

A business that first took ‘stalk’ in taro

By Jaimie Kim

When it comes to purchasing food these days, it's reassuring to know where it is coming from and who is making it. It's an added bonus when the company has remained a family-run operation within the community for more than 65 years.

Since 1946, HPC Foods Ltd. has been providing Hawaii with locally produced Taro Brand products. Currently, president Craig Tottori represents the company's fourth generation of family involvement — parents and owners Ernest and Miriam Tottori remain involved.

The company began in a poi mill as a three-man operation. “The company has been a part of Hawaii before it was a state,” said human resources manager Ryan Lau.

Since its humble beginnings, the company has grown to a nearly 200-person operation, and currently is looking to expand its employment opportunities.

Originally known as Honolulu Poi Co., the company only produced poi. In the 1960s, it began to offer products that include varieties of bean sprouts, currently making it the largest producer of



Ryan Lau

sprouts in the state. It also offers a variety of taro products, including its Taro Pancake Mix and Hawaiian Poi Powder.

In the 1970s, the company also began to offer cut vegetables and fruits. Then in June 2004, it opened a produce processing plant, where it manufactures fresh-cut produce.

With the growth and diversification of its business, the company decided to change its name to HPC Foods Ltd. in 1990.

Its commitment to the community remains steadfast, with company products grown and



HPC Foods Ltd., which began as a three-person operation, has since expanded to nearly 200 employees. It plans to keep growing while still adhering to strict cleanliness, taste and quality controls.

distributed locally to grocery stores and restaurants.

“It's to ensure maximum freshness and nutrition (in the) product that we're putting out there,” he said. “The company and all of its workers put a lot of care into the product.”

This year, the company received its Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) certification.

“It was such a big accomplishment to be GFSI-certified,” said Lau. “GFSI is the standard — the global standard — that a lot of food manufacturers and producers are going to be held to.”

To start, GFSI guidelines require that companies purchase only raw materials from certified farm-

ers and growers. GFSI standards also strictly dictate how food producers handle and process materials, even controlling the distribution process. This ensures that everything from cleanliness, taste and quality, to size and color, is closely monitored.

“It has opened up doors for us because a lot of times, when we're talking to customers, they want some sort of guarantee of the product that they're buying,” said Lau. “And that's one of the guarantees that we can give them.”

Contact Patrick Klein at pklein@staradvertiser.com if you wish to have your company featured in this section.



Photos courtesy of HPC Foods Ltd.

Company website has home recipes

Just because HPC Foods Ltd. no longer has its Taro Brand bakery doesn't mean you can't indulge in your favorite treats. In fact, the company website (hpc-foods.com) has recipes you can use in your own kitchen.

“(It's to get people more familiar with our products) and the varieties of ways that you can use our product,” said human resources manager Ryan Lau.

In addition to recipes with its own Taro Brand products, HPC Foods Ltd. also partners with other local and mainland companies for distribution purposes. These include Chun Wah Kam noodle products, Aloha Tofu and more.

Some of the recipes were used at the bakery, while customers submitted others. And the company is still accepting recipes, which means it's time to get cooking.

The 411

Company: HPC Foods Ltd.

Address: 288 Libby St., Honolulu, HI 96819

Telephone: 848-2431

Owners: Ernest and Miriam Tottori

Employees: 181

Benefits: Employees receive medical and dental insurance, paid vacation and holidays, life insurance, supplemental life insurance, flexible spending ac-

counts, 401(k) and discounts on products.

Noteworthy: The heart of the company remains in its familial atmosphere. Twice yearly, the entire company gathers to bond with one another and recognize each other's accomplishments.

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