

Native Intelligence



O'AHU
The Fung Guy

“Look at the gills,” says Small Kine Farm proprietor Fung Yang, turning over a hefty specimen to reveal its soft, pink underside. “Most people think they’re supposed to be black because that’s what you usually see in the stores, but when they’re really fresh, they’re flesh-colored. And when you cook them the flavor is amazing.” ▶

The Fung Guy (continued)

Small Kine Farm, O'ahu's only portabella mushroom grower, has been supplying fresh, certified organic mushrooms to specialty grocers and local restaurants since 2008. But Yang never intended to be a mushroom farmer. He wanted to find something productive to do with the waste he collected through his other company, O'ahu Community Recycling. After studying the refuse carefully, even going on a few dumpster dives, he concluded that the bulk of the trash was green waste and that it could be repurposed as fertilizer. With so much of the Islands' food being imported from the Mainland—including millions of dollars' worth of mushrooms each year and no local source for fresh portabellas—Yang saw an opportunity.

Instead of filling up the dump, Yang's crew processes three to five tons of green waste about every three weeks at Small Kine Farm, which is located down a muddy dirt road deep in the heart of Waimānalo farm country. The waste creates a nutrient-rich, heat-pasteurized compost that forms the perfect substrate for growing top-quality mushrooms. "There's zero waste!" he beams, explaining his recycling process that yields gigantic, meaty portabellas, along with their smaller siblings, crispy brown crimini button mushrooms. The firm,

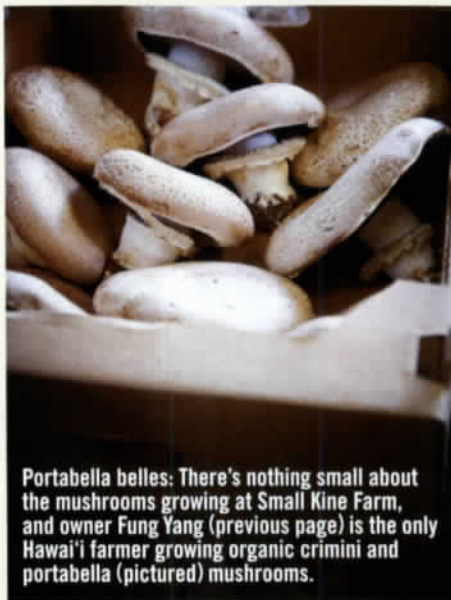
bite-size buttons yield nutty flavors with a well-defined texture.

Yang's proud of his portabellas, and just as proud that the only inputs are organic waste products, mycelium spores, water and the electricity needed to run chillers and pumps (which he'll eventually generate with solar panels). The only outputs are mushrooms and nutrient-rich soil that he distrib-

utes to other farmers. With Yang's growing techniques, the portabellas can become gargantuan. His largest mushroom yet weighed in at a whopping pound and a half—not bad for a small-kine farm.

—Larry Lieberman / Photos by Kyle Rothenborg

smallkinefarm.com



Portabella belles: There's nothing small about the mushrooms growing at Small Kine Farm, and owner Fung Yang (previous page) is the only Hawai'i farmer growing organic crimini and portabella (pictured) mushrooms.



O'AHU

Half Hey and Figure Eight

Robert Bley-Vroman calls it as he wants to see it. For nearly three decades Bley-Vroman, his wife Sasha and a small number of founding members have been running Contradancers of Hawai'i, which offers lessons in one of America's oldest folk dances. Couples face each other in long lines and weave, spin and twirl in patterns determined by "callers" like Bley-Vroman, who dictates the next move from a collection of treasured index cards yellowed from years of use.

"I like to think I'm dancing the same dances that George Washington danced," Bley-Vroman muses. The word contradance originates from the French *contredanse*, meaning "country dance"; the dance itself is a fusion of English and French styles brought to New England in the early eighteenth century. It was Bley-Vroman's wife who introduced him to the dance in the early 1970s, converting him from square dancing. "Back then," he says, "contradancing was an interesting combination of youth and counterculture along with older men and women who had been dancing for decades—all in the same New Hampshire hall that had held contradances for two hundred years."

Since its inception in 1987 the group on O'ahu has grown to include more than two hundred members. Twice a month it stages free gatherings in a small white chapel at the base of Diamond Head crater, filled with the pounding of feet, shouts of happiness and lively Celtic-style music. The six-person band adds immense energy to the room with arrangements played on, among other things, a flute, fiddle and antique mandocello. "It's live music. It's easy, yet vigorous. And you meet great people," says Bley-Vroman. About forty people of all ages and backgrounds show up at each dance. Some

come in evening gowns, some in gym clothes and sweatbands. Some glide with the gait of a ballroom dancer, some skip like children, but everyone is smiling—and sweating. Board member Darrow Hand says the vigor of the dance is a big part of its appeal. "It's very aerobic, but it's not a form of exercise you're actually thinking about," he notes. "You're just having fun and interacting with other people."

—Noel Nicholas / Photo by Olivier Koning

contradancehi.weebly.com



Contradancing dates back several centuries and has its roots in French and English country dancing; now it has made its way as far west as the Islands, where twice a month members of the Contradancers of Hawai'i gather on Diamond Head to step, swing and twirl.