

# GROWN WITH ALOHA

---

A GUIDE TO HAWAII'S COFFEE INDUSTRY:  
YESTERDAY, TODAY & TOMORROW







The Hawaii Coffee Association's mission is to represent all sectors of the Hawai'i coffee industry, including growers, millers, wholesalers, roasters and retailers.

The HCA's primary objective is to increase awareness and consumption of Hawaiian coffees. A major component of HCA's work is the continuing education of members and consumers.





# IN THE BEGINNING

Coffee first arrived to Hawai'i from Brazil in 1825 and was planted in Mānoa valley on the island of O'ahu, although, some believe it may have first arrived a decade earlier.

Coffee's early decades in Hawai'i were tumultuous as plantations combatted a scale insect, challenging weather conditions, and a dearth of workers caused by an exodus to California during the gold rush. In many areas, competition with sugar plantations for land and labor further stymied the early development of the Hawaiian coffee industry. During the middle of the 19th century, some success was found and a positive international reputation was built. Near the end of the century, a new variety from Guatemala, 'Typica', was introduced and proved to be a prolific producer relative to the Brazilian variety. Farmers quickly switched to it.

At the end of the century, coffee prices crashed and coffee production suffered a steep decline on most of the islands. The region of Kona on Hawai'i Island was the only place to maintain a successful coffee growing community. Throughout the 20th century, the viability of coffee production in Kona waxed and waned but it never completely disappeared.

By the 1980s, sugarcane and pineapple, two major crops in Hawai'i, were losing their dominance and the large companies that owned them began seeking alternative crops to plant. Coffee was a logical choice because of its suitability, local history, innovations in harvesting technology, and the burgeoning specialty coffee movement.

These coffee farms, borne from crop diversification efforts, helped bring a resurgence of coffee cultivation throughout Hawai'i. With the development of the Internet and the continued growth of specialty coffee, marketing coffee from individual estates became popular. Today, Hawai'i's coffee farms employ a diverse set of business models ranging from selling coffee cherry to complete seed-to-cup operations.

Currently, coffee is grown on 5 Hawaiian Islands in 8 regions. The industry has never been healthier or more diverse. The myriad of varieties, innovations, and business models has created an exciting coffee industry unlike any other in the world.





# FARM TO CUP, HAWAI'I-STYLE

## HAWAI'I CAN BE A CHARMING PLACE TO DISCOVER THE PERFECT COFFEE

One can select among hundreds of farms, several regions and many coffee varieties, often sold direct from the farm - each with distinctive farm practices, styles, and flavor profiles. Buyers can source green coffees direct from farms, through local mills and exporters who aggregate regional coffees, or through one of Hawai'i's large commercial producers.

The majority of producers are considered small “lifestyle” farms or small commercial farms with sales ranging from \$10,000 to \$250,000. But when aggregated, Hawai'i's nearly 1,000 coffee farms produce one of the state's most important crops. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, coffee is ranked as the second highest value crop in Hawai'i, just behind seed corn.

Hawai'i's coffee harvest season runs broadly from August through March. All coffees in Hawai'i are hand-harvested, except for 4 of the largest farms, one each located on Maui, Kaua'i, Moloka'i, and O'ahu.





6

After harvesting, producers employ a wide variety of processing methods, accounting for the current weather conditions, farm infrastructure, availability of water, and the desired result. Washed coffee is the most common processing method. These are typically dried on patios, raised beds or covered rooftops, and raked frequently for one to three weeks, or until the moisture is low enough to safely store.

Semi-washed, pulp(ed)-naturals (“honeys”), and full natural processed coffees are becoming increasingly popular as producers experiment and demonstrate improvements in quality and innovation. On the four mechanically harvested farms, where the weather tends to be dry around harvest time, some cherries are fully dried on the trees prior to harvesting.

Unlike most coffee producing origins, Hawai‘i’s coffee growers have several avenues of distribution and can refine





their coffees as much as they choose. Many mills serve farmers with an array of equipment including dry mills, graders, gravity tables, optical sorters, and roasters. Farmers choose their level of service, generally informed by whether they'll sell direct to consumers, to a roaster, or to an exporter.

When shopping for Hawaiian coffee, a wide selection can be found: in varieties, region, processing method, and grade. Hawai'i offers a broad spectrum of unique and distinctive coffees produced exclusively for the specialty coffee palate.

With so much variety, it's hard to define Hawaiian coffee in any singular way. Hundreds of small, independent farms, often with unique and innovative practices, create interesting and distinctive nuances in the cup. Hawai'i is a legendary place for coffee lovers to "treasure hunt" for their favorite coffee.



# HAWAI'I'S GEOGRAPHICAL GROWING REGIONS

## HAWAI'I ISLAND

*(commonly known as the Big Island)*



### HAMAKUA

**Farms:** 15-20

**Growing Area:** ~45 acres

**Elevation:** 350-2,500 feet

**Average farm size:** 5-7 acres

This region is a cool, high-rainfall, red soil coffee area.

**Tasting notes:** citrus, sweet cocoa, nutty. Good body and mouthfeel.



### KA'Ū

**Farms:** 80-90

**Growing Area:** 830 acres

**Elevation:** 1,100-2,700 feet

**Average farm size:** 5-10 acres

An unspoiled land, sunny climate and misty afternoons give Ka'ū coffee its characteristic deep flavors.

**Tasting notes:** chocolate, cherry, floral, citrus.

**Awards:** 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2017 Hawaii Coffee Association (Grand Champion, various divisions); 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 Roaster's Guild Coffee of the Year



## KONA

**Farms:** 900-1,000

**Growing Area:** 3,800-4,000 acres

**Elevation:** 500-3,000 feet

**Average farm size:** 2-5 acres

Kona is Hawai'i's most recognized coffee region, commanding some of the highest prices in the world. The 'Kona Typica' variety is most commonly grown here.

**Tasting notes:** floral, citrus, berry, and nutty notes in the cup with a smooth finish.

**Awards:** 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 Hawaii Coffee Association (Grand Champion, various divisions)



## HAWAI'I

**Farms:** 20+ farms

**Growing Area:** 125 acres

**Elevation:** 300-2,600 feet

This region includes Puna, the wettest locale of Hawai'i Island with an average rainfall of 150" to 220" annually. Most coffee farms in this region are composed of 2-3 acres.

**Tasting notes:** honey, mineral, wine, full-bodied, peach/stone fruit, nutty overtones.

**Awards:** 2013 Hawaii Coffee Association (Grand Champion, Creative Division)

---

## MAUI



**Growing Area:** 600 acres

**Lahaina:** 500 acres in large commercial production

**Upcountry:** 100 acres in smaller, independently owned farms.

Maui has a large-scale commercial farm on the Lahaina side and several smaller estates in the "Upcountry" region on the slopes of Haleakalā.

**Tasting notes:** Earthy, sweet, with notes of chocolate and vanilla.

**Awards:** 2017 Hawaii Coffee Association (Grand Champion, Creative Division)

---

## MOLOKA'I



**Growing Area:** ~150 acres

This small island of approximately 7,500 residents has one 150-acre plantation and a mill in the village of Kualapu'u. It's the sole source of Moloka'i coffee.

**Tasting notes:** nutty, sweet, caramel, slightly herbal, full-bodied, earthy, chocolate aftertaste.

---

## O'AHU



**Growing Area:** ~160 acres

The majority of the acres belong to a single farm on the island's north shore. The smaller portion of acreage belongs to an agricultural research company that harvests a fraction of its fields for commercial use.

**Tasting notes:** milk chocolate, sweet, fruit, floral.

11

---

## KAUA'I



**Growing Area:** ~3,000 acres

Most of the commercial coffee grown on Kaua'i is washed processed Arabica varieties. There are three commercial farms, with the largest coffee farm producing more than one third of all the coffee grown in the USA.

**Yield:** 2.4 million pounds of green coffee

**Tasting notes:** chocolate, earthy, spicy, mango, mellow, delicate.



NI'IIHAU

KAUA'I

### **KAUA'I COFFEE**

Most of the commercial coffee grown on Kaua'i are washed processed Arabica varieties. There are three commercial farms, with the largest coffee farm producing more than one third of all the coffee grown in the USA.

O'AHU

### **O'AHU COFFEE**

Near O'ahu's North Shore, at 600-700 feet above sea level, between the towns of Wahiawā and Waialua, you'll find 155 acres of Arabica 'Typica' coffee. O'ahu coffee has been described as a smooth, mellow, well-balanced cup with a medium body, clean finish, hint of chocolate and a pleasant, lingering aftertaste.

# Hawai'i's Distinct Growing Regions

## MOLOKA'I COFFEE

In central Moloka'i, in the village of Kualapu'u, lies a 115-acre coffee plantation where coffee beans thrive in the rich red volcanic soil, producing a rich bodied, medium roast coffee with mild acidity and a luscious hint of chocolate at the finish.

## MAUI COFFEE

On Maui, there are over 500 acres, cultivated by over 50 farms of varying sizes on the slopes of Haleakala and the West Maui Mountains. The industry on Maui has grown considerably in recent years, as its quality, diversity, and uniqueness has become better known.

## HAMAKUA COFFEE

The Hamakua District runs from the lush jungle and waterfalls of Hilo to the deep valley of Waipio and on to Upcountry Waimea. Hamakua coffee has flavors that are often described as dessert in nature: vanilla, caramel and rich cocoa.

## KONA COFFEE

Hawai'i's best-known coffee, asked for around the world. With almost half of the total coffee grown in Hawai'i, over 600 independent farms within the borders of North and South Kona on Hawai'i Island produce 100% Kona Coffee, with its delicate, aromatic flavor. Aficionados consider 100% Kona Coffee to be the only way to go.

## KA'Ū COFFEE

The district of Ka'ū spans the south side of Hawai'i Island, providing a unique climate for growing specialty coffee. The climate and soils of the region have produced some of the best coffees in the world, described as having a rich flavor, piquant acidity and intriguing hints of sweetness and spice, citrus and jasmine aroma, fresh butter undertones, hints of lime and currant, and a long spice finish.

## PUNA\*

Coffees grown in Puna are included in the the Hawai'i region. Puna is located between Hilo and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. It is typically full-bodied, heavy, with nutty overtones.

\*Puna is not a recognized geographic region for purposes of coffee labeling and advertising under Hawai'i law. Coffee grown in the Puna district may be labeled Hawai'i coffee.





# VARIETIES

Although many know of ‘Kona Typica’, Hawai‘i’s coffee farmers grow many varieties. Besides small experimental plantings or rootstock production for grafting, all coffee grown in Hawai‘i is Arabica.

---

## OLD HAWAIIAN

The original variety brought from Brazil was ‘Typica’. Some of those descendants still exist on the Big Island, where they are commonly known as Old Hawaiian.

## TYPICA

More than 90% of coffee in Kona is known as ‘Kona Typica’, even though it is all descended from an 1892 introduction from Guatemala. Likely all of the Typica planted throughout the state comes from the same lineage. In warmer climates, Typica coffees display a sweet and balanced profile with hints of nuts and citrus whereas in cooler climates, floral and berry notes may appear.

## CATURRA

Red and yellow Caturras are the second most common variety grown in the Ka‘ū, Puna, and Hilo regions of Hawai‘i Island. They are also widely grown on Maui. Caturra produces higher acidity (and yields) than Typica, and, in cooler climates, may show notes of stone fruit, herbs, berry, and tropical fruit.





## CATUAI

A common variety grown in Moloka'i, Maui, Kaua'i, and in the Ka'ū and Puna regions. It tends to be grown in warmer climates, resulting in a simpler flavor profile that may include cocoa, spiciness, or earthiness.

16

## BOURBON

Red, Yellow, and Pink Bourbon are currently grown in very limited quantities in all regions of Hawai'i Island and on Maui and O'ahu. It is relatively sweet and tends to have medium-high levels of acidity and complexity in the cup.





## **MOKKA**

Mokka is a low yielding, dwarf mutation of Bourbon that produces the smallest beans of any Arabica variety. It is predominantly grown on Maui. Often, Mokka is spicy or earthy and chocolatey, but on occasion, it can produce notes of rose.

## **MARAGOGYPE**

Maragogype is a giant mutant of Typica that's currently found in the Kona, Ka'ū, and Puna regions, along with limited plantings on small farms in Maui. It's heavy bodied and notes of grapefruit, chocolate, and peach are common.

## **SL28**

A Bourbon-derived variety known for its complex cup quality. Recent plantings of this variety have begun on a limited scale on farms in Kona, Ka'ū, and Puna, as well as on O'ahu.

## **OTHER VARIETIES**

Geisha, Blue Mountain, Laurina, and others can be found scattered throughout the state. Hawai'i also has a few novel varieties that were borne out of a local breeding program.

# A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

## HAWAI'I'S COFFEE CERTIFICATION & GRADING SYSTEMS

Hawai'i's producers understand that coffee quality is of vital importance to our industry. The Hawai'i Coffee Association works closely with Hawai'i's Department of Agriculture's Quality Assurance Division to protect the quality and integrity of Hawai'i-grown coffee.

18

Skilled Department of Agriculture Quality Assurance inspectors sample each lot presented for certification and meticulously measure bean size, physical imperfections (or lack of), and cup characteristics before issuing a State of Hawai'i certification mark and unique number. Each certified lot offers traceability and attests to the quality of the coffee held within. Certification marks are issued for origins located throughout the state and for quality grades including Prime, Select, Hawai'i #1, Fancy, Extra Fancy and Naturals.

## WE TAKE COFFEE QUALITY VERY SERIOUSLY IN HAWAI'I

It is illegal to offer or sell any coffee as Hawaiian that fails to meet our rigorous quality standards, and it's a criminal offense to falsely label coffee as being Hawai'i-grown.

Hawai'i's producers are subject to government audits and are required by law to maintain detailed records for a minimum of six years. This requirement is part of a system designed to ensure quality, protect integrity, and offer traceability of Hawai'i-grown coffee.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IS A WAY OF LIFE**

The Hawaiian coffee industry is built on the pillars of sustainability. Not only is sustainability woven into our culture, Hawai'i's producers must comply with stringent United States Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) rules and meet local and Federal labor laws, including minimum wage. Many chemicals available in other producer countries are not available in Hawai'i due to health and environmental concerns. Our compliance is mandatory and violators are punishable.



As a result of being grown in the United States, Hawai'i-grown coffee offers important assurances that the coffee is ethically produced and grown in an environmentally responsible way.

Hawai'i's deep respect for the land, water, and creatures is not merely a compliance issue. It's a part of everything Hawai'i coffee farmers do.



# EVENTS

Hawai'i offers numerous opportunities to explore the myriad ways coffee is produced in Hawai'i and the variety of flavor profiles that can be found. At the following events, growers, roasters, and baristas are eager to teach, answer questions, and serve to curious drinkers.

20

---

## **HAWAII COFFEE ASSOCIATION STATEWIDE CUPPING COMPETITION & ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The premiere multi-day event for the state's coffee industry, which includes industry presentations, workshops and a statewide cupping competition. Esteemed judges use Specialty Coffee Association standards in evaluating nearly a hundred samples.

**Dates:** Summer months, usually July

**Location:** Varies

**Website:** [HawaiiCoffeeAssoc.org](http://HawaiiCoffeeAssoc.org)



## KA'Ū COFFEE FESTIVAL

Events include star gazing, farm tours, a recipe contest and brewing with baristas. Attendees can experience Ka'ū coffees, meet the farmers, and enjoy local culture via the epic Ho'olaule'a which includes local food, hula, and live music. On the following morning, the Ka'ū Coffee College offers free seminars from industry experts.

**Dates:** April and/or May

**Location:** Pahala Community Center, Hawai'i Island

**Website:** [KauCoffeeFestival.com](http://KauCoffeeFestival.com)

## KONA COFFEE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

This 10-day event is one of Hawai'i's oldest and most successful festivals, celebrating cultural activities along with Kona coffee. Popular events include the Kona coffee recipe contest, the coffee harvesting contest and, farm/mill tours. The Kona Coffee Cupping Competition showcases the best Kona coffees grown each year.

**Dates:** Annually in November

**Location:** Kona, various, Hawai'i Island

**Website:** [KonaCoffeeFest.com](http://KonaCoffeeFest.com)

## MAUI SEED TO CUP COFFEE FESTIVAL

This festival, organized by the Maui Coffee Association, features demonstrations and coffee-inspired food and drinks. This is a festival with character; its most quirky event is a fashion show with clothing made from filters and burlap sacks.

**Dates:** Summer

**Location:** Maui, varies

**Website:** [MauiCoffeeAssociation.com](http://MauiCoffeeAssociation.com)





# HAWAI'I AT THE LEADING EDGE OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Coffee research performed in Hawai'i reacts directly to local demands. This has been true since the 1950's when coffee research became a focus of the Hawai'i Cooperative Extensive Service. Through that time, critical research has explored needs such as pruning, fertilization, and nematode control. More recently, when the Coffee Berry Borer arrived in Hawai'i in 2010, the University of Hawai'i's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, the US and Hawai'i Departments of Agriculture, the Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center, and a number of public and private organizations collaborated with colleagues around the globe to develop best management practices tailored to Hawai'i's unique circumstances.

Creating new cultivars for Hawai'i has been a major focus of genetics research. The Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center began investigating breeding novel and potentially rust resistant varieties in the 1990's. The first stable Hawaiian cultivar bred in the state, called Mamo (meaning "descendent" in Hawaiian), was released to market in 2017. It is a fifth-generation cross of 'Mokka' and 'Maragogype' that is considered to have exceptional flavor and a superior bean size.



Numerous other research topics have been explored locally in recent years. Researchers have delved into genetic modification of coffee, production practices that influence cup quality, innovative pruning methods for increased and stable yields, engineering of processing equipment and roasters, and the underlying factors that control and influence flower production.

While Hawai'i scientists perform methodical, controlled experiments, plenty of less formal experimentation is taking place as well. Farmers are manipulating fermentation by adding specific yeast strains to fermentation tanks, they are creating special rooms to control honey processing, and they try a variety of products that will enhance plant nutrition or combat pests. As the global demand for more and better coffee grows, Hawai'i's researchers contribute handily to the body of knowledge that helps make coffee farmers around the globe more successful.

The background features a large, faint watermark of the Hawaii Coffee Association logo. It consists of a circular border containing the text "HAWAII COFFEE ASSOCIATION" and a central stylized coffee plant with several leaves and a cluster of coffee cherries.

*Mahalo for your role in creating this booklet:*

Kelleigh Stewart

Chris Manfredi

Shawn Steiman, PhD

Brandon Damitz

Miguel Meza

Ralph Gaston

Joan Obra

Juli Burden

DTL Hawai'i

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture

All photos courtesy of the Hawaii Coffee Association

© 2018 Hawaii Coffee Association



PO Box 168, Kealahou, Hawai'i 96750  
[www.HawaiiCoffeeAssoc.org](http://www.HawaiiCoffeeAssoc.org)



Department  
of Agriculture  
STATE OF HAWAII