

morsels

Tasty tid-bits from around the Island

Dine About Town

Visit new and old eateries during Restaurant Week

By Simpicio Paragas



Sansei Seafood
Restaurant
& Sushi Bar



Chef Chai's at Pacifica

WHEN A GROUNDBREAKING ceremony took place at the future site of the **Culinary Institute of the Pacific**, Kelvin Ro sighed deeply, commenting that the moment had finally arrived after more than 15 years in the planning.

"All the fundraisers and all the pleading with donors," says Ro, a key figure in helping raise monies and awareness for the project, "it's finally happening."

For years, Ro and **Kapiolani Community College** faculty have rallied to establish a premier, four-year bachelor's degree curriculum in a new 7.8-acre state-of-the-art facility, located on the former Fort Ruger Cannon Club site behind Diamond Head crater. However, annual budget shortfalls have slowed the efforts but momentum is now building — literally and figuratively.

“Once the shovel hits the dirt, we should get the necessary support,” says Conrad Nonaka, director of the **Culinary Institute of the Pacific**, which is the umbrella term that covers all UH campus culinary programs statewide. “This is exciting for the state of Hawai‘i.”

In addition to grants and government funding, KCC’s culinary, and hospitality and tourism faculty members have had to rely on such fundraisers as the annual Ho‘okipa and Restaurant Week. “We’ve had to find ways to offset costs that the state doesn’t cover, including repairs to equipment in the lab, replenishment of supplies and professional development,” says KCC culinary arts chairman Ron Takahashi, who first started teaching at KCC in 1977. “If you’re teaching at an art school, you wouldn’t expect the student to pay for his own clay. So, as a culinary school, we don’t expect our students to pay for their ingredients.”

According to Nonaka, the first \$25 million phase of the facility is slated to be complete in December 2016, and will include two culinary teaching laboratories; an advanced multi-function laboratory; an advanced Asian cuisine laboratory; one of two paved parking lots; an umu pit; farm plots; and infrastructure improvements, such as water, electrical and sewer connections.

“It’s going to be like KCC, which has 400 students right now,” Nonaka says. “They have to finish their two-year program at any of the six community college culinary programs before they can get here, so those schools will be feeding students into the culinary institute, but we’re also going to have industry professionals come back to get their degree.”

The second phase of the plan calls for the construction of student classrooms; faculty office space; a 100-seat auditorium for demonstrations and broadcasting to remote locations; a 200-seat teaching restaurant and student laboratory; additional parking; two additional baking and patisserie laboratories; and an administration and office building.

“We still need to raise the money for the second phase,” Nonaka asserts. “Fundraisers, like Ho‘okipa,



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Artist renderings of the state-of-the-art kitchen labs and dining room reveal clean lines and contemporary furnishings.

help and so does Restaurant Week, which is an industry-driven event that involves all segments — from purveyors and farmers to distributors and hotels. It bridges education with industry partners, while also bringing in the community.”

More than 100 different restaurants — from Chef Chai at Pacifica to Chinatown Express — will participate in this year’s event, running from Nov. 16-22. Each establishment will provide special menu items, promotions and discounts during the weeklong celebration of local cuisine.

“This is our favorite event to participate in,” says Ivy Nagayama, managing partner at d.k Steak House and Sansei Seafood Restaurant & Sushi Bar. “And we know that the money is going toward culinary students.”

Visit Restaurant Week’s website to see a list of participating restaurants and their respective menus. restaurantweekhawaii.com