



## NEXT GENERATION OF FOOD PIONEERS

*The next generation of Oahu's food pioneers are popping up in Oahu's emerging neighborhoods*

O'AHU – Within recent years, a bevy of chefs and restaurateurs have changed O'ahu's dining scene, transforming entire blocks into bustling food and drink hubs and injecting new energy into sleepy neighborhoods. Here are a few of the standouts in O'ahu's current culinary landscape.

Honolulu-born **Robynne Maii** spent time cooking in New York kitchens and teaching in culinary schools before deciding to come home to open **Fête**, a handsome restaurant with brick walls and a marble-topped bar. Here, she cooks and serves the food that she craves: fried chicken with grits and collard greens, inspired by frequent trips to Georgia to visit her husband's family, and kalbi-marinated steak, a nod to the Korean flavors of her childhood.

[www.fetehawaii.com](http://www.fetehawaii.com)

**Jenny Grondin** and **David Segarra**, who spent years opening restaurants for others in New York, came to Honolulu to start their own personal project, **Grondin, a French-Latin Kitchen**, to showcase their heritage (hers French, his Ecuadorian). The menu isn't so much fusion as it is classic, polished comfort food from their two different cultures, in the form of dishes such as steak frites and chicken mole. Grondin also features classically-made cocktails, wine and craft beer in a cozy, French bistro setting.

[www.grondinhi.com](http://www.grondinhi.com)

Former Alan Wong's team members **Dusty Grable** and **Jesse Cruz** have a knack for transforming nondescript and dingy spaces into stylish, inviting dining rooms, while pairing comfort food with attentive and polished service. Their first venture, **Lucky Belly**, is a refined ramen bar where noodles and modern-style dumplings are served with fine sake in a white wine glass. Lucky Belly's signature dish and must-try is the Belly Bowl: ramen in a sesame-based stock topped with pork belly,

## NEXT GENERATION OF FOOD PIONEERS

Add 1

bacon and sausage. Across the street is their **Livestock Tavern**, a seasonal American eatery, where the décor and menu change with the seasons. Expect dishes such as a savory mushroom pudding in the fall and a lobster and spinach pasta in the spring. Livestock Tavern also boasts one of Honolulu's best bars, with a well-edited wine program and handcrafted cocktails.

[www.luckybelly.com](http://www.luckybelly.com)

[www.livestocktavern.com](http://www.livestocktavern.com)

A Culinary Institute of America graduate and former sous chef at Chef Mavro, **Andrew Le's** eclectic menu offerings at **The Pig and the Lady** are inspired by his mother's Vietnamese home cooking, some faithfully reproduced, and some reinterpreted with fine dining techniques. Favorite dishes include the pho French dip bánh mì, with braised brisket and a Thai basil chimichurri, served alongside a cup of pho broth for dipping. His newest restaurant, **Piggy Smalls**, is the more casual branch, with bowls and plates made for sharing. The signature bánh mì here is the pho-strami, a pastrami sandwich with pickled mustard seeds and side of pho, and desserts include boozy slushies and a weekly changing menu of slush floats and soft serve.

[www.thepigandthelady.com](http://www.thepigandthelady.com)

Honolulu-born chef **Chris Kajioka** and England-native **Anthony Rush** collaborated on **Senia**, where little touches of their upbringing make their way onto the menu, as in a poke on squid ink cracker, bubble and squeak croquette, and Maui venison Wellington. But most of the menu doesn't hew to any one culinary tradition; the best way to taste the constantly-evolving menu, which showcases a variety of techniques and flavors, is by booking a seat at the Chefs' Table, where it's tasting-menu only and you can watch dishes being assembled in the open kitchen.

[www.restaurantsenia.com](http://www.restaurantsenia.com)

Chef **Brian Chan** has deep roots in Chinatown—his parents are longtime restaurateurs and own Little Village, one of Honolulu's favorite restaurants, known for its Chinese food served in a friendly and clean setting, a rarity at the time it opened in 2001. **Scratch Kitchen & Meatery** in Kaka'ako is Chan's own venture, focusing on unique brunch options such as milk and cereal pancakes and skillet grits and eggs.

[www.scratch-hawaii.com](http://www.scratch-hawaii.com)

## NEXT GENERATION OF FOOD PIONEERS

Add 2

In a town known for outstanding izakayas, opening a new one can mean getting lost in the sea. But former Doraku chef **Hide Yoshimoto** proved that **Izakaya Torae Torae** in McCully is a worthy destination. The interior of the restaurant mixes traditional and contemporary Japanese elements, as does the menu, where you'll find traditional sushi and dishes (ask for the dashimaki tamago, an ethereal version of a Japanese omelet) as well as Yoshimoto's creations that pair amaebi, uni and ikura.

[www.toraetorae.com](http://www.toraetorae.com)

Husband-and-wife duo **Michelle Karr-Ueoka** and **Wade Ueoka** spent almost 20 years working alongside chef Alan Wong as pastry chef and chef de cuisine, respectively, before opening their own spot, **MW Restaurant**. Representing the new Hawai'i Regional Cuisine, Karr-Ueoka and Ueoka present favorite local dishes with an upscale twist, utilizing only the best locally-sourced ingredients.

[www.mwrestaurant.com](http://www.mwrestaurant.com)

The son of a famed hula dancer, chef **Ed Kenney**'s food in his restaurants, which now total four, has a deep sense of place, whether through his commitment to using local ingredients or by the flavors rooted in Hawai'i. His latest restaurant, **Mahina & Sun's** in the Surfjack Hotel & Swim Club, focuses on local and sustainable seafood (don't miss the Mahina's Family Feast, with a whole fried snapper and fixin's such as a fiddlehead fern salad). The setting is aloha meets mid-century modern (check out the shaka-print wallpaper). Right before Mahina & Sun's, Kenney also opened **Mud Hen Water** in Kaimuki, which presents modern Hawaiian dishes such as yaki o pa'i'ai, squares of pounded taro brushed with teriyaki sauce and grilled; and plates that draw on Hawai'i's multicultural influences, like a mapo tofu biscuits and gravy for brunch.

[www.mudhenwater.com](http://www.mudhenwater.com)

[www.mahinaandsuns.com](http://www.mahinaandsuns.com)

Restaurateur **Kevin Hanney** and chef **Lee Anne Wong**, a contestant on the first season of Bravo's *Top Chef*, opened **Koko Head Café** in Kaimuki in 2014. The island-style brunch house features unique dishes like a cornflake-crust French toast and Eggs Haloa, a Hawaiian-style riff on eggs Benedict, with a poi biscuit, coconut lū'au sauce and sour poi hollandaise.

[www.kokoheadcafe.com](http://www.kokoheadcafe.com)

## NEXT GENERATION OF FOOD PIONEERS

Add 3

**Melissa Bow** began **Via Gelato** with the idea of bringing local flavors to Italian-style gelato. She nailed it at her neighborhood gelateria in Kaimuki, where she churns out an ever-changing mix of gelato and sorbetto in flavors such as green tea Oreo, li hing pineapple, lilikoi, guava, strawberry ume, and the lava flow, a pina colada sorbet swirled with a fresh strawberry sauce.

[instagram.com/viagelatohawaii](https://www.instagram.com/viagelatohawaii)

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