to set than standard flour.

- 5. Rest on a wire rack before serving.**

Transfer the hot waffle immediately to a wire cooling rack. Letting air circulate underneath for sixty seconds allows steam to escape, setting the crisp exterior while trapping the chewy mochi texture inside.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skip the cornstarch.**

Sweet rice flour loves to be chewy, but it struggles to hold a crisp edge once it cools. A small spoonful of cornstarch is the local secret to ensuring the waffle stays crispy enough to handle maple syrup.

- **Stock the freezer.**

These waffles freeze exceptionally well. Let them cool completely on a wire rack, freeze in a zip-top bag, and drop them straight into a standard bread toaster on busy mornings to perfectly revive the crisp edges.



# King's Hawaiian Sweet Bread French Toast

This is the taste of a slow Sunday morning in Hawaii. The islands' famous sweet bread traces its roots back to the Portuguese laborers who worked the sugarcane fields, bringing their beloved pãu doce with them. Today, those ridiculously soft, pineapple-laced loaves make the ultimate custardy French toast. But there is a right way to do this. The bread is delicate and packed with sugar. You have to slice it and let it go stale overnight so it doesn't disintegrate in the pan. When it's time to cook, give it a fast dip—do not soak it—and fry it low and slow in a mix of butter and oil so it doesn't scorch. Keep the simple things simple, drown it in coconut syrup, and it tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>16 oz</b>	King's Hawaiian Sweet Round Bread <i>edges trimmed and cut into 3/4-inch slices</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	vegetable oil
<b>4 large</b>	eggs	<b>1/2 cup</b>	coconut syrup <i>store-bought, or 2 parts maple syrup whisked with 1 part canned coconut milk</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	half-and-half	<b>1 tbsp</b>	powdered sugar <i>for dusting</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract	<b>1 cup</b>	fresh berries <i>or sliced bananas</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	ground cinnamon	<b>1/4 cup</b>	macadamia nuts <i>toasted and roughly chopped</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	honey		
<b>1 pinch</b>	fine sea salt		

## PREPARATION

- **Stale the bread overnight.**

King's Hawaiian bread is incredibly soft and will fall apart in the custard if used fresh. Slice it 3/4-inch thick and lay the pieces flat on a wire rack overnight to dry out.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the custard base together.**

In a large, shallow dish, whisk the eggs, half-and-half, vanilla extract, cinnamon, honey, and salt until completely smooth with no streaks of egg white remaining.

- 2. Preheat the skillet with a hybrid cooking fat.**

Place a large non-stick skillet or griddle over medium-low heat and add the butter and vegetable oil. The butter gives you that nostalgic diner flavor, while the oil raises the smoke point so the milk solids don't burn.

**1. Give the stale bread a quick dip.**

Once the butter is melted and foaming, take a slice of the stale bread and drop it into the custard. Leave it for no more than five to ten seconds per side, then lift it out and let the excess drip off. Do not let it soak.

**2. Fry slowly to a deep golden brown.**

Gently place the coated bread into the pan and cook until the bottom is deeply caramelized, about two to three minutes. Flip carefully and cook the other side for another two minutes, lowering the heat if it starts to scorch.

**3. Keep warm and serve immediately.**

Transfer the finished slices to a warm oven while you cook the rest, wiping the pan clean and adding fresh butter and oil as needed. Serve hot, dusted with powdered sugar, scattered with fruit and nuts, and generously drenched in coconut syrup.



## Da Kine Breakfast Burrito

If you grew up with a parent from the Islands, weekend mornings smelled exactly like this: the smoky, paprika-laced sizzle of Portuguese sausage, the unmistakable crackle of SPAM hitting a hot pan, and the sweet, salty aroma of shoyu. This is the ultimate, unpretentious marriage of the Mexican-American flour tortilla and the Hawaiian plantation plate lunch. There is no pineapple here, no barbecue sauce, and absolutely no tourist fluff. It is a deeply comforting, handheld snapshot of a Honolulu auntie's kitchen, built for a weekday morning using ingredients you can find in any Midwestern supermarket. We use crispy tater tots because it's exactly what the locals do when they want that crucial textural crunch without spending an hour making fried rice from scratch.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 large</b>	flour tortillas	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	cheddar jack cheese <i>shredded</i>
<b>2 cup</b>	frozen tater tots	<b>1/2 cup</b>	mild chunky salsa
<b>6 oz</b>	SPAM <i>cut into 1/4-inch cubes</i>	<b>1/2 med</b>	avocado <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>6 oz</b>	Portuguese sausage or linguiça <i>diced</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>6 large</b>	eggs	<b>1/2 tbsp</b>	Aloha Shoyu or low-sodium soy sauce
<b>1/4 cup</b>	milk or half and half		

## PREPARATION

- **Heat your tortillas before you try to fold them.**

A cold flour tortilla will tear the second you try to wrap a heavy burrito. Ten to fifteen seconds in the microwave under a damp paper towel makes them perfectly elastic.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bake or air-fry the tater tots until they are deeply golden and shatteringly crisp.**  
Do not undercook them; they need to hold their crunch inside the soft, steamy environment of the wrapped burrito.
- 2. Cook the diced sausage in a large, dry non-stick skillet over medium-high heat until the edges brown and the paprika-laced oil renders out.**  
Use a slotted spoon to remove the sausage to a paper towel-lined plate, deliberately leaving that highly flavorful orange oil in the pan to fry the SPAM.

- 1. Add the cubed SPAM to the rendered sausage fat over medium heat, crisping on all sides, then sprinkle with sugar and deglaze with the shoyu.**

Toss rapidly as the liquid bubbles and turns into a sticky, salty-sweet glaze coating the meat, then move the SPAM to the plate with the sausage and wipe the skillet clean with a paper towel.

- 2. Whisk the eggs with the milk and a pinch of black pepper, then scramble them slowly in the clean skillet over medium-low heat.**

Push the eggs gently to form large, soft curds, removing them from the heat just before they look fully cooked so they don't turn rubbery once wrapped up.

- 3. Warm the tortillas until pliable, then layer the crispy tater tots, soft scrambled eggs, glazed SPAM, sausage, cheese, avocado, and salsa down the center.**

Fold the left and right sides of the tortilla in over the filling, bring the bottom edge up and tightly over, tuck it back slightly to compact the ingredients, and roll tightly to seal.

- 4. Return the skillet to medium heat and toast the rolled burritos seam-side down for one to two minutes per side.**

This crucial final step locks the burrito together and melts the cheese directly against the hot, savory meats inside.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not pour standard mainland soy sauce blindly into this pan.**

Aloha Shoyu is the lifeblood of local cooking, offering a lighter, sweeter profile than Japanese soy sauces. If you can't source it, cut low-sodium soy sauce with a splash of water and an extra pinch of sugar to emulate that authentic island umami.

- **The right sausage makes all the difference.**

True Hawaiian Portuguese sausage is softer and sweeter than its European ancestors. If you can't find a brand like Redondo's on the mainland, Silva brand linguiça or a mild kielbasa will hit the exact nostalgic notes you need without overpowering the SPAM.



# Plantation Sweets: The Sugar Legacy

*Nostalgic baked goods, desserts, and addictive sweet-and-salty snacks honoring the islands' sugar cane heritage and local fusion flavors.*

Sugar didn't just build Hawaii's economy; it bled into the cultural bedrock. The plantation era dragged workers from across the globe into the sweltering cane fields, where they traded sweat, stories, and lunch tins. What emerged from

those camps wasn't delicate patisserie—it was an unapologetic, brilliant collision of cultures bound together by cane sugar and survival.

These are the nostalgic hits of a local childhood, engineered for standard mainland kitchens. The tooth-sticking chew of butter mochi cooling on a Formica counter. The clean, coconut relief of haupia after a heavy plate lunch. The glorious, sticky-salty crunch of furikake Chex mix passed around in a gallon Ziploc. There is no pretension here. Just the heavy, sweet legacy of the islands, ready to be baked and devoured.





## Crispy-Edge Mini Butter Mochi Bites

Butter mochi is the ultimate child of Hawaii's plantation era—a beautiful, unpretentious collision of Japanese sweet rice flour, Filipino coconut baking, and Portuguese dairy. Forget the mainland bakeries trying to gentrify this with matcha and chocolate chips. The secret to the real deal, the kind that broke mouths at local bake sales, is sticking to the holy trinity of Koda Farms mochiko, full-fat coconut milk, and canned evaporated milk. We bake them in a butter-greased mini muffin tin to guarantee every single bite is a coveted, shatteringly crisp edge piece.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>16 oz</b>	mochiko sweet rice flour	<b>13 1/2 oz</b>	full-fat canned coconut milk <i>well shaken</i>
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>12 oz</b>	canned evaporated milk
<b>2 tsp</b>	baking powder	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>2 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract
<b>4 large</b>	eggs <i>at room temperature</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>softened, for greasing the pan</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Bring your cold ingredients to room temperature before mixing.**  
Adding cold eggs and milk to melted butter will cause the fat to immediately seize into unpleasant little chunks.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and generously grease a non-stick mini muffin tin with the softened butter.**  
Do not use cooking spray; the milk solids in actual butter are essential for shallow-frying the exterior edges of the mochi to golden perfection.
- 2. In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly whisk the mochiko, sugar, baking powder, and salt.**  
Make sure no hidden lumps of baking powder remain in the flour.
- 3. In a separate bowl, lightly beat the eggs, then whisk in the coconut milk, evaporated milk, vanilla, and the slightly cooled melted butter.**
- 4. Pour the wet mixture into the dry ingredients and stir until completely smooth.**  
The batter will look alarmingly thin, much like crepe batter—this is exactly right.

1. **Ladle the batter into the prepared muffin tin, filling each well about three-quarters full, and bake for 35 to 40 minutes.**

Look for deeply browned, crispy edges; a toothpick inserted in the center should come out mostly clean with a few sticky crumbs.

2. **Remove from the oven and let the mochi cool in the pan for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.**

This resting period is non-negotiable. If eaten hot, it will be unpleasantly gummy; the starches need at least an hour to set into their glorious, bouncy chew.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Mochiko is strictly non-negotiable.**

Do not substitute standard rice flour for mochiko. Mochiko is made from glutinous sweet rice; regular rice flour lacks the necessary amylopectin starches and will yield a dry, crumbly brick.

- **Evaporated milk is the authentic plantation secret.**

Fresh dairy was expensive and highly perishable in the plantation camps. The caramelized notes of shelf-stable evaporated milk provide the true nostalgic flavor of this dish.

- **Do not refrigerate leftover butter mochi.**

Store them in an airtight container at room temperature for up to three days. To bring back that grandma-approved crispy edge on day two, throw them in a 350°F toaster oven for a few minutes.



## Uncle's Fast-Action Furikake Snack Mix

In Hawaii, snack mix isn't a casual affair; it's a social currency born from the old plantation camps where American convenience foods met the Japanese pantry. Furikake mix is a beautiful, chaotic collision—a deeply savory, unabashedly sweet, butter-glazed matrix of cereals and snacks traditionally meant for sharing by the garbage-bag-full. While the orthodox method requires hours of babysitting a low oven, this fast-action microwave technique is built for the weeknight cook in Ohio. It rapidly boils off the moisture in the syrup, setting that iconic, glassy ama-shoppai crunch in a fraction of the time.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 cup</b>	Corn Chex cereal	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter
<b>3 cup</b>	Rice Chex cereal	<b>1/2 cup</b>	light corn syrup
<b>2 cup</b>	Honeycomb cereal	<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>2 cup</b>	Bugles	<b>1/2 cup</b>	vegetable oil
<b>2 cup</b>	small pretzel twists	<b>2 tbsp</b>	Kikkoman soy sauce
<b>2 cup</b>	Goldfish crackers or Japanese arare	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce
		<b>1.7 oz</b>	Nori Komi Furikake

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare the landing zone.**

Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the dry ingredients.**

In the largest microwave-safe bowl you own, gently toss the Corn Chex, Rice Chex, Honeycomb, Bugles, pretzels, and crackers using your hands to avoid crushing the delicate cereal.

- 2. Boil the glaze.**

In a medium microwave-safe bowl, combine the butter, corn syrup, sugar, oil, soy sauce, and Worcestershire sauce, then microwave on HIGH for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring halfway, until vigorously bubbling and the sugar is dissolved.

- 3. Coat the matrix.**

Pour the hot glaze evenly over the dry mixture and use two large spatulas to fold from the bottom up until every single piece is glistening.

**1. Microwave to set the crunch.**

Microwave the coated mix uncovered on HIGH for 2 minutes, remove, and stir vigorously from the bottom up; microwave for another 2 minutes and stir again.

**2. Introduce the furikake.**

Sprinkle the entire bottle of furikake over the hot mix and toss thoroughly so the seaweed and sesame seeds stick to the glaze, then microwave for a final 1 to 2 minutes so the seeds toast without scorching.

**3. Cool to crisp.**

Immediately dump the hot, sticky mix onto the prepared baking sheets and spread it into an even layer so the steam can escape.

**4. Break and store.**

Let it cool completely at room temperature for 30 to 45 minutes; as the melted sugars settle, they will harden into a brittle, glass-like crunch that you can break apart and pack away.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **A note on substitutions.**

If you cannot find traditional Japanese arare or kakimochi (soy sauce rice crackers) at the local Asian market, standard baked cheese crackers like Goldfish perfectly mimic the necessary savory baseline crunch.

● **Managing humidity.**

Spreading the hot mix thinly on parchment to cool is crucial. If left in the mixing bowl, ambient steam will re-condense onto the cereals and turn the mixture soggy.



# Okinawan Andagi

サーターアンダギー

*sātā andagī*

Andagi are not donuts. If you bite into one expecting a light, airy pastry, you are in for a shock. These are dense, hearty, cake-like orbs engineered to survive a brutal shift in a Hawaiian sugar plantation worker's lunch pail. The diaspora adapted the fierce Okinawan original with a splash of evaporated milk and vanilla, softening the crumb just enough for modern tastes while preserving the armor-like crust. The secret to achieving that iconic, cracked smile on the exterior is uncompromising: treat the dough like drywall spackle, never overmix it, force it to rest, and fry it slow and low.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 cup</b>	cake flour	<b>3 large</b>	eggs <i>brought to room temperature</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1/2 cup</b>	evaporated milk
<b>1/2 cup</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>2 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	baking powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>2 qt</b>	neutral oil <i>for frying</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Bring the eggs to room temperature.**

Cold eggs straight from the fridge will cause the melted butter to seize on contact, creating unpleasant lumps of fat in your wet mix.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sift the dry ingredients together to prevent clumping.**

In a large mixing bowl, vigorously whisk the cake flour, granulated sugar, dark brown sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cake flour clumps easily, and perfectly distributed baking powder is essential for the andagi to bloom uniformly in the oil.

- 2. Whisk the wet ingredients gently in a separate bowl.**

Crack the eggs and break them up without beating them into a massive froth. Stir in the evaporated milk, melted butter, and vanilla extract.

- 3. Fold the wet and dry ingredients together without overmixing.**

Make a well in the dry ingredients, pour in the wet mixture, and fold gently with a spatula. Stop the absolute second the dry streaks of flour disappear. The batter should look thick, lumpy, and sticky; overmixing develops gluten, locking the dough tightly and preventing it from cracking in the fryer.

**1. Rest the dough in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.**

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap. This mandatory resting period hydrates the flour evenly, relaxes the gluten you inevitably formed, and firms up the sticky dough so it holds its shape and repels excess frying oil.

**2. Heat three inches of neutral oil to exactly 320°F.**

Use a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven or wok equipped with a deep-fry thermometer over medium-low heat. Temperature control is non-negotiable; because of the high sugar content, standard high-heat frying will scorch the exterior to a bitter black before the inside is cooked.

**3. Drop ping-pong-sized balls of dough into the hot oil.**

Wet your hands slightly to keep them slick. Squeeze a handful of dough into a fist, forcing it up through the circle made by your thumb and index finger. Pinch off the ball with a flick of the wrist to create a tiny tail that will fry up into the ultimate crunchy bite.

**4. Fry slowly until the dough blooms and turns deep golden-brown.**

Fry four to five balls at a time so you don't crowd the pot. They will sink, float, expand, and eventually crack open like a blooming flower, often flipping themselves in the oil. Let them fry for 6 to 8 minutes, turning gently, until a wooden skewer inserted into the cracked center comes out clean.

**5. Drain the andagi and serve them immediately.**

Remove with a spider or slotted spoon and drain on a wire rack lined with paper towels. They are at their absolute best eaten within minutes of leaving the oil.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **Revive leftovers in the toaster oven.**

Thanks to their robust plantation history, these hold up wonderfully at room temperature for a couple of days. A quick 2 to 3 minutes in a toaster oven will perfectly restore their signature exterior crunch.

- **Troubleshoot smooth spheres.**

If your andagi refuse to crack and remain perfectly smooth, your oil was likely too hot, sealing the crust instantly, or you simply overworked the dough. Stick to gentle folding and strict low-temperature frying.



## Hawaiian Almond Float

The Hawaiian Almond Float is a triumph of working-class pragmatism. Stripped of the exhaustive apricot-kernel grinding demanded by its aristocratic Chinese ancestor, *xìngrén dòufu*, this dessert was reborn in the grueling sugar plantation camps. Immigrant grandmothers turned to the plantation store, discovering that unflavored gelatin, a tin of evaporated milk, and commercial almond extract could remarkably mimic the silken texture and floral aroma of home. Served swimming in the heavy syrups of canned fruit cocktail and lychees, it is a brilliant, unpretentious masterpiece of survival and adaptation.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 tbsp</b>	unflavored gelatin	<b>1 tbsp</b>	pure almond extract
<b>3 1/2 cup</b>	cold water <i>divided</i>	<b>15 oz</b>	canned lychees in syrup <i>undrained</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>15 oz</b>	canned fruit cocktail in syrup <i>undrained</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	evaporated milk	<b>11 oz</b>	canned mandarin oranges in syrup <i>undrained</i>
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	whole milk		

## PREPARATION

- **Do not drain the canned fruit.**

For first-generation mainlanders, the instinct might be to drain the commercial syrup. Resist it. Those syrups mix to create the foundational chilled broth of the dessert.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sprinkle the gelatin evenly over 1/2 cup of the cold water in a small bowl.**  
Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes to hydrate and soften until it looks thick and rubbery.
- 2. Combine the remaining 3 cups of water, evaporated milk, whole milk, and sugar in a medium saucepan over medium heat.**  
Whisk gently until the sugar dissolves completely and the mixture is hot, taking strict care not to let it boil, which will curdle the milk.
- 3. Remove the saucepan from the heat and whisk in the bloomed gelatin.**  
Stir thoroughly until the rubbery mass is entirely dissolved and the liquid is perfectly smooth.
- 4. Stir in the almond extract off the heat.**  
Adding the extract after removing the pot from the stove preserves its volatile aromatic compounds, ensuring that sharp, nostalgic amaretto fragrance.

- 1. Pour the mixture into a 9x13-inch baking pan and chill in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours.**

Let it cool on the counter for 15 minutes first. You are looking for a firm set with a delicate, silken texture.

- 2. Cut the chilled almond gelatin into 1-inch diamonds and gently fold them into a large serving bowl containing all the canned fruits and their syrups.**

Serve ice cold in small individual bowls. The pooled heavy commercial syrups form the chilled sweet broth that the almond "tofu" floats in.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Mind the heat.**

Boiling evaporated milk will cause it to break, ruining the smooth, pristine white appearance of the almond cubes. Keep it at a gentle simmer.

- **Texture is everything.**

The ratio of liquid to gelatin here is intentionally higher than standard box instructions. This is the secret to mimicking the delicate, break-apart texture of traditional silken tofu.



# Mainland Haupia Squares

*how-pee-uh*

In Hawaii, Haupia is the undisputed king of luau desserts—a cool, bouncing palate cleanser after a mountain of rich, salty kalua pig. You don't need to forage for wild arrowroot to do it justice; the authentic, grandmother-approved method relies on everyday commercial cornstarch and white sugar, a testament to the islands' plantation legacy. It's an exercise in culinary restraint that demands exactly four ingredients, a precise mathematical ratio, and the stubborn patience to whisk at the stove until the chemistry takes over.

## INGREDIENTS

**1/2 cup** cold filtered water

**5 tbsp** cornstarch

<b>14 oz</b>	full-fat unsweetened coconut milk	<b>1/4 cup</b>	granulated white sugar
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	unsweetened coconut flakes <i>lightly toasted</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare the mold.**

Lightly grease an 8x8-inch square glass or metal baking pan with a neutral oil, or line the bottom with a strip of parchment paper for easy extraction.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the slurry.**

In a small mixing bowl, aggressively whisk together the cold water and cornstarch until the liquid is entirely smooth and resembles whole milk.

- 2. Heat the coconut base.**

Pour the entire can of coconut milk into a medium saucepan, add the sugar, and place over medium heat, whisking gently until the sugar dissolves and the liquid comes to a bare, bubbling simmer.

- 3. Activate the gelatinization.**

Reduce the heat to medium-low, give your cornstarch slurry one final stir to reincorporate any settled starch, and pour it slowly in a thin stream into the simmering coconut milk while whisking the saucepan continuously.

- 4. Cook it to the finish line.**

Do not walk away from the stove; continue to whisk vigorously until the mixture undergoes a rapid physical transformation, thickening into a glue-like consistency with a glossy sheen.

- 5. Push past the thickening point.**

Once it thickens, keep whisking over the heat for an additional two to three minutes until it begins to pull away from the edges of the pan.

## 1. **Set the pudding.**

Immediately remove the saucepan from the heat, pour the thick pudding into the prepared pan, and quickly smooth the top with an offset spatula before it begins to set.

## 2. **Chill and serve.**

Allow the pan to sit at room temperature for twenty minutes to cool slightly, cover tightly with plastic wrap without letting it touch the surface, and chill in the refrigerator for at least four hours before slicing into two-inch squares with a wet knife.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Trust the math.**

The structural integrity of a sliceable square relies entirely on the strict ratio of five tablespoons of cornstarch to one can of full-fat coconut milk.

- **Leave the dairy and vanilla out of it.**

Mainland blogs love to dress haupia up with milk, vanilla extract, or gelatin, but doing so destroys the traditional bouncy mouthfeel and dilutes the pure, unmistakable flavor of the coconut.

- **Embrace a soft set.**

If your pudding weeps or refuses to set after six hours, you undercooked the starch; don't try to re-boil it, just accept your fate and eat it with a spoon exactly the way they serve it at local plate-lunch counters.



## Local-Style Chantilly Frosting and "Hack" Cocoa Puffs

Mention Coco Puffs to anyone who grew up in Hawaii, and you won't hear about breakfast cereal; you'll hear about a legendary, pudding-filled pastry crowned with a salty-sweet, buttery cooked custard known as Chantilly. Born in Honolulu's working-class bakeries and leaning heavily on plantation-era pantry staples like evaporated milk, this isn't some fussy French pâtisserie. Recreating it in a mainland kitchen means honoring the island grandmother's ultimate secret: deploying a brilliant instant-pudding "hack" that saves hours of prep without sacrificing an ounce of that undeniable, deeply nostalgic taste of home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 cup</b>	water	<b>1 cup</b>	whipped topping <i>thawed</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>cut into cubes</i>	<b>12 oz</b>	evaporated milk
<b>1 tsp</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>4 large</b>	large egg yolks <i>lightly beaten</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>cubed</i>
<b>4 large</b>	large eggs <i>room temperature</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	cornstarch <i>mixed with 1 tbsp water to form a slurry</i>
<b>3.9 oz</b>	instant chocolate pudding mix	<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	vanilla extract
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	whole milk <i>cold</i>	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	kosher salt
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	macadamia nuts <i>finely chopped and roasted</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Mix and chill the hack filling first**

Whisk the instant chocolate pudding mix and cold milk together for two minutes until noticeably thick, then gently fold in the whipped topping until uniform. Cover the surface directly with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator to set completely.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Build the Chantilly frosting base**

In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-low heat, continuously whisk the evaporated milk, sugar, egg yolks, 1/2 cup butter, and 1/4 teaspoon salt to prevent the eggs from scrambling.

**1. Thicken the custard with the cornstarch slurry**

As the butter melts, pour in the cornstarch slurry and cook for 10 to 12 minutes until it comes to a gentle boil and resembles a rich caramel that leaves a clear trail when scraped with a spatula.

**2. Chill the Chantilly frosting**

Remove from heat, whisk in the vanilla, and pour into a shallow dish with plastic wrap pressed directly against the surface. Chill for at least two hours.

**3. Boil the choux liquids**

Preheat the oven to 425°F and line two baking sheets with parchment. In a medium saucepan, bring the water, 1/2 cup butter, 1 teaspoon sugar, and 1/2 teaspoon salt to a rolling boil.

**4. Dry out the choux dough**

Off the heat, dump in the flour all at once and stir vigorously, then return to medium heat for two minutes, mashing the dough against the sides until a thin white film forms on the bottom of the pan.

**5. Incorporate the eggs**

Transfer the dough to a mixer and let it cool for five minutes so it doesn't scramble the eggs. Beat in the eggs one at a time until the dough is smooth, glossy, and holds a soft peak.

**6. Pipe and bake the pastry puffs**

Pipe 1.5-inch mounds onto parchment paper, spacing them apart. Bake at 425°F for 15 minutes, then without opening the door, drop the temperature to 325°F and bake another 20 to 25 minutes until deeply golden brown and dry.

**7. Vent and cool the puffs**

Carefully poke a tiny hole in the side of each hot puff with a toothpick to let steam escape, preventing them from collapsing, then let them cool completely on a wire rack.

**8. Fill the cooled puffs**

Use a chopstick to widen the vent hole in each pastry, then pipe the chilled chocolate filling inside until the puff feels heavy.

## 1. Frost and garnish

Spread a thick layer or pipe a generous dollop of the chilled Chantilly frosting on top of each filled puff and immediately sprinkle with the chopped macadamia nuts.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Coco Puffs must be eaten chilled**

The authentic experience requires the assembled pastries to sit in the refrigerator for an hour or two before serving, allowing the Chantilly to firm up into a buttery fudge and the choux shell to perfectly meld with the cold pudding.