

ISLAND FESTIVITIES

Enjoy food, culture and fun at the Aloha State's many fairs and festivals

BY ILIMA LOOMIS





The Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Cultural Festival features musicians and hula groups such as the Hālau Ulumamo o Hilo Palikū, shown here at a prior year's festival.

RON KOSEN / KPD



Left: Horseback riders honor Hawaiian heritage in the Kōloa Plantation Days, on Kaua'i. **Below:** Guests enjoy a tasting at the Kapalua Wine & Food Festival, on Maui.

Taking me by the hand, my daughter pulls me into the crowd, and we join the throng of people streaming toward the fairgrounds. It's a warm, perfect evening on Maui.

As dusk falls, the lights of the Century Wheel (resembling a Ferris wheel) and other rides cast a warm and inviting glow. The shrieks and squeals coming from the roller coaster promise thrills and excitement, while the savory smoke wafting from the food booths hints at gustatory temptations.

For our family, enjoying the Maui Fair has become an annual tradition. Each year, my daughter and I head to the fair on its opening night. We try out the rides—she finally talked me onto the “Wave Swinger,” a carousel-swing ride that has riders rotat-

ing around its axis and flying high over the crowds, but I'm still not brave enough to try “Pharaoh's Fury,” a giant, Egyptian-style galley that swoops back and forth on an enormous pendulum, taking passengers to great heights on each end. Afterward, we admire the animals in the livestock display, find her painting in the children's art show, and wonder at the giant pumpkins in the agriculture exhibit. For dinner, we make a feast from the food booths. Each booth is staffed by a different church group, cultural club or community organization, dishing up local specialties such as *chow fun* noodles, Korean *kalbi* ribs, *pipi kaula* (a form of smoked beef) and sugary Portuguese doughnuts called *malasadas*. With greasy hands, we happily share our meal and enjoy the sweet chords of Hawaiian music carrying over from the entertainment tent.

From hula and history to yoga and wine-tasting, festivals in the Islands offer chances to immerse yourself in the culture and flavors of Hawai'i. Here are some of Hawai'i's celebrated fairs and festivals, coming up this month and beyond.

KAPALUA WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

June 9–12

THE RITZ-CARLTON, KAPALUA, MAUI

Admission: Prices range from \$100 for seminars to \$995 for a festival pass

kapaluawineandfoodfestival.com *continued on page 158*

KWFF / SEAN M. HOWER



A Feast of Festivals

Here is a sampling of other great festival events around the Islands.

HAWAII ISLAND

Hawai'i Island Festival of Birds—Ha'akula Manu

Sept. 24–25

**Multiple
Hawai'i Island
Locations**

Admission:
\$10 general
admission;
special events
priced
individually



The 'i'iwi is a honeycreeper native to Hawai'i.

This inaugural event will honor the Hawaiian Islands' diversity of birds and mark the opening of the Hawai'i Island Coast to Coast Birding Trail, with various food events, guided tours and children's activities. Sponsored in part by Alaska Airlines.

Waimea Ocean Film Festival

Jan. 2–10, 2017

Waimea and the Kohala Coast

Admission: \$15 to \$165

Films from around the world explore ocean environments, island cultures, inspirational topics and ocean experiences (such as surfing). The festival includes Q&A sessions with experts and filmmakers.

Merrie Monarch Festival

April 16–22, 2017

Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium

Admission: \$5 to \$40

The world's premier hula competition includes a week-long festival featuring a *ho'olaule'a* (party), Hawaiian arts fair and royal parade through downtown Hilo.

MAUI

Maui Jim Oceanfest

June 3–5

Kā'anapali Beach

Admission: \$125 to \$200 registration

Watermen and waterwomen compete in events including outrigger-canoe paddling, stand-up and prone paddleboarding, and swimming.

Maui County Agricultural Festival

April 1, 2017

Maui Tropical Plantation, Wailuku

Admission: \$5

Livestock and agriculture displays, a live-exhibit farm, children's activities, cooking demonstrations and food booths celebrate Maui's bounty.

MOLOKA'I

Moloka'i Ka Hula Piko

June 2–4

Locations around Moloka'i

Admission: free

This celebration of hula's ancient traditions includes performances, lectures, excursions and a "talk story" with some of Hawai'i's most-renowned hula masters.

O'AHU

39th Annual Prince Lot Hula Festival

July 16–17

Moanalua Gardens, Honolulu

Admission: free

The state's top *hālau* (hula schools) perform traditional and modern-style dance in the largest noncompetitive hula event in the Islands.

Aloha Festivals

Sept. 3–24, select dates

Multiple Locations

Admission: all events free

A celebration of Hawai'i's cultures, traditions and heritage, with music, dance, food and art-oriented events held at various locations around the island of O'ahu. This year's theme is "Hāli'a Aloha—Treasured Memories." Events are intended for *kama'aina* (local residents) and *malihini* (visitors).

Honolulu Pride

Oct. 22

Waikiki and Kapiolani Park

Admission: free

Hawai'i's LGBT community gathers for a rainbow-hued celebration of diversity and equality in the Islands.

Great Aloha Run

Feb. 20, 2017

Aloha Tower to Aloha Stadium, Honolulu

Admission: \$50 for adults; \$25 for kids and seniors (early-registration discount); \$4 for expo (free to runners)

The 8.15-mile (13.12-kilometer) charity race from downtown Honolulu to Aloha Stadium is complemented by an expo of local products and services, with a healthy-living theme.

Hawai'i Book & Music Festival

Late April or early May; 2017 dates to be determined

Frank F. Fasi Civic Center, Honolulu

Admission: free

Panels, signings, concerts and more, featuring writers and entertainers from around the Islands, nation and world.

KAUAI

Hawaii Sand Festival

Aug. 13

Hanalei Bay

Admission: free

This annual sand-sculpture contest is open to amateurs but also draws some of the world's top sand artists.

Eō e Emalani i Alaka'i Festival

Oct. 8

Kōke'e State Park

Admission: free

Held in a beautiful setting, this cultural event commemorates the 1871 journey of beloved Queen Emma to upland Kaua'i, with re-enactments, presentations and hula. —I.L.



Paddlers race at Maui Jim Oceanfest.

The Maui Fair has rides such as the “Wave Swinger,” an aerial carousel that whirls riders above the fair.

NAGAMINE PHOTO STUDIO, INC.



from page 155 The Kapalua Wine & Food Festival, which was established in 1981, offers a long weekend of sipping rare vintages while enjoying the rugged coastline and soft breezes of West Maui. With panels that feature top sommeliers and wine-

makers, the festival is a chance for even the most devoted oenophiles to deepen their understanding of wines and learn more about current wine trends.

This year's schedule includes a seminar and tasting hosted by master sommelier Michael Jordan



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THE KAPALUA WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

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that compares young-vintage and 10-year-aged wines, another event that focuses on New Zealand Pinot Noirs, and a seafood festival with food from many of Maui's top restaurants. There will also be cooking demonstrations by celebrity chefs and a golf tournament.

The Kapalua Wine & Food Festival is sponsored in part by the Alaska Airlines Visa Signature Card and Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan.

KŌLOA PLANTATION DAYS

July 22–31

LOCATIONS AROUND KŌLOA AND PO'IPŪ, KAUA'I

Admission: Varies by event; many events are free
koloaplantationdays.com

Ten days of *ho'olaule'a* (parties), cultural demon-

strations, food events, films, lectures, walking tours and a rodeo celebrate Kōloa's heritage and multicultural past.

Hawai'i's first sugar plantation was established near the south shore town of Kōloa in 1835, and laborers from Japan, China, Portugal, the Philippines and elsewhere arrived in the years that followed to work in the fields. These immigrants joined the indigenous population of Native Hawaiians to form a cultural melting pot that is feted at the festival.

During Kōloa Plantation Days, hikes are also offered, including a guided tour of archaeological and historic sites on the Hapa Road Trail, which was once a major route connecting the villages of Kōloa and Po'ipū.



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The Kaua'i Chocolate & Coffee Festival will showcase some of the island's tastiest beans and confections, along with a variety of entertainment.

Hawai'i Festival Tips

- **Dress for the environment.** In Hawai'i, you might find yourself at a film festival on the beach or a hula performance in the cool mountains. Check the location, and wear appropriate layers and shoes.
- **Taste something new.** Festivals that appeal to both residents *and* travelers often serve up local favorites and unusual cultural specialties.
- **Make a friend.** Picnic-table seating often offers a chance to meet locals and learn something new about an island.
- **Wear sunscreen and carry water.** Outdoor celebrations mean fun in the (very hot) sun.
- **Go in off hours to avoid crowds.** Many weekend fairs offer discounted admission on Sundays.
- **Take it easy on kids.** Heat and crowds are tiring. Take breaks to rest and cool off, and head for the exit when youngsters aren't having fun anymore. —I.L.



TINA MAHINA PHOTOGRAPHY

In addition to cultural demonstrations and activities, the festival includes minigolf and Hawaiian-games competitions for kids.

KAUAI COUNTY FARM BUREAU FAIR

Aug. 25-28

VIDINHA STADIUM, LĪHU'Ē, KAUAI

Admission: \$5 adults, \$2 children
(discounted admission on Sunday)

kauaifarmfair.org

Gardening and flower-arranging classes, an orchid show, and fruit and vegetable exhibits showcase Kauai's agricultural heritage at the Kauai County Farm Bureau Fair.

The Hawaiian ranchers of tomorrow will show off their prized steers, hogs, lambs and goats in a youth 4-H livestock competition.

In addition to food booths featuring local favorites such as *laulau* (a dish that can include meat and other ingredients wrapped in leaves and cooked), *shoyu* chicken, and Portuguese bean soup, the agricultural exhibits will include a beef tasting provided by the Kauai Cattlemen's Association.

Rides will include festival favorites such as the Zipper and the Ferris wheel, along with other options for younger visitors.

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HAWAI'I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK CULTURAL FESTIVAL & BIOBLITZ

Aug. 27

HAWAI'I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK,
HAWAI'I ISLAND

Admission: free

[nps.gov/havo/planyourvisit/event-details.
htm?eventID=868731-307230](http://nps.gov/havo/planyourvisit/event-details.htm?eventID=868731-307230)

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, the
theme of this year's festival is *e ho'omau*,
"to perpetuate."

Hula and Hawaiian cultural demon-
strations honor the original inhabitants
of the Islands and explore how Native
Hawaiians have lived in a close relation-
ship with nature for generations. Visitors
can also learn about Hawaiian crafts and
enjoy musical performances.

A "BioBlitz" (7 A.M. to 1 P.M.) offers
conservation programming and hands-
on opportunities to learn about the biodi-
versity of Hawai'i Island's volcanic areas.

The cultural festival (10 A.M. to 3 P.M.)
will also feature interactive exhibitions
and activities, including lei making, hula,
tasting Hawaiian foods and learning
more about medicinal herbs.



At the Made in Maui County Festival, visitors enjoy sampling treats and shopping for craft items produced on Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i.

MAUI FAIR

Oct. 6–9

WAR MEMORIAL SPORTS COMPLEX,
WAILUKU, MAUI

Admission: 2016 prices to be announced;
see website for updated information
mauifair.com

Now in its 94th year, the Maui Fair has actually been delighting residents of the Valley Isle since 1916 (events were cancelled during war years). Today, in addition to the usual rides and carnival games, the fair offers an entertainment tent with performances by favorite musicians, hula groups, magicians and an eclectic assortment of other local talent; along with a Maui Fire Department chili cook-off, the Maui Fair Pie Competition and other contests.

Livestock and agricultural exhibits give a nod to the island's farming history, while the craft tent offers plenty of local-gift-buying opportunities. The fair's food selection is legendary among Maui resi-

What is AUTHENTIC?

The definition of authentic is something that is original or true, and made or done the same way as an original. At Noi, we take pride in serving authentic meals and every dish is made and served with the utmost care. Our food map who we are and where we come from.

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Settapon Nilket or Chef Pag,
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The Kona Coffee Cultural Festival Cupping Competition is an anticipated event in which judges (and Miss Kona Coffee) assess some of Hawai'i Island's best products.

dents; it features a diverse selection of local favorites and cultural specialties prepared by community groups. Alaska Airlines is a sponsor of the Maui Fair.

KAUAI CHOCOLATE & COFFEE FESTIVAL

Oct. 21–22

HANAPĒPĒ, KAUAI

Admission: \$18–\$20

kauaichocolateandcoffeefestival.com

Kona's beans may get most of the glory, but excellent coffee beans are actually grown on most of the Hawaiian Islands. Celebrate and savor two of Kauai's most delicious products at the Kauai Chocolate & Coffee Festival. Workshops cover topics such as chocolate tempering and coffee roasting.

In addition to performances by local entertainers, the festival's main stage features cooking demonstrations and presentations by local coffee growers. Other highlights include children's activities at the Storybook Theatre of Hawaii, in Hanapēpē, as well as a craft fair and farm tours. A \$20 "tasting passport" is the cost of admission and gets you samples of exclusive coffees and chocolates.

HAWAII INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Nov. 3–13, 2016; 2017 dates to be determined



FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Opening of Hawai'i Island Coast to Coast Birding Trail
- Guest speakers including Dr. Sam Gon III (The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i)
- Guided field trips on land and sea
- Trade show for outdoor and birding equipment
- Bird-themed arts and crafts fair
- Photography and painting workshops

For more information and registration:
hawaiibirdingtrails.com



CURRENT EVENTS / KONA COFFEE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

HAWAII FESTIVALS

LOCATIONS AROUND HONOLULU, O'AHU

Admission: all tickets cost \$14

hiff.org

Celebrate cinema at Hawai'i's premier film festival—with events in fall and again in spring. Featuring both mainstream and independent films, the Hawaii International Film Festival is particularly well-known for showcasing movies from across Asia and Oceania—including Japan, China, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand—along with American and European productions.

The festival has a track record of launching acclaimed international films; breakthrough hits such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and *Y Tu Mamá También* (2002) have premiered at HIFF. The festival also includes films with ties to Hawai'i, such as the comedy-drama *Midori in Hawai'i*, which premiered at HIFF in 2015.

Along with more than 150 screenings, the festival includes seminars, workshops, receptions and awards ceremonies. A smaller "Spring Showcase" brings a selection of international films to Honolulu in April.

MADE IN MAUI COUNTY FESTIVAL

Nov. 4–5

MAUI ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTER,
KAHULUI, MAUI

Admission: \$5 public admission on Saturday; \$35 for a "shoppers preview" and opening ceremonies on Friday; admission for children under 12 is free
madeinmauicountyfestival.com



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Activities include a fashion show that highlights local designers, product demonstrations, cooking demonstrations and tastings.

Beyond sampling local treats, snacks, food products and spirits (21 and older), enjoy tasty dishes from some of Maui's most popular food trucks.

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KONA COFFEE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Nov. 4-13

KAILUA-KONA, HAWAII ISLAND

Admission: a \$3 button gets visitors into most events; farm and mill tours cost \$75
konacoffeefest.com

An art show, scholarship pageant, cooking demonstrations, recipe contest and tastings celebrate Kona's famous beans, which are among the most coveted coffees in the world. Now in its 46th year, the Kona Coffee Cultural Festival, which is sponsored in part by Alaska Airlines, offers 10 days of buzz-worthy events at locations along the Kona Coast.

Farm and mill tours offer chances to see how coffee beans are grown, harvested and processed (advance registration is required). The prestigious cupping competition includes a chance to meet local growers and experience a coffee-tasting demonstration in which experts guide you through sniffing, sampling and comparing coffees like a real judge.

KONA BREWERS FESTIVAL



The Kona Brewers Festival takes place on a picturesque stretch of the Kona coast near the Kailua Pier.

WANDERLUST O'AHU

Feb. 23–26, 2017

TURTLE BAY RESORT, O'AHU

Admission: 2017 pricing to be determined
wanderlust.com/festivals/oahu

Yoga, meditation and music are focal points for this four-day feel-good festival on O'ahu's North Shore.

With an emphasis on mindful living, Wanderlust O'ahu also includes adventures involving hiking, surfing, horseback riding and stand-up paddleboarding, along with lectures by authors, yoga teachers, musicians, health gurus and other experts. With the mindful focus, it should be no surprise that healthy food is on the menu. Raw, vegetarian, vegan, paleo

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KONA BREWERS FESTIVAL

March 11, 2017

COURTYARD KING KAMEHAMEHA'S KONA BEACH HOTEL, HAWAII ISLAND

Admission: \$70–\$75

konabrewersfestival.com

Raise a glass to sustainability with this eco-friendly annual event for beer lovers. From the hoppiest IPA to the palest pilsner, a diversity of brews is represented.

THE KONA BREWERS FESTIVAL HAS A “RUN FOR THE HOPS”; WAIKIKI SPAM JAM HONORS HAWAII'S TOP CANNED MEAT.

Nearly 50 breweries from across Hawaii and the U.S. mainland will each present two styles of beer on tap. The admission fee buys seven tasting tickets, plus unlimited access to samples from 29 of Hawaii Island's top chefs and restaurants.

While you sip and sample, enjoy live music throughout the day and a fashion show of wearable creations made from recycled materials. Other highlights include a homebrewers competition and the “Run for the Hops” 5K, 10K and walking event. Benefiting local non-profits, the festival is a zero-waste event that promotes environmental awareness with informational booths and awards for the most sustainable food-tasting station. Alaska Airlines is an event sponsor.

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SJ FOUNDATION

The mascot Spammy entertains visitors at the Waikiki Spam Jam Festival, on O'ahu.

WAIKIKI SPAM JAM FESTIVAL

April 29, 2017

KALĀKAUA AVENUE, WAIKĪKĪ, O'AHU

Admission: free

spamjamhawaii.com

The crown champion of canned meat, Spam, was introduced to Hawai'i during World War II, and the Aloha State still boasts the highest per capita consumption of the famous protein product. Its maker, Hormel, estimates that Hawai'i residents gobble up more than 6 million cans of Spam annually.

Now in its 15th year, the Waikiki Spam Jam Festival (which includes Alaska Airlines among its sponsors) acknowledges Hawai'i's decades-long love affair with Spam, through musical entertainment; sales of merchandise (including Spam-themed shirts, hats and kitchen items, such as a Spam-slicer); and food booths featuring Spam burgers, Spam noodle bowls, Spam chips and even Spam desserts (such as Spam cupcakes). Appearances by mascot Spammy offer memorable photo opportunities.

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NIGHT HAS FALLEN ON THE VALLEY ISLE, and it's past my daughter's bedtime, but we're not ready to leave the Maui Fair. Sticky and tired, we stroll the fairgrounds a bit longer, taking in the scene—the carnival barkers inviting passersby to play a game in the Joy Zone, the dreamy soundscape of music and rides, the local families enjoying a night out, the teenagers holding hands. We'll be back again at least once over the course of the four-day festival, probably on Sunday morning, when the rides are discounted, and there are smaller crowds. But there's just something magical about the fair at night.

"Let's go on the wheel again!" my daughter says, and she tugs me toward the towering wheel, alit with the promise of one last ride. I hesitate when I see the long line, and then I relent. After all, the fair only comes once a year.

She holds my hand until it's our turn to get on. We climb into our car and lurch off the ground as the other cars load. Snuggled together in the cool night air, we ascend slowly, slowly into the night. At last the ride begins, and we soar upward, rising above the darkened treetops, leaning toward the edge of our seats and looking down over the lights and the people and the smells and the music below.

All of Maui seems to be here tonight. And, as much as I've loved being immersed in the sights and sounds of the fair, I realize this is the perfect end to our evening, above it all, taking it all in. ▲

Ilima Loomis is based on Maui.

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