

Kumu Farms

Kumu Farms is an organic farm located at Maui Tropical Plantation in Waikapu, Maui and Ho'olehua on the island of Moloka'i. Kumu Farms specializes in papayas, sweet basil, other fresh herbs plus specialty crops including beets, arugula, kale, and more. It also markets its famous pesto! Established in 1981 on Moloka'i, today over half of its farmland is CO-Certified Organic.



Kumu Farms, with location on Maui and Molokai, is one of the largest diversified organic farms in the state of Hawaii. Between the two farms they grow non-GMO papaya, bananas, greens, herbs and a wide variety of certified organic vegetables. The mission of Kumu Farms is stewardship of the land, offering viable employment for Maui residents and providing the community with good, fresh food. These motivations have garnered them much success. Kumu Farms, which began operations on Oahu decades ago, has grown extensively and now includes acreage on Molokai and even more on Maui.

More Info:

After running a foreign-language school in Palo Alto for 13 years, Emanuela Vinciguerra thought she was semiretired when she moved to Molokai in 2006 with husband Steve Jaquess.

But after meeting farmer Grant Schule of Kumu Farms, Hawaii's largest producer of certified organic, non-genetically modified papaya, among other crops, Vinciguerra discovered a taste for marketing fresh produce to chefs and consumers.

"I'm passionate about food, and so I'm passionate about what nature can do for us," said Vinciguerra. When Schule decided to open another organic farm and farm stand in 2012, this time at Maui Tropical Plantation in Waikapu, she and Jaquess moved to the Valley Isle, too.

Schule remains "the engine and soul" of Kumu Farms, working the land every day with his crew, as Vinciguerra noted, while she has become the face of the farm as head of sales and marketing.



“I like to link people together and educate people on what’s been happening in the last few years,” Vinciguerra said. “In Hawaii, we always follow the West Coast, so we’re a little bit late with the farm-to-table trend.” But they’re catching up quickly, judging by sales of organic greens such as kale and chard, as well as other vegetables not typically associated with Hawaii, including beets, radishes, turnips, carrots and cabbage. Visitors naturally gravitate to tropical offerings like juicy mangoes, Strawberry Sunrise papayas, stubby apple bananas and golden pineapple.

“It’s just spectacular what they’re doing there,” says Dania Katz, editor of the quarterly Edible Hawaiian Islands magazine, which has an office

on the plantation. “A couple of chefs really get inspired when they walk the farm, and we’re just going to see more of them.”

While executive chef of the Grand Wailea, home to seven dining outlets that serve 5,000 meals a day, Faivre would stop by weekly in his chef’s whites to choose his own fruit and vegetables, Vinciguerra said. He still visits regularly, she noted, but now he’s restructuring the menu at the Aston hotel restaurants on Oahu, Kauai and Maui to be more “fresh and farm to table. He said it’s thanks to his experience at Kumu Farms that they hired him to do that.”

McDowell helped Vinciguerra develop products from Kumu Farms’ bounty, including spicy papaya jam and organic basil and cilantro macadamia nut pestos. The latter are sold not only at the farm stand but also at Whole Foods and the Foodland chain across the islands. “She keeps working hard and gathering new businesses,” Mc Dowell said.

A native of Abruzzo, Italy, Vinciguerra says she is just trying to share the farm to table philosophy she grew up with.

“I’m a food lover, but I’m also an educator and I’m here to educate the chefs,” she says. “We need chefs willing to make the special of the day with the harvest that we have. When you have an overflow because nature gives it to you, you use that.”