



**CONTACT:**

Yvonne Biegel  
For Grand Wailea  
(808) 891-3383  
Yvonne.Biegel@waldorfastoria.com

**Grand Wailea's Michael Lofaro Named "Chef of the Year" by Maui Chefs**

*Lofaro Also Received "Most Innovative Menu" and "Best Pacific Rim" Cuisine*

**WAILEA, MAUI, HI** – April 11, 2016 – **Michael "Mike" Lofaro**, chef de cuisine of the prized Humuhumunukunukuapua`a restaurant at [Grand Wailea, A Waldorf Astoria Resort](#) was awarded **Chef of the Year** last night at the Maui No Ka Oi Magazine's `Aipono Awards Gala at Grand Wailea. The prestigious Chef of the Year title is decided by peer review – voted on exclusively by Maui chefs. Lofaro also received the **Most Innovative Menu** and a silver award for **Best Pacific Rim** cuisine by the readers of the magazine.

It has been a big year for Lofaro, fondly nicknamed the "waterman chef." He refers to the ocean as his hunting ground and uses his muse to fish, gather, forage and hunt for a quarterly dinner series called Ka Malama, based on the Hawaiian moon calendar and what is in season during certain phases of the moon.

His creative menus have him paddling a mile offshore at midnight to catch *malolo* (flying fish) and *opelu* (mackerel); hiking several hours into a valley to gather *pohole* fern; and jumping off the rugged ocean cliffs of the East shores of Maui to pick *opihi* (limpet). His *kai momona* dish combines *wana* (sea urchin), shellfish coconut emulsion, *ogo* (seaweed) and sea beans, and it won Best Protein Dish at the 2016 Maui County Agricultural Festival.

Lofaro takes farm to table a leap forward. In doing so, his dinners have inspired a television series – *SEARCH Hawaii, Where Food Meets Culture* – that will air 12 half-hour shows weekly on KHON2-Fox in Hawaii beginning June 4, and an hour special in September. The show will air globally on independent stations around the world this fall, and on Hawaiian Airlines flights to and from Hawaii.

He and his co-host Hawaiian cultural ambassador Kainoa Horcajo have diverse but similarly passionate backgrounds. *SEARCH Hawaii* inspires viewers to consider local ingredients while they learn about Hawaii's cultures and traditions with visually rousing images of their island home, meetings with local heroes farming, fishing and cooking cultural ingredients throughout the Hawaiian islands.

"I look at food differently now that I've been on this journey. I look at life differently," said Lofaro.

"Grand Wailea is proud and very fortunate to have Mike as part of our *ohana* (family)," said Tom Donovan, managing director of Grand Wailea. "His passion for the ocean truly translates to his award-winning cuisine, and he leads and motivates his team in the kitchen to think differently

about local ingredients. We know we can count on Mike to impress our guests and clients with his innovation. He always delivers.”

“The Chef of the Year is someone that everyone looks up to,” said Becky Speere, dining editor for Maui Magazine. “The chefs vote for this award. Honoring the Hawaiian culture has earned Chef Mike the respect of industry peers.”

Lofaro is a graduate from the esteemed Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He was executive chef at Mill’s Tavern in Providence, Rhode Island where he achieved the distinguished Mobil Four Star Award, and worked with famed chef Michael Mina of Aqua in San Francisco before landing at Grand Wailea in 2005. In 2014 The Maui News readers named Lofaro Best Maui Chef and his restaurant Best Resort Restaurant.

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### **About the `Aipono Restaurant Awards**

Now in their 14<sup>th</sup> year, the `Aipono Restaurant Awards are the first high-profile dining awards devoted entirely to Maui. They are awards of honor and distinction determined by the readers – the residents and regular visitors of Maui. The awards presentation gala is a benefit for the Maui Culinary Academy.

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### **About Grand Wailea, A Waldorf Astoria Resort**

The newly refreshed landmark resort consistently ranks among the world’s best in leading travel and consumer reports. Nestled on 40 acres of lush, tropical gardens fronting Wailea Beach, **Grand Wailea, Waldorf Astoria Resort** provides a range of vacation experiences: open spaces for the active vacationer, beauty and seclusion for romantic getaways, and family fun – ranging from a fully equipped camp for children and a teen lounge to rope swings and a jungle-style river pool. Guests also have access to the luxurious **Spa Grande**, a standard-setter in the world of resort spas, as well as eight restaurants, including the award-winning “Best of Maui” Humuhumunukunukuapua’a. Accommodation options include Grand Wailea’s 780 rooms and suites and an enclave of 120 luxury villas **Ho`olei at Grand Wailea** ranging from 3,200 to 4,000 sq. ft., located nearby with access to Grand Wailea amenities. For reservations and information, call 1-800-888-6100 or visit [www.grandwailea.com](http://www.grandwailea.com)

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