

## MAHIMAHI MUSUBI: COSMOPOLITANIZING STRATEGIES IN HAWAIIAN REGIONAL CUISINE

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Hawaiian Regional Cuisine (HRC) is an haute cuisine that uses high quality island-grown foods in combination with local ethnic flavors and global techniques to form what we term an “engineered cosmopolitan cuisine.” This intentionally developed regional cuisine is analyzed through the work of three chefs who are noted practitioners of HRC. Linking the backgrounds of these chefs with their recipes examines the impact of global cultural flows on the production of cosmopolitan cuisine. A number of “cosmopolitanizing strategies” are interrogated that position HRC concurrently within multiple registers: global, regional, and local. Examples of these crosscutting strategies include disruption, performance, and hybridization. The hybridity present in HRC, as a central cosmopolitanizing strategy, both incorporates but also reaches beyond the local. HRC is discussed as a contact zone where waves of commodity, culture, and tradition collide to form an engineered regional cuisine to wash up along global shores.

IN AUGUST OF 1991, A DOZEN CHEFS<sup>1</sup> FROM AROUND HAWAII met at the Maui Prince hotel for what they termed a Hawaiian Cooking Symposium. After several days of discussion they resolved to help each other in a new organization they called Hawaiian Regional Cuisine (HRC). The chefs were accomplished in their careers but generally not household names. Many were executive chefs at resort hotels and some owned their own successful restaurants. Of the twelve, only Roy Yamaguchi (owner of Roy’s on Oahu),

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who would win a James Beard award later that year, had real name recognition. In addition, Peter Merriman (then owner of Merriman's on the Big Island) and Jean-Marie Josselin (then owner of A Pacific Café on Kaua'i) had been reviewed positively in the national press (Heckathorn 2011). In addition to the chefs, a key person at the meeting was Shep Gordon, a music producer and manager who lived on Maui and was friendly with several of the group. Gordon managed rock star Alice Cooper and several other highly successful music acts. Toward the end of the 1980s, he had added also a number of chefs to his management roster, raising the profile of celebrity chefs such as Wolfgang Puck and Dean Fearing. Gordon saw the public relations potential of a food movement in Hawai'i that featured fresh, local foods and the flavors with which some of the chefs had grown up.

Among the twelve chefs were several who had experience with regional cuisines. Amy Ferguson (2013) had worked at Baby Routh in Dallas when Southwestern Regional Cuisine took off and Roy Yamaguchi (2013) had worked in Los Angeles during the heyday of California cuisine. The use of fresh local ingredients was a given in these markets—something difficult to achieve in Hawai'i at the time. Bound together by their interest in farm-to-table cooking, these chefs, with the assistance of Gordon, pursued a number of public relations activities that had the joint effect of putting Hawai'i on the international culinary map. A number of food festivals widely covered in the culinary press, several additional James Beard awards (Wong, Choy, and Mavrothalassitis), and a number of Beard-award nominations (Choy, Merriman, Gannon, and Josselin) all raised the profile of HRC. A cookbook titled *The New Cuisine of Hawaii: Recipes from the Twelve Celebrated Chefs of Hawaii Regional Cuisine* was authored by Janice Wald Henderson (1994) and featured recipes from each of the HRC chefs. The book was widely reviewed and served to put HRC in the food press nationally. Although the HRC organization formally lasted only three years, its effects were powerful. HRC became a prominent regional cuisine worldwide, and culinary tourism became a critical part of Hawai'i's tourism mix. Looking back, it is important to recognize that HRC didn't automatically just spring to life from some chefs who were friends and colleagues. Rather, the movement was a planned series of steps: the use of high-quality island-grown foods in combination with local ethnic flavors; the techniques of haute cuisine to create new dishes; and finally, a serious public relations campaign.

### **Cultural Flow and the Engineered Cosmopolitan**

In this paper, we focus on the cultural dynamics associated with the creation of HRC. We characterize HRC as a cultural hybrid, another layer

in the creolized cuisine that has developed in Hawai'i since the onset of the plantation era. As such, HRC is a prime case study of the globalization of cuisine, providing an opportunity to consider interactions between the global and the local as a new cuisine was developed or "engineered." Historically, many authors (cf. Canclini 1995; Pieterse 2004; Kraidy 2005) have conceptualized globalization as a relatively straightforward bilateral process of hybridization. For example, Ritzer (2012) has characterized globalization as following the model of McDonaldization—an (American) institution acts in hegemonic ways to standardize process and product in ever-expanding markets around the world. In the actual case of McDonald's, the hybridization produced is primarily the result of local cuisine interacting with McDonald's traditional American menu to produce hybrid menu items such as Shrimp burgers in Japan, spicy Shaka shaka chicken in Singapore, McVeggie burgers in India, and the McArabia sandwich in the Middle East—a pita bread-based version of a shawarma featuring McDonald's burgers and chicken patties (Nasr 2013). These global processes act as hegemonic and colonial influences on local culture. A significant literature exists documenting colonialist global influences on local cuisines (cf. Narayan [1995] for an example from Indian cuisine and Heldke [2001] for an example from Thai cuisine).

In contrast to this version of global homogeneity, many authors have come to view cultural globalization as comprising "multilateral and complex movements among plural origins and plural destinations" (Allen and Sakamoto 2011). As a result, for many scholars, the globalization of culture has become a discussion of the constantly evolving fusion of cultures that may occur at local, regional and global levels (c.f. Pieterse 2004). The islands of Hawai'i are a particularly useful place to study the evolution of cuisine because of their relative geographic isolation and history of cultural influence through distinct waves of ethnic immigration—individuals largely coming to Hawai'i to work on sugarcane plantations. Another, often unseen, stream of immigration were individuals from the United States who relocated to the Hawaiian Islands for a variety of reasons: some coming as missionaries, others as mariners and traders, and others as adventurers (Dening, 1980; O'Conner, 2008). These waves of immigration have each added to a creolized culture termed "Local"<sup>2</sup> culture by island residents. The genesis of HRC is found in the Local foodways of Hawai'i that have been elaborated through global and regional flows of cultural information to create reconstituted cultural products. HRC has its roots in Local food—the flavors eaten by the local people of Hawai'i that are the result of the negotiation of colonial influences into a cuisine that captures the plurality and mixed backgrounds of the people living there.



In moving beyond the often reductive homogeneous versus hybrid debates in definitions of globalization, we focus on the emergence of HRC as a distinct regional identity marker that is branded and constructed to traverse multiple cultural registers. Food is used to navigate and make slippery nominal dichotomies: global/local, national/regional, home cooked/professional. This intentionally developed cultural product may be seen as an example of a cosmopolitan cuisine that allows for HRC to exist along multiple levels of globalization: local, regional, and global. The term cosmopolitan cuisine is frequently invoked in the literature as an elevation of cuisine in the direction of the global (Pujol 2009). Rather than seeing cosmopolitanism as a unidirectional move toward the global, we consider cosmopolitan cuisine as a multidirectional, ideological force that maneuvers HRC within multiple registers. The engineering of cosmopolitan cuisine can thereby penetrate the local, establish the regional, and enchant the global. Pascual (2013) describes a number of what she terms “cosmopolitanizing strategies” that function to position food within the global, regional, and local. Examples of these strategies include disruption, performance, and hybridization. Disruption involves the fragmentation of traditional expectations about menu structure (e.g., appetizer, first course, second course, dessert) replaced, for example, by a series of small plates that serve to disorient a diner but also to involve them in a process of cocreation. Performance refers to the recognition that the dining experience is performed, with roles played by, among others, chefs, wait staff, and diners. The restaurant space and layout, the timing of courses, and the menu all are involved in the creation of a spectacle of consumption. In all this, food is central, but modes of preparation and presentation may extend the experience of dining to a spectacle that, in turn, may be tied to additional symbolic meanings. Hybridization of cuisine typically involves the mixing of ingredients but also of preparation and cooking techniques. Of all of the cosmopolitanizing strategies, hybridization is the one most widely used by HRC chefs and will be a focal point of our investigation. In the paragraphs below, we address ways in which the local, regional, and global conjoin in the making and remaking of HRC, a process of rearticulation that occurs not only at the level of food and technique but ideologically as well.

On the local level, HRC chefs used local ingredients and recipes that connected their roots with global techniques—basically derived from French haute cuisine. At the same time, the global techniques and practices were enriched also by the infusion of local flavor, which became a valuable commodity. The process is crosscutting because the global technique elevates how the local is valued, but also the local is a source of cultural capital and enrichment for global practices. In writing about HRC,



Samuel Yamashita (2013) describes ways in which HRC “affirms the local” by emphasizing local produce and specifically identifying local producers as well as by bringing traditional, local dishes to high-end restaurants. For example, Local Moco, a dish invented by Richard Inouye at the Lincoln Grill in Hilo, Hawai‘i in 1949 (Kelly 1998), features hamburger steak over rice with brown gravy topped with a fried egg. Alan Wong serves a version of the dish that substitutes wagyu beef in place of the burger and Japanese kabayaki sauce (a thick soy-based sauce used on eels in Japan) in place of the brown gravy. Wong’s dish is finished with quail eggs. The dish is an homage to the original local version but has been refined by Wong. The hybrid creations that make up Hawaiian Regional Cuisine have cultural capital added at both the local and the global levels: the food is still local food despite the operation of global techniques but also is palatable at the global level because of the cultural capital added through the chef’s largely classical training and techniques.

The insertion of global techniques came as a result of the training that the HRC chefs brought to their work. Four of the group had culinary arts training from various institutions, whereas another five had trained by serving extensive apprenticeships, several in well-known European restaurants. As a group, they had rather extensive training in classical French gastronomy and saw the ingredients of the Pacific as an opportunity to create unique but high-quality cuisine. Amy Ferguson characterized HRC as “applying high end technique to incredible, tropical ingredients” (as cited in Heckathorn 2011).

On the reverse side, the insertion of the local into the global also provided an opportunity for enrichment. As noted above, we maintain that HRC is what might be termed an engineered cuisine—a consciously developed cultural product created to facilitate the roles of both creators and consumers. Looking back on twenty years of development, it is easy to recognize the prescience of HRC in establishing the importance of the local in the cuisine of Hawai‘i. Viewing this history from a macromarketing perspective, we can analyze the motivations of the chefs and marketers but also the responses of consumers at local, regional, and global levels. First, HRC was and is an addition to food systems that is driven by small-scale producers rather than by a global-scale marketplace. Such a focus on the inclusion of a variety of producers pushed back against food produced by highly McDonaldized (Ritzer 2012) means of production.<sup>3</sup> The HRC chef’s desires for fresh ingredients mandated that these be produced locally. A number of the HRC chefs had spent years establishing relationships with local farmers. For example, Dean Okimoto, founder of Nallo Farms in Waimanalo describes early interactions with Roy Yamaguchi who encouraged him not to quit running his family farm but rather to grow herbs,

greens and specialty vegetables for his restaurants (as cited in Yamashita 2013). Yamashita further points out that, for the HRC movement to succeed, the chefs realized they needed to identify farmers, gain their trust, and spend the time needed to cultivate lasting bonds (2013). These initial efforts were supported also by the Hawai'i State Department of Agriculture who guaranteed payments for specialty crops that the HRC chefs sought to have grown (Heckathorn 2011). Second, HRC is intrinsically a cuisine consistent with sustainable production. Under such circumstances, the additional cultural capital created by using food that was sustainably produced creates higher satisfaction among consumers per unit consumed (Shafer and Crane 2005). Food producers and restaurants applying sustainable agricultural ethics and environmentally responsible production techniques become discursively attractive to a segment of the consuming public who value socially conscious consumption (Clark and Chabrel 2007; Sims 2009). Sustainability can be understood partly as a branding technique. Sustainable production was a part of the HRC marketing plan from the beginning and clearly benefited from positive consumer response to food that was locally and sustainably produced.

The term "regional" references the Pacific and Pacific Rim and adds another point of cultural departure for the chefs of the HRC group. Flavors and techniques are drawn directly from Pacific Rim cultures as well as from Hawaiian Local cuisine that in many cases is in turn influenced by the cultures of the Pacific Rim. Our intent is to document complex ways in which a variety of cultural flows have intersected to produce hybrid cuisine. The hybridization present in HRC is a central cosmopolitanizing strategy that has created a complex cuisine that both incorporates but also reaches beyond the local.

### **Analytic Approach**

Our mode of analysis is the recipe. A number of investigators have pointed to the importance of recipes and cookbooks in the definition and standardization of particular cuisines. Goody (1982) notes how social class is reflected in cookbooks—historically distinguishing between high and low cuisines—the food of nobility versus the food of peasants. In addition, he points to urban–rural differences that are reflected in cookbooks. Further, Appadurai (1988) has pointed to ways that cookbooks reflect both processes of regional and ethnic specialization as well as the development of overarching national cuisines. More recently feminist scholars have read cookbooks with an eye toward understanding their role in constructing and deconstructing social and cultural boundaries (cf. Hartman 2003; Newlyn

1999; Tobias 1998). Of special importance for our investigation is the role of cookbooks in expressing and articulating cultural contexts and identities. In this regard, Zafar's (1999) account of two African-American cookbooks treats these documents as ethnographic texts with food (presented as recipes) as the basis for the construction of the self. Theophano (2002) goes further and treats cookbooks both as collective cultural memory and repository of identity. She asserts that these processes operate at the collective, family, and individual levels with recipes serving an autobiographical function by conveying a vision of society and culture.

More recently, cookbooks (especially those published in the United States) have been critiqued as detaching culinary knowledge from local origins and homogenizing this information into a hegemonic national food culture (e.g., Gvion 2009). For example, ethnic food has been detached from its geographic, institutional, and familial backgrounds and renarrated into a much more homogeneous composite. However, Larson and Osterlund-Potzsch (2012) have pointed to more recent trends in cookbook narration that constitute local and regional cuisine. Our interest is in understanding this process where narratives are articulated as hybrid cultural assemblages.

Although identity is fluid and constructive, it is not arbitrary. Identities are assumed and maintained because of their functional effectiveness and meaningfulness. Speaking of narratives produced and used to reinforce identity, McArthur has noted, "No doubt the meanings emerge and shift as narratives are recentered into new contexts. Nonetheless, creativity is not random" (McArthur 1999, 86). Recognizing that the establishment of cultural meaning is an emergent, often contested process, it is nonetheless useful to link the backgrounds of the HRC chefs we are considering with their aesthetic projects (foremost their food but also recipes, books, menus). By tracing the foundations of the recipes of three chefs associated with HRC, we interrogate the process of narrative formation that accompanies the development of multiculturally informed cuisine. The ethnic, national, and social positioning of these chefs will influence the narratives attached to such projects—understanding of one informs understanding of the others. Linking the backgrounds of these chefs with their recipes is one way of examining the impact of global cultural flows on the production of cosmopolitan cuisine.

### **Local Chefs, Local Culture**

The three chefs we will describe are all highly successful practitioners of HRC. Each has been involved in multiple restaurants that cater to both



local residents and tourists, and each has been influential in the engineering of HRC. Alan Wong is of Japanese, Chinese, and Hawaiian ancestry.<sup>4</sup> He was born in Japan but moved to Hawai'i at the age of five. His formal culinary training was from Kapiolani Community College in Honolulu, and subsequently he apprenticed at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Also, he spent three years at the prominent French restaurant Lutece in New York City. After returning to Hawai'i, he worked in several restaurants before opening his own restaurant in 1995. Wong won a James Beard award in 1996 for best chef in the northwest region. Wong currently has three restaurants, two in Honolulu and one on Maui as well as a wedding catering business. He has produced two cookbooks that detail his recipes and present his philosophy of cooking.

Sam Choy, of Hawaiian/Chinese ethnicity, was born in Hawai'i and grew up on the North Shore of Oahu cooking with his father, also named Sam.<sup>5</sup> Choy's father was famous for promoting some of the first luaus for tourists in the Islands during the 1960s and early 70s. Like Wong, Choy also attended the food service program at Kapiolani Community College in Honolulu and subsequently cooked in a number of island restaurants, developing his style of cooking using the flavors of Local cuisine. He attracted regional attention while cooking at the Kona Hilton in the early 1980s. He is a natural entertainer, and his cooking demonstrations, public appearances, and locally televised cooking show has been very popular. Also, he has been involved in the production of 16 cookbooks (Choy 2013). Choy has opened and been involved with the ownership of many restaurants both in Hawai'i and internationally. He currently owns a restaurant on the Big Island of Hawai'i and another on Hickham military base on Oahu and is involved with food truck restaurants in Los Angeles and Seattle.

Finally, Russell Siu, of Chinese and Caucasian ethnicity, was born in Hawai'i, and grew up cooking local specialties at a drive-in restaurant.<sup>6</sup> Later, he too graduated from the food service program at Kapiolani Community College and subsequently worked in several island restaurants. He then worked in the Plaza Club system for the next thirteen years, first in Honolulu, then in the Dallas, Texas, area, then in Hong Kong, and finally in California. In 1992, he returned to Hawai'i and opened his own restaurant, 3660 on the Rise. In addition, Siu owns a casual restaurant named Kaka'ako Kitchen that serves HRC at takeout prices. The restaurant attempts to broaden the clientele for HRC by serving this food at a price that is accessible to all, including Local people.

Each of these chefs is steeped in Local culture, a creolized culture that has been influenced by 150 years of immigration into the islands. As a result of this immigration, in many ways, Hawai'i is a culinary amalgam.

Starting in 1850, waves of immigrants arrived, primarily to work on sugar plantations. Chinese immigrants were followed by Japanese and Portuguese laborers. Around the turn of the century, significant numbers of people from Korea and the Philippines, together with smaller groups from Puerto Rico, Spain, and Samoa, arrived (Haas 1998). Immigrants from the United States were also a part of this mix but came for other reasons. Starting in 1820, groups of missionaries arrived from the United States as well as mariners and adventurers (Deming 1980). Local culture should be understood as a confluence of these migrations. These waves of immigration, which come to stand in for Local culture, can be seen as both inherently global and colonial (Lockwood 2004, 3). Walker (2011), for example, posits that the ocean acts as a contact zone wherein Hawaiian masculinity is juxtaposed with the encroaching influences of colonization. The ocean is presented as a contested terrain where “waves of resistance” are enacted to combat and rewrite stereotypical notions of Hawaiian masculinity. In the same way, the development of cuisine in Hawai‘i is also a site of negotiation or contact zone. Hawai‘i has been the recipient of ongoing global influences and Local food culture has been shaped by a series of colonial incursions.

Laudan (1996) draws a parallel between the emergence of Pidgin English and the emergence of Local food. She points out that, in contrast to home environments where the indigenous languages of immigrants were spoken, Pidgin emerged in public settings where individuals speaking different languages were required to interact with one another. Likewise, Local food emerged in restaurants, lunch wagons, and *saimin* stands where, in contrast to the consumption of ethnic foods in home environments, entrepreneurs sought to present food that customers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds would find palatable. Hawaiian plate lunches developed in this social milieu as a low-cost lunch that would sustain working people. Today, plate lunches have become deeply associated with the Local in terms of language, social class, and ethnicity. Yamashita provides a brief history of restaurants in Hawai‘i and distinguishes between restaurants that catered to local people and fine dining establishments. Local restaurants served local food to local people, whereas fine dining restaurants developed what has been termed continental cuisine (basically classic French cuisine) and catered to tourists and Hawaiian residents of high socioeconomic status (Yamashita 2013). As a result of cultural sharing, the range of foods enjoyed by Locals is striking—Asian ingredients, extending from a foundation of rice, noodles, and soy seasonings are conjoined with foods like *wanton*, *sushi*, and raw fish (*sashimi*). In addition, Japanese *katsu* dishes, Korean barbecue, Portuguese sausage, Philippine *adobo* dishes, Samoan corned beef, and *Spam*<sup>7</sup> as a predominantly American influence (basically stemming from the United

States military presence in Hawai'i) all have a prominent place in Local cuisine. In the recipes that follow, we show how each chef has crafted an aesthetic hybrid—a dish that has prominent Local elements but with a twist that is derived from each chef's cosmopolitan experience and training. The three recipes we present and analyze in this section show how these dishes have evolved, not in arbitrary ways but in ways that are consistent with each of the chef's background and training.

*Seared Foie Gras with Li Hing Mui Chutney.* Alan Wong has produced a foie gras dish that is complemented with li hing mui chutney. In the dish, the foie gras is cut into slices and seared until golden brown. The foie gras is presented on fresh pineapple and is topped with the chutney. Dried pineapple is used as a garnish. The recipe for the chutney is below:

- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon li hing mui powder
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ cup each dried pitted prunes and apricots
- ¼ cup each diced bananas, pineapple, and macadamia nuts

In a saucepan, bring the vinegar and sugar to a boil. Boil for 3 to 4 minutes or until the mixture thickens to a syrup. Stir in the li hing mui, lemon juice, and cinnamon. Add the prunes and apricots, and cook for 1 minute longer. When cool, stir in the bananas, pineapple, and macadamia nuts (Wong and Harrison 1999).

Li hing mui is a powder made from sweet and sour dried plums (Wong and Harrison 1999). It is one of a wide variety of dried spiced fruits and vegetables that are extremely popular in Hawai'i. These products were brought to Hawai'i from China in the 1800s and have found a home in Local cuisine. Li hing mui is very popular among children where both the whole dried fruit is eaten, and the powder that results from grinding the dried fruit is used to dust all types of dried and fresh fruit and then licked. The powder is even used to dust candy to add a sweet and sour kick to gummy worms or lollipops. In this recipe, the rich creaminess of the foie gras is cut by the acid of the fruit and the sweet and sour of the li hing mui. The result is a sophisticated dish that has a distinctly local Hawaiian twist. The aesthetic hybrid is highly creative, but the creativity is not random or arbitrary. Rather, it manifests the cultural flows that are present in Wong's experience.



Wong's ethnic Chinese background is reflected in the li hing mui. Laudan (1996) points out that li hing mui and similar products based on dried fruit (termed crack seed in Hawai'i's Local Pidgin) are similar to pizza in the United States in terms of its exaggerated importance in an "adopted" culture. That is, both pizza in Italy and crack seed in China are recognized but somewhat unimportant foods in their home cultures but have exploded in variety and penetration in the United States (pizza) and in Hawai'i (crack seed). Alan Wong was familiar with li hing mui because of his childhood in Hawai'i. In truth, eating the dried li hing mui fruit is an acquired taste but one that the great majority of children growing up "local" in Hawai'i develop and come to cherish. Wong names the li hing mui sauce in the dish a chutney, which is consistent with the use of the reconstituted dried fruits. As such, the dish references South Asia and makes contact with another flavor often found in local cooking in Hawai'i—curry. The cultural flow associated with this ingredient has its origins in China and, in turn, has contributed significantly to local cuisine in Hawai'i.

In contrast, foie gras is a classic French ingredient—a part of Wong's professional training and cooking experience. For example, foie gras was prominently on the menu at Lutece in New York City when Wong worked there (New York City Public Library, n.d.). The hybrid dish Wong has created reflects the interaction of local Hawaiian culture with French ingredients and technique. The result is a dish that represents a conjoining of cultural flows—the li hing mui flavor is deeply associated with China and local Hawaiian food, whereas the foie gras represents a Francophone cultural flow that is rooted in classical French cuisine.

*Sautéed Opakapaka with Spinach Coconut Luau Sauce.* Sam Choy transforms a dish that is a traditional one at Hawaiian luaus—squid luau. The young, small, tender leaves of the taro (kalo in Hawaiian) plant or luau leaves are used in the traditional preparation. Hawaiian feasts were originally called 'aha'aina but the name gradually evolved to luau with the term used in print as early as 1856 in a description of the wedding feast of King Kamehameha IV and his wife Emma (*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 1856). Because of the important role of kalo in Hawaiian culture, it is notable that the Hawaiian name for young taro leaves was adopted as the name given communal feasts. The Hawaiian origin myth is that kalo was the elder brother of all humans; thus, the plant is sacred in the culture. In the traditional preparation, taro leaves are boiled (often in coconut milk) until they become a thick, green sauce that is served with cooked squid. Choy substitutes chopped fresh spinach for the taro (although he includes instructions for using the taro leaves) and presents opakapaka (pink snapper) fillets with the spinach coconut luau sauce.

To prepare the dish, the opakapaka fillets are seasoned with fresh ginger and minced garlic, dredged in flour, and sautéed in oil and butter. The sauce is made as described below:

3 tablespoons minced Maui onion  
 ½ teaspoon minced fresh ginger  
 2 tablespoons butter  
 1 cup heavy cream  
 ¼ cup coconut milk  
 salt, pepper, and sugar to taste  
 ½ cup cooked fresh spinach (can use young taro leaves)

In a small saucepan, sauté onions and ginger in butter 3 minutes or until onions are translucent. Add heavy cream, bring to a boil, and reduce by half. Stir in cooked spinach and coconut milk, and cook 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and sugar (Choy 1996).

Traditional squid luau is an intense flavor and some would say is an acquired taste. When it is served at luaus, those who like it, really like it and seem to top everything with it. This preparation is clearly more delicate; the spinach is not as strong tasting as the taro leaves, and the leaves are left somewhat intact rather than boiled for hours. Moreover, in Choy's adaptation, the sauce is designed as an accompaniment rather than as the focus of the entire dish. The flaky fish and the pungent, rich coconut/spinach flavors complement each other well. Choy's modification of the traditional dish reflects his training in French technique. The dish echoes the classic French dish Salmon with Sorrel Sauce that prominent French chef Daniel Boulud identified as the dish "more than any other that marked the path from the classic cooking of Escoffier to *la nouvelle cuisine*" (Boulud and Greenspan 1999, 48). The sorrel sauce is made with a base of onions and cream into which the sorrel leaves are placed and brought to a boil. Here the sorrel leaves are just brought to a boil so that they retain their integrity. Choy's hybrid both reflects the classic French dish in terms of technique but uses flavors related to his local experience. The luau leaves have a somewhat mineral, slightly bitter taste that is present also in the taste of spinach. Using spinach provides a similar but milder flavor profile than do the luau leaves. The dish reads like Choy's autobiography—the cultural flow from his childhood experience with luaus yield the flavors of the dish, but the technique is related to a Francophile cultural flow that draws from *la nouvelle cuisine* embodied in his sophisticated professional training. The result is not just watered down luau food but rather a hybrid creation that stands alone, rich in tradition but strikingly original.

*Mahimahi Musubi.* Russell Siu presents a mahimahi fish dish with the fish wrapped in a sheet of nori, the seaweed sheets that are used to wrap sushi rolls. Siu indicates that the inspiration for the dish was Spam musubi—a local food consisting of a slice of Spam and sticky rice wrapped in nori. Musubi has its origins in Japan in rice balls and cakes named *o-nigiri*. These date to at least the twelfth century in Japan and have remained popular through today. They are often filled with pickled vegetables or seafood to act as a preservative. During World War II, Spam became a widely consumed protein in the Pacific—large quantities were shipped to American soldiers, and a portion of that found its way to the local population (Spam n.d.). Between 1941 and 1945, Spam became a replacement for fish because fishing around the islands was prohibited during the war years (Nenes 2008, 479). Spam musubi is widely available in Hawai'i in homemade lunches and at grocery and convenience stores. Siu describes the creation of the dish by saying “We actually started by calling this a ‘mahi musubi’ . . . We played around with the idea and wrapped the mahimahi like a musubi. We elevated it to a higher level . . .” (Siu, Hiura, and Benton 1996, 71).

To prepare the dish, the fish is wrapped in the nori and pan seared in a small amount of oil until golden brown. Just before the mahimahi is completely cooked, teriyaki sauce consisting of mirin (sweet rice wine), soy sauce, sugar, and sake is added to glaze the fish. The dish is presented in a way that references a Japanese cultural flow; Siu uses a cold cooked soba noodle salad consisting of noodles and julienne strips of carrots, cucumber, and zucchini as the base of the dish. The salad is dressed with a very common local dressing—ginger soy vinaigrette:

- 3 tablespoons sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
- Juice of one lemon
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 ½ cup salad oil
- 2 teaspoons ponzu vinegar
- ½ teaspoon grated ginger

The ingredients are simply mixed in a bowl. To finish the dish, the soba salad is tossed with the dressing and placed on a plate. The nori wrapped teriyaki mahimahi is then placed over the noodles (Siu, Hiura, and Benton 1996).

Siu's description of the process of creating this dish again demonstrates the hybridization process. In this case, the musubi wrapping technique was



derived from Local cuisine that, in turn, was influenced by a Japanese cultural flow. The process of wrapping plays a significant role in Japanese culture (Hendry 1993), most obviously in the wrapping and giving of gifts. But the rituals of wrapping that surround Japanese gift practice have been extended to food with many foods being wrapped in other foods, in cellophane wrappers, or presented in containers (for example bento boxes). The use of nori in wrapping o-nigiri or sushi is an example of the use of wrapping rituals applied to food. The process of wrapping elevates the quality of the gift or the food item when it is presented to another. In the case of musubi, the process of subsequently unwrapping the food by eating it is akin to unwrapping a gift and receiving the interest and appreciation encoded into the gift through its wrapping.

A similar Japanese cultural flow is evident in the sweet/sour flavor of the teriyaki sauce. Originally made with sake, soy sauce, and mirin wine, the sauce has origins in Japan in the 1600s when it was used as a shiny (*teri* in Japanese) glaze primarily for seafood. The term *yaki* means to grill in Japanese (Davidson and Jaine 2006). The sauce reached Hawai'i through Japanese immigrants to the plantations where sugar replaced the mirin and seasonings such as garlic, ginger, green onions, and pineapple juice were added as the sauce became a Local amalgam.<sup>8</sup> The sweet/sour of the fish is cut by the bitter nori, and the soy/sesame of the noodles complements the dish. In the recipe, the fish becomes an ingredient that poses an interesting challenge. Mahimahi operates metonymically, as the ubiquitous fish comes to stand in for Hawai'i. Although remaining tethered to its regional identity, mahimahi, as a fish that is served around the world, is able to traverse numerous global cultural flows. Again the result is a distinct eating experience, a product that clearly reflects Siu's ethnicity and cultural background.

Siu's mahi dish is an important example because HRC is not simply a bilateral fusion between Pacific and European cooking. As Sam Choy cautioned, "it is not enough to simply take an Asian ingredient and give it European sauce or vice versa. That may be fusion, but it is not Hawaiian Regional Cuisine" (Choy as cited in Hiura 2009, 124). Siu's dish is a hybrid that started with one of the most common dishes in Hawai'i, Spam musubi. This is a dish he ate as a child and that nearly all children in the islands grow up eating. His modification plays with the original, a descriptor that suggests amusement, active participation, and perhaps a level of teasing. Each of these descriptors suggests a level of engagement with the cultural flows involved with hybrid dishes that exceed simple, sterile mixing of flavors or textures and extends toward a recombination of cultures.

### Discussion

The multicultural background of each of these chefs is reinforced in their cuisine. As hybrid aesthetic products such as the dishes described above are created, the accomplishments of these individuals refract and define their cultural backgrounds. Historically, the cuisine of Local culture in Hawai'i was built upon cultural flows of various nationalities that came to Hawai'i in successive waves of migration. As a result, Local cuisine features tremendous variety in its proteins and seasonings. The process is still occurring today as multiple layers of cuisine and culture penetrate the islands in an increasingly globalized society. The hybrid aesthetic products we have described are case studies that demonstrate the results of the often colliding cultural flows that continue to join together, influencing both eating habits in Hawai'i in general and the ongoing creations of HRC.

In the twenty years since HRC emerged as an important culinary trend, the chefs involved have become shapers of cultural identity in Hawai'i; their food is well known and has actively influenced food preferences and purchasing patterns. Regarding the popularity of the three chefs we have considered, each is highly active in public promotions of their cuisine. They each are affiliated with multiple, popular restaurants, and each has authored well-received cookbooks. Each has been involved in cooking demonstrations and classes, are the focus of coverage in the local media, and have the status of local celebrities. Regarding HRC's influence on food preferences and purchasing patterns, it is possible to see changes in terms of "eating local" that are directly consistent with the goals the HRC chefs held for their cuisine. For example, Myrone Murakami, a farmer and vice-president of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation comments that HRC has changed the buying habits of consumers in Hawai'i, both in supermarkets and in supporting farmer's markets. "The general public's consciousness has been raised about supporting the local agricultural community. There's no question that that kind of willingness on the consumers' part, to go after local products, encourages local production" (Engle 2011). Of course these are changes that have occurred across the United States; thus, arguing that HRC has been entirely responsible for changes in Hawai'i is unrealistic. Nonetheless, the rise in interest in local agriculture in Hawai'i is striking—a change that HRC has certainly promoted.

Although we have focused on the importance of global cultural flows in describing the origin of HRC it is important also to situate HRC within the culture and economy of Hawai'i. As noted previously, Yamashita posits that HRC "affirms the local" and that by so doing contravenes previous denigration of things Local by colonialists (Yamashita 2013). He points to the use

of local produce, the foregrounding of local producers and places in the names of dishes on menus (e.g., Ho farm tomatoes; Hau'ula tomatoes), the foregrounding of Local dishes on menus (e.g., the previously mentioned Loco Moco), and the opening of career opportunities in the culinary professions to Local people (Yamashita 2013).

Although Yamashita applauds the agency afforded to Local chefs and agricultural producers through HRC, he might not take into full account the ways in which HRC makes and remakes local and regional culture given the tension between structure and agency, resistance and incorporation.<sup>9</sup> In a parallel analysis, Fermantez (2007) analyzes the case of a Hawaiian surfing club (Hui o He'e Nalu) and a for-profit version of the original club (Da Hui, Inc.). In his analysis, he draws on Stuart Hall who identifies a "tricky version of 'the local' that operates within and has been shaped by 'the global'" (Hall 1993, 354). Da Hui, Inc. can be seen as a rearticulation of the Local in Hawai'i that satisfies "the demands of a global capitalism" (p. 95). However, Fermantez deftly moves beyond an argument based solely on resistance because "both organizations have both local and global indigenous articulations, the resistance within them is complicit in and reinforcing of local and global hegemonies" (p. 96). In the same way, HRC can be seen as both empowering of a particular kind of Local culinary rootedness while, at the same time, co-constructively reifying a regional and global imaginary of Hawai'i as a commodified brand awaiting consumption. Just as Da Hui, Inc. "deftly rides both local and global waves to shore on the back of Native Hawaiian resistance" (p. 95), HRC acts constitutively as both resistance and incorporation.

Rather than solely celebrating the achievements of HRC, a somewhat different picture may emerge if the development of HRC is viewed from a critical cultural perspective that focuses more specifically on the articulation of power relations. Through such a lens, HRC may be viewed not only as a consciously developed product designed to tie together local ingredients and local flavors in a cuisine that would complement the heritage of the Local people of Hawai'i but as having an additional goal of being economically successful in the restaurant business. The supplanting of cultural motives with economic goals among the HRC chefs may be especially the case because fully nine of the original twelve HRC chefs were from the mainland United States or Europe. With the goal of economic success in mind, in addition to "affirming the local," restaurants serving HRC may be seen also as "appropriating the local" through a commodification of Local culture. Another perspective on this type of appropriation comes from Costa and Besio (2011) who describe HRC as "gentrified" Local food. Taking this viewpoint, foregrounding the names of local producers and



places by showing them prominently in recipes and demarcating them on menus may be seen as usurping the identity of local producers and places in the service of presenting a more convincing commodity. The repurposing of Local dishes in high-end restaurants designed to serve well-to-do tourists and high socioeconomic status residents points both to cultural appropriation and is ironic given that many of these dishes evolved out of the poverty of Local people, designed to feed many and stretch budgets.

Our position is that HRC should be considered an engineered cosmopolitan cuisine that is at the same time local, regional, and global. As noted above, HRC employs a series of cosmopolitanizing strategies that act to both break down boundaries with other food cultures while at the same time to establish rootedness within the food culture of Hawai'i. This dual process of cosmopolitanization has been elaborated in what Calhoun terms national cosmopolitanism "the pleasures of being both home and away" (Calhoun 2008, 445) and what Pascual has described as the "double movement of embracing one's roots and the worldwide community of human beings at once" (Pascual 2013, 602). For example, through hybridization, new ingredients and techniques are introduced, but at the same time roots are reestablished and reinforced. Alan Wong's foie gras dish described previously opens HRC to an ingredient that is certainly foreign yet the dish as a whole is unmistakably Local, pervaded with a taste recognizable to all Local residents as *li hing mui*. The experience of eating the dish both connects a diner to Hawai'i and by extension to the Pacific Rim but at the same time negotiates international boundaries. In the same way, Russell Siu uses the cosmopolitanizing strategy of disruption to deconstruct diner's expectations of *musubi*. Rather than a typical Local *musubi* with a slice of Spam, diners receive a mahimahi fish fillet flavored with *teriyaki*. Diners reference *musubi* as a quintessential Local dish in Hawai'i but have their expectations upended by the mahimahi, a high-quality fish that is globally available but widely associated with Hawai'i and the *teriyaki*, a sauce with Japanese roots that is again associated with Hawai'i. Disrupting expectations highlights the root of the dish but at the same time emphasizes the hybrid, creating the double movement of cosmopolitanization to which Pascual refers. A final example is Sam Choy's fish dish with spinach/coconut luau sauce. Choy's dish is certainly a hybrid but also disrupts the "script" of a typical luau menu. Also, the dish has a dimension of performativity in the sense that luaus are celebratory occasions, and of course the name for the celebration and the name for luau leaves (a central ingredient of the dish that contributes to Choy's hybrid) is the same. Thus, the dish is an integral part of the performance of luaus and that increases the symbolic significance of the food.

These cosmopolitanizing strategies use this double move to serve the strategic ends of existing within multiple valences of globalization. HRC leverages the local and codifies the regional, all while skimming the surface of sticky entanglements with Local politics and culture. Here food acts as a contact zone (Walker 2012) where waves of commodity, culture, and tradition collide to form an engineered regional cuisine to wash up along global shores. Rather than an arbitrary kaleidoscopic mixing of ingredients and techniques, the food combinations presented here derive from the cultural backgrounds of their creators and articulate HRC as a moment of engineered cosmopolitan cuisine. The story of the development of HRC is one such moment where, in the words of Sam Choy: “cooking creatively carries on the local tradition of blending and sharing” (Choy 1996, 114). Such blending results in the culinary expressions of hybridity that constitute HRC, a point in the continuing development of the Local, regional, and global cuisine of Hawai‘i.

## NOTES

1. The original twelve Hawaiian Regional Cuisine chefs included (in alphabetical order) Sam Choy, chef/owner, Sam Choy’s Kai Lanai, Kona, HI; Roger Dikon, executive chef, The Carlyle, Palm Beach FL; Mark Ellman, chef/owner, Mala Ocean Tavern, Lahaina, Maui HI; Amy Ferguson, catering, Big Island, HI; Bev Gannon, chef/owner, Haliimaile General Store, Maui, HI; Jean-Marie Josselin, chef/owner, Josselin’s Bar & Grill, Poipu, Kauai, HI; George Mavrothalassitis, chef/owner, Chef Mavro, Honolulu, HI; Peter Merriman, chef/owner, Merriman’s Waimea, Big Island, HI; Philippe Padovani, owner, Padovani’s Chocolates, Honolulu, HI; Gary Strehl, no longer in restaurant business; Alan Wong, chef/owner, Alan Wong’s, Honolulu, HI; Roy Yamaguchi, Roys, (numerous locations). There were two additional chefs who attended the August 27, 1991, meeting, René Boujet and John Farnsworth, but who did not attend later meetings (Yamashita 2013). The recipes used for analysis in this article were taken from Alan Wong, Sam Choy, and Russell Siu, all chefs with strong Local connections to Hawai‘i. Siu was not one of the original HRC chefs but is strongly identified with this cuisine. It should be pointed out that, although the HRC chefs all are dedicated to farm-to-table cooking and to the Local flavors of Hawai‘i, of the original twelve chefs, only Wong and Choy grew up Local in Hawai‘i.

2. Like all manifestations of material culture, Local food is embedded in a cultural milieu. In the case of Hawai‘i, that milieu is Local Culture—a highly elaborated and well-studied set of social practices (Chang 1996; Costa and Besio 2011, 840; Miyares 2008). For treatments of the political and social aspects of Local Culture see Fuchs (1961), Okamura (1980, 2008), and Chang (1996). A number of origins for the term Local have been identified in the Hawaiian context. John Rosa (2000) dates usage to a legal case that is well known in Hawaiian cultural history, the 1932 Massie murder trial (Rosa 2000). A prominent Caucasian woman accused five young Polynesian men of raping her. Their trial led to a hung jury, and family and friends of the woman in

question took matters into their own hands, murdering one of the men. The ensuing sensational trial received tremendous press coverage, and in describing the young men, the *Honolulu Advertiser* identified them as a group of “local youth.” Rosa argues from a production of culture position that the Local designator continued from that point both as a classifier and as a cultural foundation. Essentially “local” became “Local.” Okamura (1980, 1994) has also pointed to the continuing importance of media representations of Local Culture. Although the above authors would not deny the additional importance of social class in determining Local status, Sally Engle Merry emphasizes economic status as the major basis of the Local designation. She asserts: “Working-class Asians, many of whom had plantation backgrounds, began to develop a shared identity as local. The concept of local emphasized class and residence in the islands. Local described working-class people of color who were born in Hawai‘i and spoke pidgin—the English Creole language of Hawai‘i” (Merry, 2004, 140). The definition of Local culture and who can or cannot be classified as Local is a subject of ongoing academic and vernacular discussion (cf. Leong 1997; Okamura 1994) with various authors drawing nuanced distinctions between individuals of different ethnic origins. For example, it is clear that Local Culture is not necessarily Hawaiian culture. Local Culture is a much more recent cultural construction, whereas Hawaiian culture refers to the culture of indigenous people of the Hawaiian Islands. However, Trask (2000) has argued that the use of the Local designator is inappropriate for anyone other than indigenous people of Hawai‘i. In practice, many ethnically Hawaiian people may classify themselves as Local in addition to a primary ethnic identification as Hawaiian. Although the exact definition of Local culture is a dynamic, changing entity, the term is an actively used identifier in Hawai‘i and includes some consideration of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, language, and of course food. Our convention in this paper is to present Local as a proper noun with capitalization when referencing the Local culture described above. When we reference geographic locality, we use a typical noncapitalized form.

3. The increased awareness and support of a variety of local producers in a locale’s food system is one of the many precursors to the Slow Foods movement—a political and social approach to food that emphasizes sustainable, local, equal and just production and consumption (Leitch 2013).

4. The description of Alan Wong’s background and training is taken from Alan Wong and John Harrison’s book published in 1990 (pp. xii–xx).

5. The description of Sam Choy’s background and training is taken from Janice Wald Henderson’s book published in 1994 (pp. 2–4).

6. The description of Russell Siu’s background and training is taken from Russell Siu’s book published in 1996 (pp. 12–20).

7. Spam consumption in Hawai‘i is seven million cans per year (Spam n.d.). This would make the per capita consumption of Spam the highest of any state in the nation.

8. As in all widely available hybrid food, tracing the history of teriyaki sauce in the United States is difficult because of the ubiquity of the dish. Food historian Rachel Laudan points to the plantations of Hawai‘i as the source of the sauce’s evolution



(Laudan 1996) from the original Japanese soy sauce and mirin combination to the stronger garlic/ginger flavor profile that is associated with the product today. It is interesting to note that the international food conglomerate Kikkoman also cites Japanese-Americans in Hawai'i as the developers of teriyaki sauce forty-five years ago (Kikkoman 2014).

9. See Fermantez (2007) for a discussion on Oceanic cultural studies as both "routed" and "rooted."

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