



**Chef James McDonald Takes Top Honors at the
21st Annual Maui Onion Festival at Whalers Village Fine Shops & Restaurants**

KĀ'ANAPALI, Maui – Chef James McDonald, Braeden Kastner, Robert Geaque and the Maui Kula Onion were the stars at the 21st Annual Maui Onion Festival held at Whalers Village Fine Shops & Restaurants. McDonald took top honors in the Maui Onion Recipe Contest while Kastner (*keiki*) and Geaque (adult) took first place in their respective divisions in the Raw Maui Onion Eating Contests. Overall, it was a day of friendly competition, fun and celebration.

Following the success of this year's event, the 2011 Maui Onion Festival is confirmed to take place on Saturday, May 7, 2011 and the Maui Onion Beer Pairing Dinner will be held at Hula Grill on Friday, May 6.

Held annually in honor of the Maui Kula Onion, Maui's most famous agricultural export, Whalers Village hosted its signature event and, once again, brought Maui's upcountry, agricultural heritage to Kā'anapali. "We're proud to host a fun event featuring a full day of celebrity chefs demonstrating cooking techniques followed by food sampling for the audience, best onion recipe contest, *keiki* and adult raw Maui onion eating contest, food and products booths, and island music and entertainment," said Lisa Donlon, marketing manager, Whalers Village. "It's great to see the community, industry and visitors having a such a great time."

With his dish, *Upcountry Ravioli*, Chef James McDonald of Lahaina's *i'O*, *Pacific'O* and *Feast at Lele* restaurants along with *O'o Farm* and *'Aina Gourmet Market* was the top winner in the Maui Onion Recipe Contest. In second was the 2009 champion - David Paul of *David's Paul's Island Grill*, followed by Chef Russell Siu of *3660 on the Rise* in Honolulu, Chef DK Kodama of *Cane & Taro* and Chef Roy Yamaguchi of *Roy's Restaurants*.

Visiting emcees Tannya Joaquin and Lisa Kubota from KGMB 9 led all of the center stage activities, and this year's Maui Onion Recipe Contest judges included Chris Speere, coordinator, Maui Culinary Academy, Carla Tracy, dining/food editor, *Maui News*, Shannon Wianecki, assistant editor & dining/food writer, *Maui No Ka Oi* magazine, and Dave Eckert, host/producer, *Culinary Travels with Dave Eckert*.

About Chef James McDonald: Chef James has been showcasing his Pacific Rim style of cuisines at 505 Front Street in Lahaina Maui for over fifteen years. Originally a Philadelphia native, Chef James moved to Hawaii in 1980 and has never looked back. James' culinary training consists of a three-year formal European style apprenticeship coupled with an associate of science culinary degree from the University of Hawaii Maui Culinary Academy. In addition Chef James trained one year at the 5 star Hotel Quellenhof in Switzerland, a leading "Hotels of the World" known for its health and wellness facilities and cuisine.

A James Beard nominee, Chef James was voted "Maui's Best Chef" by the readers of Maui News and Maui Time newspapers. He was also a 2009 Chef Magazine "Chef of the Year" finalist. His cuisine and restaurants have garnered rave reviews from Bon Appetit, Travel and Leisure and the New Yorker to name a few. Gourmet Magazine voted his two restaurants in the top ten U.S. for "Farm to Table" dining. He is the only recipient of the Distinguished Restaurants of North America (DiRoNA) on Maui.

In addition his restaurants are the only in the state to own and operate an 8 acre farm, The O'o Farm in upcountry Maui with the sole purpose of growing their own produce and offering dining tours.

About the Maui Kula Onion: A golden-pale globe with mild, crunchy flesh, the Maui Kula Onion embodies premium quality, belongs to the sweetest onions in the world, and is grown on about 150 acres in cool, fertile Kula. Its name is trademarked to safeguard authenticity.

About Whalers Village Fine Shops & Restaurants: Recognized as Maui's premier oceanfront shopping destination, Whalers Village Fine Shops & Restaurants is part of the master-planned, award-winning Kā'anapali Beach Resort and hugs the famed three-mile long strip of Kā'anapali Beach. Set on 8.5 tropical acres, diverse, carefree, and sophisticated at once, the three-level open-air village comprises

111,857 square feet of retail space with a vibrant variety of shops and restaurants and offers a world-renowned whaling museum, cultural crafts and entertainment, and dynamic annual celebrations. Open daily from 9:30 a.m. until 10 p.m., it's the place to shop, dine, and play. Visit www.whalersvillage.com for more information.

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