

# Increasing the Value of Products from Small Family Farms by Enriching the Culinary Experience of the Local Consumers

*Glenn Shinsato (Hawai'i – Farmer/Rancher Grant)*

**Project Number:** FW01-021

**Title:** Increasing the Value of Products from Small Family Farms by Enriching the Culinary Experience of the Local Consumers

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Glenn and Amy Shinsato at their farm in Kāne'ohe.

**SARE Grant:** \$4,000

**Situation:**

Local swine producers typically compete with mainland imports of meat, which are often priced much lower than the cost of producing a market hog locally.

Glenn Shinsato operates the 100-sow Tomei Farm with his brother-in-law, wife and daughter in Kahalu'u, nestled in the foothills of the Ko'olau Pali. The farm processes pigs in a USDA-approved slaughterhouse to meet client needs.

Small hog operations like Shinsato's gain value from their labor by commanding a premium price for a quality product and by utilizing the entire pig. Hawai'i producers sell younger smaller pigs, but buyers pay a premium only for chops, loin and ribs. The results in poor utilization of picnic ham, bellies and other cuts, reducing the animal's value.

An alternative is for local producers to develop niche markets and to increase the use of pork beyond the traditional dining-out dishes or pork chops and pork sirloin. Limited use of non-prime cuts in the culinary arena leaves local producers with these surplus, or undesirable, cuts to compete with cheap imports.

Educating chefs and consumers about the values of these non-traditional cuts could enhance markets for local pork producers and broaden the culinary options for chefs and consumers.



Shinsato Farm is nestled in the foothills of the Ko'olau Pali

**Objectives:**

1. Challenge established chefs and culinary students to use non-prime cuts of meat (especially pork) in new cuisine
2. Encourage consumers to experience new dishes from non-prime cuts
3. Encourage greater consumption of locally produced pork and vegetables

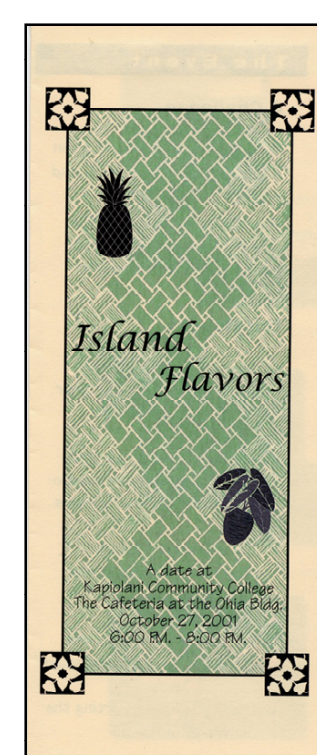
**Actions:**

To showcase the value and utility of local meat (especially pork) and vegetables, the project team planned a food show for chefs and the public. Various sectors of the livestock industry, which face the same competition from the mainland as the swine industry, were also invited to participate.

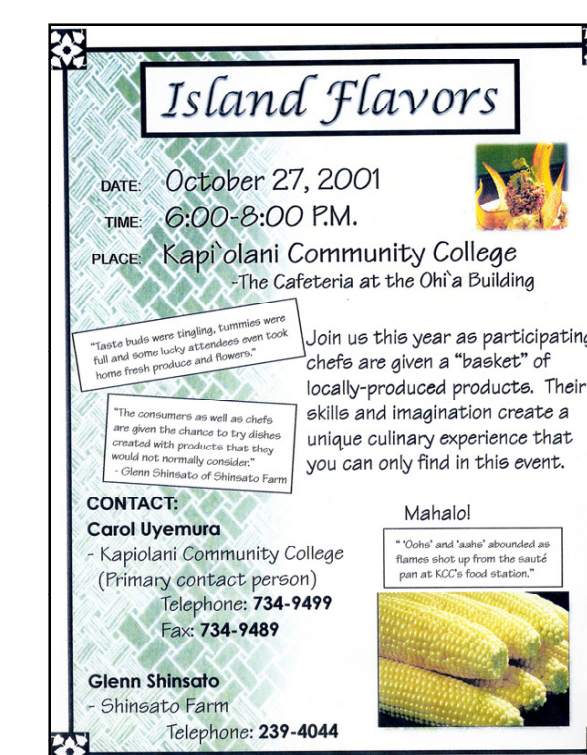
Initial inquiries revealed that holding the event at a local hotel would be too expensive and restrict the types of food that could be served. As a result, the Culinary Arts Program on the campus of the University of Hawai'i - Kapi'olani Community College in Honolulu was selected as the venue for the food show, titled "Island Flavors."

The event, scheduled for Oct. 27, 2001, was publicized through newspapers, magazines, flyers and posters. Planners expected 200-250 people to attend.

In preparation for "Island Flavors," established chefs and culinary program students were given non-prime cuts of meat and locally grown vegetables as the basis for dishes they designed.



The Island Flavors brochure.



The Island Flavors flyer.

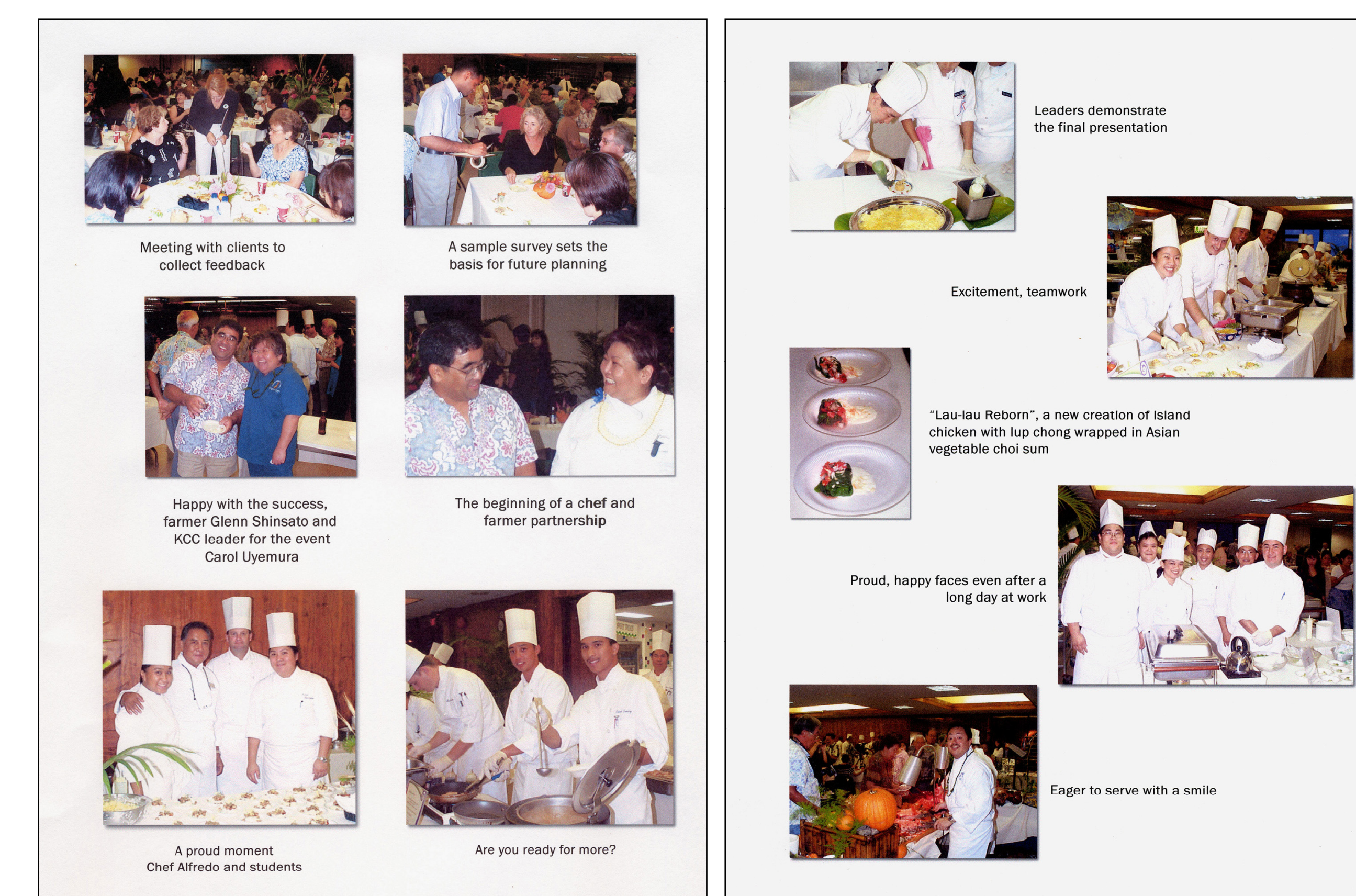
**Results:**

Despite heavy rain, attendance exceeded expectations, with approximately 300 people showing up at the KCC cafeteria to sample nearly 20 locally produced and prepared dishes. Here are some examples:

- Crispy Pork Intestine Salad with a Fresh Corn Vinaigrette
- Yaki Buta Tongue and Yaki Musubi
- Lau Lau Reborn
- Asian Tortellini
- Braised Island Pork with Lemongrass Taro Hash
- Jamaican Smoke Puff
- Thai-Style Curried Pork Summer Rolls
- Kohala Mountain Oysters Rumaki Tempura with a Ponzu Splash
- Lime-Marinated Grilled Pork with Eggplant Caviar
- Roast Suckling Pigs

After the show had been opened for 30-40 minutes, a simple one-page survey, crafted to gauge eating habits and preferences of the guests, was conducted by the University of Hawai'i swine specialist and UH students. The responses from nearly 25% of the 300 guests revealed several important findings:

- Pork is the least favored meat while poultry is the most popular.
- The preference for fish and beef fell between that for pork and chicken.
- Consumers are prepared to pay higher prices for locally grown products because they perceived them as being fresher and better tasting.
- Few of the respondents are able to differentiate between foods produced locally and those imported.



Chefs from local restaurants and the Culinary Arts Program on the campus of the University of Hawai'i - Kapi'olani Community College in Honolulu prepared dishes with a local flair. The event was well attended despite heavy rainfall.

**Potential Benefits:**

The feedback from guests confirmed the food show's success. With a rating of 5 being excellent, the surveyed guests rated "Island Flavors" 4.84. Most said they would like to see the event held annually. To have real impact on marketing, such promotion efforts need to be carried on consistently over a period of several years. Still, the dishes were all well received by the participants.

All of the producers who contributed meat and vegetables were invited to attend, and those who did responded positively and said they would continue to support future events.

The information from the food show and results from surveys of chefs and participants was provided to swine producers through an industry-wide meeting conducted by the University of Hawai'i Extension Swine Specialist.