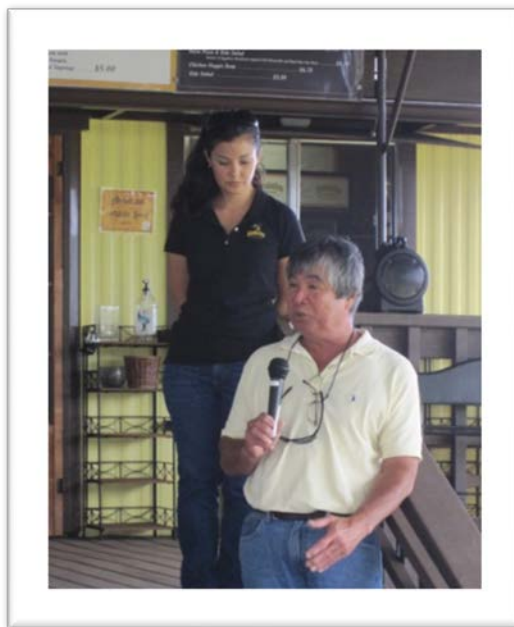


Kylie Matsuda-Lum, Kahuku Farms



Kylie, who started Agritourism on Kahuku Farms, is standing behind her father Mel Matsuda.

The following questions were posed to Kylie Matsuda-Lum, an expert in Agritourism, following a workshop she hosted in the summer of 2012. Questions are specific to Kylie's operation, and responses offer insight into her success. Additional insights from Kylie Matsuda-Lum, and all of our 2012 Master Farmers, can be found on Oahu RC&D's website.

Q. Can you tell us about the effectiveness of different marketing tools (signs, website, publications, word of mouth, etc.)?

A. We opened our Farm Café about 2 years ago and for the first year, we looked out the window and watched all the cars pass by everyday and thought “Why don't they stop?” and “How do we communicate to them just what it is that we offer?” These are our four strategies for effective marketing tools.

- Word of mouth has been our greatest marketing force. When people like what you offer, they will tell others.
- Signage: For those that have not heard about us through word of mouth, signage is crucial. People thought we were a plant nursery and offered farm tours until we put out signs that said “Ice Cream, Smoothies and Farm Pizza.” People now stop, and ask about our food items because of our signs.
- Publications: We had a couple of “lucky” breaks where we were fortunate to have had an article in the Star Advertiser and other local publications. At those times, we always saw a flood of local people.
- Website: Our website is a complete tool or resource for people to learn about our company including our story and history in farming, our farm tours, menu and value added products along with our contact information and how to find us.



Group tours are given periodically throughout the day. Afterwards there is a small café to enjoy farm-grown refreshments.

Q. Which part of your operation seems to bring more customers – the café or the tour? If you had to focus on only one, which would you choose and why?

A. To our surprise, it is the café that is bringing in more customers. We originally thought that the tours would be the highlight of our operation and though it is popular and brings guests from across the island and abroad, it is the café that actually draws more people.

Q: At the workshop, you mentioned you partnered with growers and processors to develop your products. How did you identify these partnerships? What kinds of contracts / agreements do you use?

A. You must first identify what kind of product you would like to develop. If it is a jam or jelly product, go out and do some research on local jam and jelly processors. Set up meetings with them and taste their existing products. If you like what you see and taste, ask them if they'd be willing to make products for you using your farm fruit. Make sure they have a reputable history and that their degree of quality meets your standards. Consider all options (processors) before making your decision. Depending on the situation, contracts are optional. If you have information like recipes that you want to protect, then it may be important to draw up a confidentiality statement.



A family business sometimes faces conflicts but at the end of the day working together is most rewarding.

Q. How did you identify which tour companies to work with? How important are relationships with tour companies?

A. Until now, tour companies have not been a major part of our business. However, they are an excellent resource to the visitor market. When choosing a company to work with and to represent you, it's ideal to find a company that is well established in the tour market.

Q. As a family operation, do you encounter challenges with dividing labor, income, etc? How do you handle these?

A. We are faced with many different challenges, but dividing labor and income has never been an issue. We all have different strengths and weaknesses and the more critical issues stem from the personality differences within the family. We are all passionate, even strong willed and have our own opinions as to how things should be, but at the end of the day there is no greater reward than to be able to work together and succeed as a family.

Q. How valuable is your university degree to the business success? What lessons do you feel are best learned in the classroom, versus through on-the-farm experience?

A. My degree in Travel Industry Management gave me many different tools in marketing, human resources, hospitality, and finance which are all pillars to any business. However, it is the hands on experience of day to day operations that have really helped me to grow, develop and make good decisions.

Oahu Resource Conservation & Development Council
PO BOX 209 / 92-1770 Kunia Road, Kunia, HI 96759 / P 808-622-9026
www.oahurcd.org

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