



1801 Kalākaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815

**kelepona** tel (808) 943-3500

**kelepa'i** fax (808) 943-3599

**kahua pa'a** web hawaiiiconvention.com

## **CULINARY TEAM AT HAWAII CONVENTION CENTER OFFERS TASTE OF SOMETHING NEW**

**HONOLULU** – The Hawai'i Convention Center, under AEG Facilities, provides guests an unmatched culinary experience, with menus and selections that reflect the diversity of Hawai'i with cultural flexibility and culinary creativity.

The center is home to one of the state's largest production kitchens, with 20,000 square feet of space built to help chefs prepare tantalizing entrees featuring a variety of regional flavors. The center's in-house catering team works with planners months in advance to design specialized menus, an in-demand and popular option for groups from around the globe.

Hawai'i-sourced foods lend themselves beautifully to culinary interpretations designed to please both domestic and international palates such as dishes that feature kalua pork or turkey or a continental breakfast may hug the domestic boundaries of comfort food, but provide an opportunity to explore the exotic when punctuated with a slice of dragon fruit.

"It is not an easy task to feed 10,000 people twice a day," said Christine Phelps, deputy executive director of the American Academy of Neurology, which held its annual meeting at the Hawai'i Convention Center. "The food is really very good, and not only that, it is reasonably priced, and you don't see that combination very often. Our No. 1 complaint on our evaluation forms, quite often, is the food. Not here at the Hawai'i Convention Center."

### **Top Talent & Commitment to Hospitality**

The goal of the Hawai'i Convention Center is to treat all of its guests to the finest convention and meetings experience, in the spirit of *ho'okipa* (hospitality). A vital part of this is offering visitors a taste of local flavors and cultures, and showcasing the bounty of ingredients that the islands have to offer. The culinary team, led by chef Kevin Nakata, is tasked with enhancing the guest experience for local, mainland and international visitors to the center.

Chef Nakata joined the food and beverage team at the center in 2015. Bringing more than 21 years of culinary experience, Chef Nakata previously served in executive chef positions at some of the finest restaurants and establishments on Kaua'i, Maui and O'ahu. He most recently worked as the executive sous chef at The Royal Hawaiian hotel on O'ahu, overseeing the food

and beverage operations on property including the Surf Lanai, Mai Tai Bar, as well as banquet events.

Born and raised in Hawai'i, Nakata earned an associates degree from Kapi'olani Community College.

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**About Meet Hawai'i**

Meet Hawai'i is a collaboration of the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) and Hawai'i Convention Center (HCC) to reinforce the brand of the Hawaiian Islands as a world-class destination for business meetings, conventions, and incentive programs. The marketing efforts of the Meet Hawai'i team are overseen by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), the state of Hawai'i's tourism agency. HTA was established in 1998 to ensure a successful visitor industry well into the future. Its mission is to strategically manage Hawai'i tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with the state of Hawai'i's economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires, and visitor industry needs. For information about Meet Hawai'i and the hosting of meetings, conventions and incentives, please visit [MeetHawaii.com](http://MeetHawaii.com).

**Special note to media:** HTA recognizes the use of the 'okina ['] or glottal stop, one of the eight consonants of the (modern) Hawaiian language; and the kahakō [ā] or macron (e.g., in place names of Hawai'i such as Lāna'i). However, HTA respects the individual use of these markings for names of organizations and businesses.

**Media Contacts:**

Darlene Morikawa  
Director – PR/Communications  
Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau  
dmorikawa@hvcb.org  
(808) 924-0259

Michelle Hee  
Account Executive  
Anthology Marketing Group  
michelle.hee@anthologygroup.com  
(808) 539-3474

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