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Hawai'i Tourism Authority Presents 2024 Tourism Legacy Awards to Kaua'i's Hamura Saimin and Renowned Chef Sam Choy

Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Inducted to Hawai'i Hospitality Hall of Fame

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) held its esteemed Tourism Legacy Awards luncheon today as the culminating event of the 2024 Hawai'i Tourism Conference. HTA proudly presented Tourism Legacy Awards to Kaua'i's Hamura Saimin and Hawai'i's own Chef Sam Choy for their long-standing achievements in serving Hawai'i's communities.

"Recognizing and uplifting our beloved local establishments, like Hamura Saimin, and the award-winning culinary talents of chefs such as Sam Choy, through our esteemed Tourism Legacy Awards, allows HTA and the visitor industry to continue supporting Hawai'i's restaurant and culinary sectors," said Mufi Hannemann, HTA's board chair. "These awardees are truly deserving of this honor, as they remain an essential part of the fabric of Hawai'i."

HTA's Tourism Legacy Awards annually honor organizations and individuals who have established and sustained a legacy of aloha. This year's awards were presented to Hamura Saimin and Chef Sam Choy, paying tribute to these pioneers, innovators and visionaries who are shaping and enriching Hawai'i's vibrant culinary scene and cultivating a rich tapestry of flavors, traditions and techniques.

HTA presented Hamura Saimin and Chef Choy with papa ku'i 'ai, a handcrafted board made from Hawai'i-grown hardwoods, and pōhaku ku'i 'ai, a stone implement handpicked and carved from 'Ōhikilolo Valley in west O'ahu, used together to ku'i (pound) kalo pa'a (cooked taro) into pa'i'ai and poi. HTA commissioned the papa ku'i 'ai and pōhaku ku'i 'ai from Akau Boards.

Hamura Saimin was opened in 1952 by Charles and Aiko Hamura on Kress Street in Līhu'e. More than 70 years later, Kaua'i's beloved, hometown restaurant continues to serve residents and visitors the comfort foods of Hawai'i, including a variety of saimin, won ton soup, liliko'i chiffon pie, and more.

Hailing from Lā'ie on O'ahu's North Shore and now residing in Kona on the island of Hawai'i, Chef Choy's exceptional creativity, love of good food and aloha for guests propelled him to the status of an internationally recognized chef, television personality, and James Beard Foundation award winner. While Chef Choy's colorful personality and welcoming smile have drawn customers to his multiple restaurants throughout Hawai'i over the last 30 years, it is his award-winning cooking that keeps them coming back. He characterizes his cuisine as a "melting pot of the freshest ingredients from every culture in the Hawaiian Islands."

Also during the Tourism Legacy Awards luncheon, HTA and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Travel Industry Management's Alumni Association honored the legacy of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole by posthumously inducting Ke Ali'i Maka'āinana (the citizen prince) to the Hawai'i Hospitality Hall of Fame. Presented near the entrance of the Hawai'i Convention Center's Kalākaua Ballroom, the Hall of Fame recognizes 52 pioneers in aviation, ground transportation, entertainment, education, food services, and cultural enrichment and preservation.

“HTA is proud to strengthen our partnership with the University of Hawai‘i as we jointly honor Prince Kūhiō’s enduring legacy of servant leadership and his pivotal role in Congress in preserving and enhancing the well-being of Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians,” said Daniel Nāho‘opi‘i, HTA’s interim president and CEO.

Prince Kūhiō was a servant leader, caring for his people. As a reflection of his ancestors’ practice of Hawaiian hospitality and the Native Hawaiian value of ho‘okipa, he laid the foundation of Hawai‘i as a world-class destination and worked tirelessly to perpetuate Hawaiian culture worldwide.

Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, he served in Washington, D.C., as a Hawai‘i territorial delegate to the House of Representatives in Congress for 10 consecutive two-year terms, from 1902 until his death on January 7, 1922. As a congressional delegate, Prince Kūhiō introduced the Hawai‘i National Park bill in 1916, which established a Hawai‘i National Park encompassing Kīlauea and Maunaloa on Hawai‘i Island and Haleakalā on Maui. Hawai‘i National Park was later divided into Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park and Haleakalā National Park, and both continue to receive federal funding that he fought for.

In addition, Prince Kūhiō reestablished the Royal Order of Kamehameha I in 1903, established the Hawaiian Civic Club in 1918 and ensured the signing of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) in 1921.

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Download photos from the Tourism Legacy Awards and Hawai‘i Hospitality Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony:

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About the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority

The Hawai‘i Tourism Authority is the state agency responsible for representing The Hawaiian Islands around the world, and for holistically managing tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with community desires, economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, and visitor industry needs. HTA works with the community and industry to Mālama Hawai‘i – care for our beloved home. For more information about HTA, visit hawaii tourism authority.org or follow @HawaiiHTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#).

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