

## **Hawai`ian Pineapple**

The exact date of the first pineapples grown in Hawaii is a subject of historical debate. Some historians believe that it arrived on Spanish ships from the New World as early as 1527. It is known that Francisco de Paula Marin, a Spanish horticultural experimenter who was arrived in Hawaii in 1794 after being shanghaied from San Francisco. Marin became a friend and advisor to King Kamehameha I and is known to have experimented with raising pineapples in the early 1800s.

Captain John Kidwell is most often credited with founding Hawaii's pineapple industry. He began crop development trials in 1885 when he planted pineapple in Manoa on the island of Oahu. It was, however, James Drummond Dole who is most credited with advancing the industry in Hawaii. In 1900 Dole purchased 61 acres in Wahiawa in Central Oahu and began experimenting with pineapple. In 1901 he incorporated the Hawaiian Pineapple Company and began commercial growing of the fruit. Dole is forever known as Hawaii's "Pineapple King."

As reported on the website of the Dole Plantation, Inc., in 1907, Dole established a cannery near the Honolulu harbor, which was closer to the labor pool, shipping ports and supplies. This cannery, at one time the world's largest cannery, remained in operation until 1991.

Dole is also the one who is responsible for pineapple production on the island of Lanai, once known as the "Pineapple Island." In 1922, James Dole bought the entire island of Lanai and converted it from a cactus-covered island with 150 people into the largest pineapple plantation in the world with 20,000 pineapple-producing acres and over a thousand pineapple workers and their families. Pineapple production on Lanai ended in October 1992.

By the middle of the 20th Century there were eight pineapple companies in Hawaii employing more than 3,000 people. Hawaii was the pineapple capital of the world growing over 80 percent of the world's pineapple. Pineapple production was Hawaii's second largest industry, second only to sugar cane. With rising costs of labor and production in the USA, this is no longer the case.

## **Hawaiian Pineapple Production Today**

Today, Hawaii's pineapple production does not even rank within the top ten of the world's pineapple producers. Worldwide, the top producers are Thailand (13%), the Philippines (11%) and Brazil (10%). Hawaii produces only about two percent of the world's pineapple. Fewer than 1,200 workers are employed by the pineapple industry in Hawaii.

Del Monte's exit will leave 5,100 acres of Campbell Estate land lying fallow. The Honolulu Star-Bulletin reports that Maui Land and Pineapple Co. is interested in the land, possibly for diversified crops.

The future of Hawaii's pineapple industry remains cloudy. Maui Land and Pineapple has, however, had good success with their ventures into the specialty pineapple business with their Hawaiian Gold extra sweet pineapple, Champaka variety, and Maui Organic pineapple.