

## Hamakua Mushrooms

**Where:** Laupahoehoe, HI (about a 45-minute drive to Merriman's Waimea)

**What do they have:** Mushrooms! They grow two main types:

**Alii (what we mostly use)..** A mild flavored mushroom. It's mostly stem and no cap and is around 6 inches in length. Protein quality is nearly equal to animal derived protein. The Alii Oyster has a wonderful nutty flavor, a resilient firm texture, and an amazing shelf life. Chefs in some of the country's finest restaurants have remarked on its versatility and will often use it in place of wild mushrooms. It has a great range of flavor, depending on the preparation style. It can be sauteed, grilled, braised, stewed, or broiled. Unlike many mushrooms, the stem has the same wonderful texture and flavor as the cap—nothing is wasted. The stem may be sliced into medallions and prepared like seared scallops. Alii Oysters offers endless opportunities for creativity!



**Pioppini..** Known as the Black Poplar mushroom that has a nutty flavor and a crunch texture. The unique robust flavor of the Pioppini has already made it a hit with chefs all over America. It has magnificent dark brown caps on long cream colored stems. The intense forest flavor makes it a natural for pastas, game, and red meats. The caps are dark chocolate brown with a soft/silky texture. The creamy stems have a texture similar to asparagus. Excellent on its own, with red meats or game. Widely used in Italy for pasta con funghi. Pair with big red wines.

**Who/How long:** Owned by Bob & Janice Stanga. "Bob and Janice have had their hands in a variety of careers and substrate on the road to becoming successful mushroom farmers in Hamakua.



Overcoming obstacles that would have stopped many, they persevered to create Hamakua Mushrooms, which are now found in supermarkets and stores around the state, on the tables of the most discerning Hawaiian restaurants, and even at a White House dinner. Janice Stanga spent 27 years as an interior designer and her husband, Bob, was a helicopter pilot on Oahu before they decided to switch careers and start growing mushrooms. Why mushrooms? Because they wanted to create

gourmet items no one else was growing. By 2003, they had built a 16,000-square-foot facility that today produces nearly 4,000 pounds of mushrooms a week, employing 20 people from the Laupahoehoe area.”