



CULINARY Q&A

CHEF SAM CHOY

WORDS KRYSTAL KAKIMOTO

Born and raised in the sleepy O'ahu town of Lā'ie, Chef Sam Choy grew up working for his father's catering business, never realizing that one day this boy from the country would become one of Hawai'i's most beloved chefs. Choy graduated from the culinary arts program at Kapi'olani Community College and worked his way up in many Hawai'i kitchens until he opened his first restaurant in 1985, and has become a leading advocate in promoting Hawai'i Regional Cuisine and service with *aloha*. Choy's latest venture, HoloHolo Grill at Koloa Landing features Choy's gastro-pub inspired take on Hawaiian comfort food dishes all served with a goal of enjoying life's pleasures—great food and great company.

Growing up, were there people in your family that cooked? Did you enjoy cooking with them and being in the kitchen?

For as long as I could remember, I've been in the kitchen with my family. My dad had a catering business and I was raised in the kitchen, you know; taught to hold the knife, follow direction as what needed to be done. My whole family, my brother and two sisters, dad and my mom, we were always cooking together and creating magic in the kitchen. We did the first *lū'aus* in Hawai'i as a family, feeding 800-900 People. I love cooking, doing *lū'aus*, and making food people really enjoy.

How did you know you wanted to be in the culinary field?

You could say it was love at first bite! My mom was an artist and I look at food as art. Taking something from a raw state, being creative, and transforming it to something irresistible -- the artistic part of cooking really hooked me.

What did you hope to accomplish with the food you created?

Magic. Food has to be creative, but also a balance of flavor. This is the magical part about cooking. I want my guests to enjoy the simple part of food, fresh yet always with a wow factor.

As one of the founding chefs of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine, what message do you enjoy sharing with your guests?

The importance of supporting local ingredients, farmers and fishermen. You know, taking our traditional island foods to another level and arousing those tastebuds. That is my strength...taking fresh, local dishes indigenous to the islands and making good food that anyone would want to eat and enjoy.

Where did you gather inspiration for the menu at HoloHolo Grill at Koloa Landing?

The inspiration for HoloHolo Grill at Koloa Landing was a team effort between the chefs and the products of Kaua'i. Walking through the farmers market at Kaua'i Community College and holding farmers' vegetables, fruits, and all their ethnic foods that are there. Inspiration also came from the freshness of fish and other proteins and then being an artist in the kitchen with the team—they have a great team here and it took all of us to create the menu at HoloHolo—a true taste of Kaua'i, especially for the area of Po'ipū.

How do you hope your guests will feel when they visit HoloHolo Grill?

Happy! With the big pool there, it's a great atmosphere and there is nothing to worry about, certainly not cooking or cleaning! The HoloHolo Grill brings the outside in. Sitting outdoors just a few yards from the Pacific Ocean with the fresh air...I can't imagine what could be better!

What are some of your must-try dishes on the menu at HoloHolo Grill?

My famous poke, which is a traditional island favorite that is all over the world and enjoyed by everyone. Also, the fresh North Shore Greens. There are plenty of salads to choose from with handcrafted dressings and, of course, the HoloHolo burger made with wagyu beef and served with tomato jam—a real magical flavor! At HoloHolo Grill we use nothing but fresh ingredients.

What would your perfect day on Kaua'i be like from beginning to end?

Get on up, grab an on-the-run breakfast, cruise up Grand Canyon of the Pacific (Waimea Canyon), come down and have a nice lunch at HoloHolo Grill, head off on an early evening ride to Hanalei, sit on the pier and look at a rainbow or two. Then drive back down to Koloa Landing Resort, rest and shower and then head down to HoloHolo Grill for the evening to enjoy food, drinks and the ambiance. That's definitely the frosting on the cake—ending the day at HoloHolo Grill!

What do you like best about Koloa Landing Resort?

I feel that Koloa Landing Resort is very different from all the other resorts; it's one big family, the associates are so friendly and knowledgeable, and they have a variety of accommodations available for everyone. Plus, it's located at a central area on Kaua'i, so it's easy to go and adventure, and yet come back to a very comfortable home base. The *lū'au* is a great addition, the word on the island is "come for the food and stay for the show!" It's a great show!

