



Roy Yamaguchi

Chef/Founder, **Roy's** restaurants

First introduced in Honolulu by James Beard award winner Chef Roy Yamaguchi, **Roy's** has become well known throughout the world for its Hawaiian Fusion® Cuisine – featuring the freshest local ingredients, European sauces and bold Asian spices with a focus on seafood. Today there are 34 **Roy's** restaurants around the world -- 25 in the Continental US, 7 in Hawaii, 1 in Japan and 1 in Guam.

The Early Years

Although Chef Yamaguchi was born in Tokyo, his Hawaii connection goes back to his grandfather, who owned a tavern in the '40s in Wailuku, Maui, and who was also a pioneer of sorts in the local supermarket industry. He attributes his earliest appreciation of food to his father, a career military man born and raised on Maui, and to his Okinawan-born mother. Brought up in Tokyo within this fluent bilingual environment until the age of 17, Chef Yamaguchi could not help but absorb much of Japan's culture. Yet he still vividly recalls visits back to Maui to see his grandparents, and his first experiences of the Pacific.

"My father would drive for hours just to get fresh fish, crabs, octopus and lobster from the piers. From trips to Okinawa, mom would haul back live spiny lobsters. It seems that I have always loved to cook; whether it was fried Portuguese sausage and eggs for breakfast, or a full-on Thanksgiving dinner for the family, even if it was for credit in a home ec class," says Chef Yamaguchi.

Before graduating from high school in 1974, Chef Yamaguchi knew that he wanted to enroll in the Culinary Institute of America in New York's Hyde Park, where he was to receive his first exposure to classical traditions. After graduating from CIA in 1976, his devotion to French cooking was nurtured further in southern California, where he signed on for an apprenticeship at L'Escoffier, followed by one at L'Ermitage. Chef Yamaguchi considers L'Ermitage's late master chef Jean Bertranou to be his mentor. In a June 1988 Bon Appetit cover story, he recalls how he absorbed the "inner secrets of haute cuisine" at this legendary West Hollywood restaurant.

"I almost turned down the job because I didn't think I was good enough," he explains, "but I started out doing simple things, like cutting fish and meat. I learned more cooking there in two and a half years there than I could have anywhere else. Those two (Bertranou and his right-hand man, Michel Blanchet) taught me lessons straight from the school of hard knocks. They didn't take things lightly, I learned to do a dish and work at it until it was perfect -- I learned to feel if a dish was right."

Thoroughly imbued by this discipline, Chef Yamaguchi found the confidence to tackle his first experience as an executive chef at Le Serene by late 1979. This was followed by a few memorable months at the eternally posh Michael's in Santa Monica, working for "California Cuisine" originator Michael McCarty. Yamaguchi then continued to fuse French techniques and largely Japanese ingredients as executive chef of Le Gourmet in the Sheraton Plaza La Reina - an unusual venue that is still talked about by frequent LAX travelers/gourmets. In 1984, Chef Yamaguchi finally opened his first restaurant as an owner, 385 North on Hollywood's La

Chef Roy Yamaguchi, add one

Cienega. This is where the Yamaguchi cooking style, described by Bon Appetit as "California-French-Japanese-eclectic," first came into bloom. Dishes like rare ahi in grapefruit vinaigrette and Asian herb sauce would represent something bold, even brazen for some, but it was merely "the next evolutionary step for a classic dish" to Chef Yamaguchi.

The California Restaurant Writers Association chose Chef Yamaguchi as their "California Chef of the Year" in 1986 and 1987. Nevertheless, Chef Yamaguchi made yet another move to what he found to be a more ideal, and idyllic location from which to expand his ideas. After dissolving his L.A. partnership in early 1988, he uprooted his young family in order to renew his acquaintance with Hawaii, settling into the eastern side of Honolulu known as Hawaii Kai.

The First Decade in Hawaii

The opening of Yamaguchi's restaurant, **Roy's**, in late December 1988 did not go unnoticed. Within months *Food & Wine* (Nov. '89) dubbed it "the crown jewel of Honolulu's East-West eateries." It was virtually the only one of its type in the early years. Yet, Mimi Sheraton selected this pioneering Hawaiian Fusion® project as one of *Conde Nast Traveler's* "Top 50" in America in 1991 and 1992. By early 1992, **Roy's** was enshrined in *Nation's Restaurant News* "Fine Dining Hall of Fame;" Gault-Millau awarded two "toques" (a 17/20 rating), and in *Forbes FYI*, Andre Gayot ranked it among the nation's "Top 40." Gayot proclaimed, "Yamaguchi invents his own tropical culinary scenario; blending French, Italian, Thai, Japanese and Chinese cuisines... no one has gone so far yet, at least with success." Among the celebrities and politicians that have visited the original **Roy's** restaurant are former President Bill and Senator Hillary Clinton.

Even more important to Yamaguchi has been his restaurants' overwhelming acceptance by island cognoscenti, who have voted **Roy's** as Hawaii's "Most Popular Restaurant" in consecutive editions of the Zagat Hawaii Survey. In January 1992, a second Hawaii venture, **Roy's Kahana Bar & Grill**, opened on the neighbor island of Maui. For many consecutive years since, readers of the *Maui News* have proclaimed **Roy's Kahana Bar & Grill** to be "Best Overall Restaurant." This, too, managed to find its way to Mimi Sheraton's list of *Conde Nast Traveler's* "Top 50."

After accepting a James Beard Award for "Best Pacific Northwest Chef" in 1993 -- Hawaii's first recipient of this prestigious, peer-selected national honor -- Chef Yamaguchi commented to the local press that he hoped this recognition would be a first step towards proving that "Hawaii has the talent and chefs to compete nationally." Towards that end, Chef Yamaguchi created a cooking series with Hawaii Public Television, *Hawaii Cooks with Roy Yamaguchi*. More than a cooking show, each of its six seasons has featured 13 episodes per season that focus on the beauty and culture of the islands told through a story about its food producers, artists, and of course, its chefs. The show has aired in all 50 states, and in over 60 countries.

In the mid-1990s, Chef Yamaguchi was invited to create **Roy's** Hawaiian Fusion® meals for the BusinessFirst in-flight service for Continental and Continental Micronesia.

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Television & Guest Appearances

Beyond his PBS series, Chef Yamaguchi was selected to be among the “Iron Chef USA” world-class contingent in 2001, which included Todd English (Olives, Figs), Jean Francois Meteigner (La Cachette), and Alessandro Stratta (Renoir). In 2002, he taped a segment with the Food Network for their series, *My Country, My Kitchen*, which took him back to Japan for the filming of a very personal journey back to the places that inspired him.

In 2004, he joined the ranks of other culinary celebrities such as Wolfgang Puck and Emeril Lagasse as a featured chef of the Home Shopping Network where his signature line of cookware and other culinary products are showcased.

In 2005, Yamaguchi was invited to join noted Chef Michael Lomonaco (Windows On The World, Noche), host of the Travel Channel’s popular cooking program, “Epicurious”, as an in-studio guest chef to prepare a recipe from his one of his cookbooks.

Chef Yamaguchi was named among the Honolulu 100 who were recognized at the Centennial Gala Celebration of Honolulu in November of 2005. Selected from literally hundreds of nominees by a committee assembled by members of the Honolulu Centennial Celebration Commission and HONOLULU Magazine, along with input from the public, the Honolulu 100 have been selected for their important contributions to building Honolulu, since incorporation in 1905 of the City and County of Honolulu into the city that it is today.

In 2006, Chef Yamaguchi was featured on Good Morning America, Emeril, The Today Show, and CBS This Morning.

In 2007, Chef Yamaguchi has made guest appearances on The Early Show on CBS, The Today Show, Bravo’s Top Chef, iVillage Live and Regis & Kelly.

Special Events

Among the many special events in which he has participated throughout the world are the Grammy Awards, where he has been a featured chef for four consecutive years, and the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen in June of 2004, where he participated in the Celebrity Chef Cook-Off with his “sous chef,” actor Kevin Costner.

In spring of 2005, Chef Yamaguchi was the guest chef on the beach of the Cote d’Azur at The Carlton Hotel, the grand dame of Cannes’ hotels, to prepare dinner for the Sarasota Film Festival Cruise guests attending the Cannes Film Festival.

During the summer of 2005, Chef Yamaguchi was in Thailand where he was invited to cook for Princess Soamsawali and her pet charity, Save a Child’s Life from Aids Project, sponsored by the Thai Red Cross.

Chef Yamaguchi was the featured celebrity chef on recent exotic tours: the South Africa Winelands Tour & Safari in 2006 and Tour of Egypt along with a cruise down the Nile in 2007.

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Memberships and Philanthropic Support

Chef Yamaguchi feels a strong obligation where education is concerned. He was elected to the Board of Trustees of The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), the renowned institution from which he graduated 30 years ago. He also serves as Co-Chair for the CIA's capital campaign drive.

He is a member of the Steering committee for Culinary Institute of the Pacific. He is on the Board of Directors for Hale Aina, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to championing Hawaii's culinary industry and the University of Hawaii's culinary training programs. He is also on the steering committee for the Leeward Community Culinary College.

He is on the Board of Directors for Go For Broke National Educational Foundation, a non-profit organization with educational programs about the history of the Japanese American veterans of World War II.

Chef Yamaguchi is on the Board of Directors for Grow for Good, a national initiative from Food & Wine Magazine dedicated to raising \$1 million for Farm to Table, a national initiative dedicated to supporting local farms and encouraging sustainable agriculture.

Chef Yamaguchi serves as Capital Campaign Honorary Chair for non-profit Hale Makua Kahului, the largest long-term care facility for the elderly in Maui.

He initiated the Tom and Warren Matsuda Scholarship Fund, which provides one-year scholarships to the Culinary Institute of the Pacific for first, second and third place winners of an annual culinary competition. The fund, underwritten by Roy's Restaurant, was established to support culinary education in Hawaii through the Culinary Institute of the Pacific and its programs statewide.

Chef Yamaguchi recently hosted Roy's 10th anniversary Golf Tournament to benefit Imua Family Services in Maui. The tournaments have raised over \$350,000 for the organization, which assists families of special needs children on Maui and Lanai.

Publishing

On the literary side, Chef Yamaguchi has published four cookbooks and is working on a fifth. Cookbooks available include:

Pacific Bounty (Ten Speed Press 1994)

Companion cookbook for PBS series

Roy's Feasts From Hawaii (Ten Speed Press 1995)

A brilliantly illustrated cookbook now in its third printing

Hawaii Cooks with Roy Yamaguchi (Ten Speed Press 2003)

Companion cookbook for PBS series with an emphasis on family-style meals

Roy's Fish & Seafood (Ten Speed Press 2005)

Pacific fish and seafood recipes with beautiful location, seafood, and food photography to reveal the incomparable bounty of the ocean's offerings.