

now grace the plates in every high-end-resort dining room on the island—and many of the best restaurants in Honolulu on Oahu.

Babian's success at the Four Seasons—the resort still obtains 70 percent of its produce from local growers—has influenced other restaurants on the island to buy more local food. Johnston and Betsy Sanderson operate the 11-year-old Kekela Farms in Kamuela, where they raise more than 100 varieties of 30 different vegetables on the north slope of volcanic Mauna Kea. In addition to selling at farmers' markets and to the Four Seasons and Pueo's Osteria, Kekela Farms now directly supplies produce to the

Fairmont Orchid and Hapuna Prince hotels. One of the farm's newer customers, Johnston notes with pleasure, is Three Fat Pigs, which chef Philip "Ippy" Aiona of *Food Network Star* fame opened in Waikoloa in March.

Babian believes that visitors to the islands care about local sourcing. "They're well-traveled and much more interested in where their food comes from than ever before," he says. Many of those visitors are surprised to see just how local the supply can be on the Big Island. The Four Seasons buys and dry-ages whole grass-fed beef from Kulana Foods in Hilo; at Pueo's, Babian procures whole-aged forequarters, usually just before he launches a

special on strip steak.

Ironically, good seafood is harder to get. Big Island reef fish are loaded with naturally occurring neurotoxins, so wild-caught fish (mostly tuna) typically comes from Honolulu. Farmed seafood from the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority (NELHA), just 10 miles south of the Four Seasons, more than fills the gap.

Constructed in the 1970s to generate electricity from the temperature difference between deep-ocean and surface waters, NELHA no longer makes power. But it has found a new purpose in supplying pure seawater from different depths and of different temperatures to commercial tenants. Kona Cold Lobsters,

## MORE HOMEGROWN HAWAIIAN HOT SPOTS



La Mer

his own way with a philosophy of "local first, organic whenever possible, with *aloha* always." Casual fine dining for breakfast, lunch, and dinner relies extensively on local fish, vegetables from Ma'O Farms on Oahu's west coast, and butter and soft cheeses from Naked Cow Dairy. Kenney also buys a whole hog each week from Shinsato Farm, located in the tropical rain forest at the base of the Ko'olau mountains. "The meat," he says, "tastes like the air smells." *Town*, 808.735.5900, [www.townkaimuki.com](http://www.townkaimuki.com)

For years, chef James MacDonald juggled Hawaiian regional cuisine at Maui's Pacific'O and more inventive contemporary farm-to-table cooking at the adjacent I'O. Earlier this year, chef Anton Haines was brought on board to helm Pacific'O. Both restaurants focus on fresh fish landed on Maui, like *onaga* and *chu* (two snappers) as well as albacore and bigeye tuna. MacDonald's not-so-secret weapon at both restaurants is O'o Farm in the Maui up-country, where the restaurants' other owners, Louis Coulombe and Stephan Bel-Robert, grow all the vegetables and herbs on the menus, and many of the fruits. They also grow and roast their own Maui coffee. *Pacific'O*, 808.667.4341, [www.pacificomaui.com](http://www.pacificomaui.com); *I'O*, 808.661.8422, [www.iomaui.com](http://www.iomaui.com)

—D.L.

WHEN VIKRAM GARG arrived in 2008 as the executive chef at the Halekulani hotel, he was already steeped in a world of flavors. Trained in French, Mediterranean, and Southeast Asian cuisines, Garg infuses the contemporary French menu of the Honolulu property's La Mer restaurant with a spice profile from the palace kitchens of India. Island flavors dominate the seafood-oriented menu of the hotel's Orchids, where NELHA lobster and abalone feature prominently. Garg has championed locally grown hearts of palm and is such a fanatic about spices that he has contracted growers to provide him with cinnamon leaf, peppercorns, and turmeric. He

buys many of his vegetables from Molokai because the island is a bastion of GMO-free agriculture, a cause dear to his heart. To truly sample his personal style of "locally inspired global cuisine," it is worth booking table 1 at Orchids, where up to eight diners can enjoy a five- to seven-course tasting menu. *Halekulani*, 808.923.2311, [www.halekulani.com](http://www.halekulani.com)

Ed Kenney, First Lady Michelle Obama's favorite Honolulu chef, calls his restaurant *Town* in suburban Kaimuki "an unpretentious neighborhood American bistro." Kenney pays homage to the Honolulu culinary pioneers Alan Wong and Roy Yamaguchi, but goes