

Adapting to a tropical diet in Hawaii in six weeks

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Even though Hawaii is very isolated in the Pacific Ocean, with good conditions for growing year-round, more than 85% of its food is being imported. This is a problem in many ways. Not only do the stores only hold a 7-day supply of food (agroforestry Net 2011), but it is also an economic and environmental concern. Increasing food self-sufficiency in Hawaii would keep its money circulating in the state instead of being spent in agribusinesses elsewhere, and it would save the food miles it requires to transport the food (Hawai'i Department of Agriculture 2006). I came to Hawaii very aware of this with the perception that I am a conscious consumer, working on a farm which aims are to help Hawaii's residents becoming more self-sufficient. Still I found myself initially buying the same groceries as I am used to buying in my home country of Sweden. Breaking food habits, I realized, is not an easy thing to do.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to explore if and how my food habits change as I gradually get familiar with, preferably perennial, locally grown fruits, vegetables and nuts. Over the course of six weeks I documented my largest meal each day and described the origin of its ingredients (local or imported). By *local*, I refer here to food items cultivated in the State of Hawaii and all meals are vegetarian. I also highlight some perennial crops that easily can be cultivated in Hawaii and substituted for common imported groceries.

Why perennial?

Ever since agriculture began more than 10 000 years ago, it has been depended on annual crops that need to be planted again every year (National Geographic 2011). Today almost 70% of the global cropland and the consumed amount of calories depend on annual grains such as cereals, oilseed, legumes and grains (Glover et al 2011). However one in seven people suffer from malnutrition and according to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment survey, agriculture is classified as the biggest threat to our ecosystem function and biodiversity (said in National geographic 2011). The word *perennial* is defined as plants that have a life cycle that last longer than two years. In contrast to annual crops, perennials have deeper rooting which entails several benefits for the ecosystem while they produce food for many years with less effort. For example five times as much water and 35 times as much nitrate are being lost when growing annual grain crops compared to perennial crops. In Pre-European Hawaii, perennial starches like breadfruit and taro formed the staple food together with other perennial plants or food from the sea (Pollock 1986). Since many perennials grow abundantly in Hawaii and often are more nutritious than imported vegetables, Evensen and Standal (1984) strongly encourage attempts to utilize indigenous vegetables in the diet.

MY FOOD JOURNEY

It was my first grocery shopping in Hawaii that made me aware of at least one reason to why only 15% of Hawaii's food is locally produced. I suppose to a certain point that the supermarkets offer what the consumer requires, and I choose to buy the following food item:

- Macaroni and cheese - imported
- Potato - imported
- Baked nut chips - imported
- Bananas - local
- Frozen veggie burgers – imported
- Milk – imported
- Italian dressing – imported
- Peanut butter – imported
- Corn tortilla – imported
- Wholegrain bread – imported
- Refried black beans - imported
- Canned lentil soup - imported
- Vegan Edemame Pasta – partly local
- Canned minestrone soup - imported
- Chickpeas – imported



Me and my first groceries. (Picture C. Elevich)

An interesting observation is that potato, a very common Swedish starch, was one of the first food items I picked while shopping. Although I seldom buy it nowadays I was raised eating this starch several times a week. According to Quan & Wang (2003) most tourists tend to bring their food habits with them while traveling since habits and routines creates a “psychological island of home”. This helps the individual dealing with negative emotions caused by unfamiliar environments and Cohen & Avieli (2002) claims that we are more likely to visit ethnic restaurants at home and local eating places while we travel.

Besides the above food items, there was also some food in the kitchen for me to use. I also have access to a garden full of fruits and vegetables that I gradually try adding to my diet. Locally grown food items in my meals are marked in bold.

WEEK 1

This week made me realize how stuck I am in my food habits, something that I really have not considered before. I tried to add some locally grown vegetables but I don't know yet how to use them in my meals. At home I eat lots of vegetables and my meals seldom looks like as bare as below, but I suppose I prefer eating food I am familiar with. I also noticed that I often wait too long with eating so I am starving. That has three downsides: I do not have the energy to cook and therefore do something fast and simple, I eat too much, and I tend to snack while I am cooking. Afterward I feel too full, heavy and lazy. In general during this week I have been eager for something sweet and I suspect that I have a sugar addiction.

MAIN MEALS



Day 1: Veggie burger with mashed potato and dressing.



Day 2: Veggie burger with mashed potato, dressing and **avocado**.



Day 3: Boiled **breadfruit** with store-bought coleslaw and **collard**.



Day 4: Veggie burger, macaroni and cheese.



Day 5: Refried black beans, boiled **breadfruit**, **pimento** and **collard**.



Day 6: Corn tortilla with refried black beans, **pimento** and steamed **cassava leaves**.



Day 7: Amy's brand canned minestrone soup.

BREADFRUIT

'Ulu, as breadfruit is called in Hawaiian, was not only a common starch for humans and their animals in the ancient Hawaiian culture. Nearly all parts of the tree were used in medicine, hunting and construction. The tree is also surrounded by many mythical sayings and beliefs. By the early 1900s, there were hardly any breadfruit groves left. Depopulation and outside influences affected the culture and resulted in land-use changes and new food habits (Meilleur et al 2004). Today isolated trees can be found around Hawaii but there is a move to reintroduce the fruit as an alternative to imported starches. Breadfruit is also, because of its high yield and easiness to grow, presented as a suitable tree to grow in poor tropical areas, where more than 80 per cent of the world's hungry live (Global Breadfruit 2011). "For the first time in history, we



Breadfruit tree.

have a potentially permanent solution to hunger in tropical regions”, claims Dr Diane Ragone, director of the Breadfruit Institute (Global Breadfruit 2011).

Breadfruit vs. potato

Breadfruit can be eaten in many ways and at all stages at all stages. When immature it is similar to artichoke hearts but the fruit is most often eaten still firm but mature. Then it tastes like a mix of fresh bread and potato. Just like potato breadfruit can be boiled, roasted, steamed or baked. It can also be dried into flour or processed into chips.

Table 1: Nutritional information comparing boiled breadfruit (mature) and potato (1 cup).

	Breadfruit*	Potato**
Energy (kcal)	150	133
Protein (g)	2,6	3
Carbohydrate (g)	28,8	31
Fat (g)	1,8	0,2
Fiber (g)	5	3
Vitamin C (mg)	44	11,5
Calcium (mg)	26	12,5
Magnesium (mg)	46	31,2
Potassium (mg)	46	31,2
Iron (mg)	0,4	0,5

(*Ragone 2011, **USDA 2011)



Breadfruit.

Buying or growing breadfruit

Breadfruit can only be found in town and farmers markets in Hawaii since most fruit is being used for subsistence purposes. Trees are available for purchase and are fairly easy to grow, since breadfruit is relatively maintenance-free and adaptable to many environments. Optimal conditions though are equatorial lowlands below 2000–2160 ft, but the tree can grow at elevations up to 5100ft (National Tropical Botanical Garden 2011). The tree is fast growing, 1,7-4,8 ft per year and will normally reach 40-50 ft (Ragone 2011). Depending on the variety of the tree it takes 3-5 years before it starts bearing and produces thereafter fruit for many decades. Average yields are 150–200 fruits per tree but also varies by variety and environmental conditions.

”Adapting to a tropical diet in Hawaii in six weeks,” Elin Rosenblad, Agroforestry.net

WEEK 2

This week I have been better at using locally grown vegetables in my meals but I still find it very hard to cook. It is difficult to come up with new recipes and it seems like all food is imported! I have not been fully satisfied after my meals, which I think is because I do not get enough protein. I still have a sweet tooth, but most of all I crave bread (which I got on the weekend).

MAIN MEALS



Day 1: Bread, salad, cheese and pasta from a hotel buffet (unfortunately this picture was taken after I finished, by C. Elevitch).



Day 2: Breadfruit salad (**breadfruit**, lentils, **tomato**, **cassava**, Italian dressing) and fried **eggplant**.



Day 3: Breadfruit salad (**breadfruit**, lentils, **tomato**, **cassava leaves**, Italian dressing) and fried **eggplant**.



Day 4: Steamed **chaya leaves**, quinoa, fried **eggplant** and **avocado**



Day 5: Quinoa, **eggplant**, **sissoo spinach** and **avocado**.



Day 6: Quinoa, **sissoo spinach**, **onion**, **pimento** and **coconut meat**.



Day 7: Sourdough bread with **avocado** and **tomato** and lilikoi (passion fruit) jam (partly made from local ingredients).

COCONUT

Pacific Islanders call the coconut tree "The tree of life" and almost one third of the world's population rely on coconut to some degree (Coconut Research Center 2004). Coconut endosperm contain 35-37 % oil, 47-52 % water and 17% dry mass (carbohydrates, protein and mineral salt), and is hence mainly an oilseed (Taffin 1998). Coconuts can be used in many ways. The endosperm can be eaten fresh or milk can be pressed from it. Desiccated coconut is used in pastry and confectionery and when endosperm is dried to about 6 % moisture it appears as copra. From this, coconut cake can be extracted and serve as livestock feed. Coconut oil can be extracted both from copra and from the endosperm. The oil is used because of its healing properties in traditional medicine in Asia and the Pacific, and its benefits are gaining long overdue recognition (Coconut Research Center 2004).

Because of the way the oil's fatty acids are composed the oil



Coconut tree.

has no negative effect on cholesterol and protects from heart diseases.

Coconut water vs. common sports drink

While sweating we do not only loose water, but also electrolytes (Fife 2007). These minerals in our body fluids include sodium, calcium, potassium, chlorine, phosphate and magnesium (Medline plus 2011). Too high or low level of especially sodium, potassium and calcium can cause problems such as vomiting, sweating and diarrhea. Coconut water is not only rich in electrolytes, it is also absorbed by the body faster than water, which makes it effective for rehydration (Fife 2007). Since the water is also sterile and isotonic to blood it was used with good result as for intravenous rehydration in World War II. As a home treatment coconut water is used worldwide for cholera and influenza and other dehydration-related diseases.

Table 2: Nutritional information comparing fresh coconut water and common sports drink (100 g)

	Coconut water	Common sports drink
Energy (kcal)	19	23
Total Fat (g)	0,2	0
Carbohydrate (g)	105	5,9
Protein (g)	0,7	0
Sodium (mg)	105	45
Potassium (mg)	250	12,7
Calcium (mg)	24	N/A
Chlorine (mg)	N/A	N/A
Phosphorus(mg)	20	N/A
Magnesium (mg)	25	N/A

(Coconut research center 2004, label on common sports drink)

Coconuts in Hawaii

Locally grown coconuts are being sold in farmer's markets and at some supermarkets. At farmer's markets they can also be bought opened so that the water can be drunk right away. However processed products from coconut such as milk, oil and water in bottles are all imported goods in Hawaii. (Own observation)



Opened and unopened coconut.

WEEK 3

This week has been better than the first two in many ways. I do not crave sweet things that much anymore although I do think about food I cannot have because they are not locally grown such as pasta, cheese and other dairy products. I have also found two good sources of protein; egg and macadamia nuts, and I am more satisfied after my meals now. I bought eggs thinking that they were local, only to find a note on the carton saying “mainland eggs” when I got back home. So I have also learned to stay aware when shopping and how easy the label can trick you.

MAIN MEALS



Day 1: Roasted **carrots, beets, macadamia nuts, broccoli and sweet potato** with steamed **Okinawan spinach, salsa** and toasted bread with **tomato**.



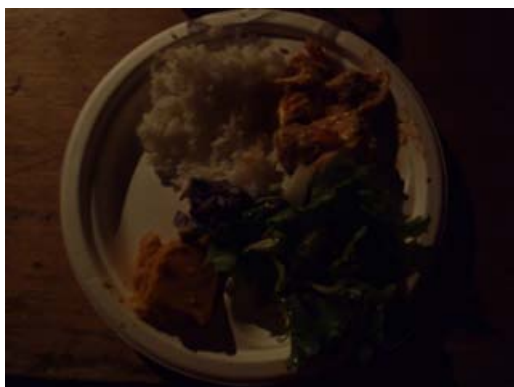
Day 2: steamed **broccoli, sweet potato, carrot and beet** with fried egg and **salsa**.



Day 3: Omelet with egg, **pimento, okinawan spinach and tomato**.



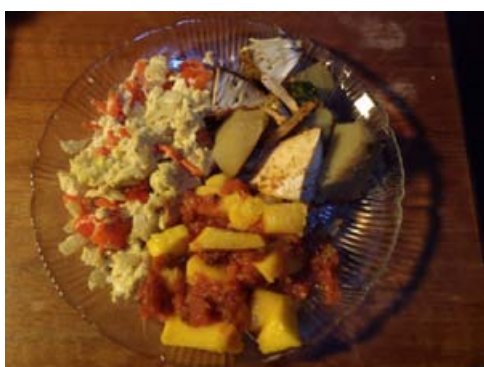
Day 4: Ready-made bean salad, **onion, steamed aerial yam and mashed avocado**.



Day 5: Rice, taro salad, salad and sweet potato salad from a partially local health food store buffet.



Day 6: Amy's brand canned lentil soup.



Day 7: omelet (**egg tomato, onion**) with baked **breadfruit, broccoli, onion** and **aerial yam** with **mango salsa**.

MACADAMIA NUTS

Macadamia nuts grow on evergreen trees that can reach the high of 19 meter (Nagao 2011). On each branch, circa ten round nuts grow and while mature, their green peel opens and a brown thick-shelled nut is exposed (van Wyk 2006). Orchard trees can produce nuts for 60 years, or even longer under proper conditions, and their bearing life is not yet known (Nagao 2011). The macadamia nut originated in Australia and was an important traditional food for the aborigines (Wyk 2006). It was named after Australian Dr John Macadam in 1858. The commercialization of macadamia nuts actually first began in Hawaii where plants were introduced between 1881 and 1882 as a result of



Macadamia nuts put in the sun to dry.

collaboration between the University of Hawaii and Hawaii’s entrepreneurs (Nagao 2011). These also encouraged the macadamia nut industry in Australia, Africa and South and Central America. Hawaii became the largest producer and marketer of macadamia nut but its production has remained constant the last 10 years due to the absence of new plantings. Although macadamia nuts still are an important export for Hawaii, it is hard for the state to compete with the industrial production in other countries market, and hence Hawaii’s principal market today is the U.S. mainland and Hawaii.

Macadamia nut vs. peanuts

Macadamia nuts are a common ingredient in confectionery and baking but also make a delicious butter and can be eaten as they are, dried or roasted. Macadamia nuts are not hard to find in Hawaii and are being sold in both farmer’s markets and supermarkets in all forms.



Dried and cracked macadamia nuts.

Table 3: Nutritional information comparing roasted Macadamia nuts and Peanuts (100 grams).

	Macadamia nuts	Peanuts
Energy (kcal)	718	585
Protein (g)	7,8	23,7
Carbohydrate (g)	13,4	21,5
Total fat (g)	76,1	49,7
Calcium (mg)	70	54
Sodium (mg)	4	6
Potassium (mg)	363	658
Magnesium (mg)	118	176
Phosphorus (mg)	198	358

(USDA 2011)

WEEK 4

Things are still going in the right direction toward more local food in my diet. This week I was very glad that I managed to get some lima beans from the plant in the garden since I

arrived between seasons. I have pretty much completely lost my sugar cravings. I wouldn't say no if someone offered me something sweet, but I do not crave it the same way anymore. I do still think that my previous diet, with dairy, grains and bread, was more tasty, but I have gotten used to skipping those things and it seems natural now. I have also noticed how hard it is to find local food when I eat out. And when I am hungry I don't want to run around looking for local food!

MAIN MEALS



Day 1: Salad with chick peas, **lima beans, beats, sweet potato**, and cole slaw.



Day 2: Commercial egg sandwich.



Day 3: Boiled cassava root, chick peas, **lima beans, beats, sweet potato** and mashed avocado.



Day 4: Salad with **katuk leaves, beats, tomato** and macadamia nuts.



Day 5: Soup with **sweet potato**, lentils, broth, **zucchini** and **tomato**,



Day 6: Omelet with egg, **cassava root**, **onion** and **tomato**.



Day 7: Same as day 5.

CASSAVA



Cassava plant.

Cassava is a shrub that grows up to 5 meters in height, and is also called manioc or tapioca. There are two types of cassava- bitter and sweet (van Wyk 2006). Mainly the root is eaten as a starch, but also the leaves serve as a vegetable. It is thought that Cassava was domesticated in the Amazon 7.000-9.000 years ago and spread throughout the tropics, where cassava is an integral part in the diet in many places (University of Hawaii 2010). Today more cassava is produced in Africa than the rest of the world combined and in some regions it is replacing other crops (Hillocks 2002). Its popularity in Africa is according to the survey “Collaborative Study of Cassava in Africa” (said in Hillocks 2002) in first hand a respond to hunger, famine and drought, but another contributing reason is the shrub’s resistance to

pests and diseases. Cassava is very easy to grow and tolerates the poorest soil and low to high rainfall (Bailey 1992). During longer periods without rain, it will shed its leaves as a survival mechanism.

Cassava root vs. rice

Cassava root is eaten cooked or fried, and can also be used as starch, whole flour and farina (greenharvest 2011). Since there is cyanide in the skin of the sweet variety it needs to be peeled before eaten. The bitter type contains cyanide throughout the tuber hence it needs to be eaten cooked. Cassava leaves are especially rich in iron and vitamin A - one leaf approximately provides 10 per cent of a child’s daily need of the vitamin (Bailey 1992). One reason to cassava leaf’s high nutritional value is that they contain less water (72 per cent) than the average pacific leaf (86 per cent). The leaf has a mild taste similar to spinach and should be boiled or steamed in water for about ten minutes before eaten.



Unpeeled cassava tuber harvested at the farm (I have not seen cassava root or cassava leaves for purchase in Hawaii).

Table 4: Nutritional information comparing boiled cassava root and white rice (1 cup)

	Cassava	White rice
Energy (kcal)	213	160
Protein (g)	2	3
Carbohydrate (g)	51	35
Fiber (g)	2	1
Total fat (g)	0,4	0,3
Vitamin A (mg)	1,3	0
Vitamin C (mg)	17,8	0
Calcium (mg)	19,8	13,2
Magnesium (mg)	26,4	8,2
Potassium (mg)	323	7
Sodium (mg)	257	580
Folate (mcg)	23,8	113,8
Phosphorus (mg)	323	23,1

(USDA 2011)

WEEK 5

Throughout this food journey I have tried finding substitutes for imported food items. It is first now I have realized how stuck I am in the thoughts of how a meal should look like. I am getting better and better at including local food in my meals but the appearance of them still looks the same. This surely limits me in my cooking, but at least now I am aware of it. This week I appreciated the soup I made from coconut milk. The milk was imported but I liked the creamy texture it gave the soup. I also truly enjoyed the macadamia nut pesto I bought at a café.

MAIN MEALS



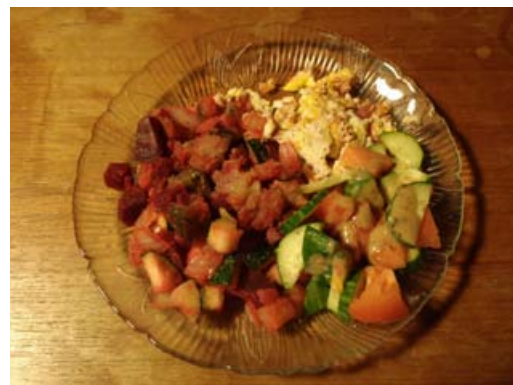
Day 1: soup with coconut milk, broth, **onion**, red lentils, **carrot**, **sweet potato**, **cassava root**, **sissoo spinach** and **chaya leaves**.



Day 2: Salad with **katuk leaves**, **chayote-** and **perennial cucumber shoots**, **macadamia nuts**, **beets**, **tomato**, **egg** and dressing.



Day 3: Lentil soup with **onion**, red and green lentils, canned tomatoes, **carrot**, broth and **sissoo spinach**.



Day 4: Fried **onion**, **zucchini**, **beets** and **aerial yam** with **tomato**, **cucumber** and dressing.



Day 5: Steamed **chaya leaves** and **pimento** in coconut milk with baked **beets**, **sweet potato**, **pumpkin** and **pumpkin seeds**.



Day 6: Sourdough bread with egg and fruit salad (**strawberries**, **passion fruit**, **banana** and **macadamia nuts**).



Day 7: Sour dough bread with **macadamia pesto** and steamed **kale**, **tomato**, **cucumber** and **green beans**.

CHAYA

Chaya, also called tree spinach, is a 3-5 meter tall shrub. The plant was domesticated in the Pre-Columbian time in the Yucatan region of Mexico, and is today used as food and medicine by Maya groups and other Mexican and Mesoamerican people (Ross-Ibarra & Molina-Cruz 2002). The shoots and young leaves can be eaten, but since chaya contain toxic hydrocyanic acid it first needs to be cooked. The plant is drought resistant and easy to cultivate. It also grows fast, shoots and young leaves are ready to be eaten after only 8-10 weeks. The domesticated varieties' foliage can be harvest all year round (Sarmiento-Franco et al 2003). Chaya is widespread in Central America and Mexico and there is also a demand in mainly Texas and Florida. Many have encouraged chaya as a promisory crop worldwide because of its cultivation and nutritional benefits (see e.g. Ross-Ibarra & Molina-Cruz 2002 and Kuti & Kuti 1999) and plant research has been done in e.g., Ghana and Nigeria (Jansen 2004).

Chaya vs. spinach

The nutritious leaves are plant's most vital and important part. According to Oomen & Grubben (1987), leaves store the largest source of protein in the world. Chaya has long been recommended for conditions such as obesity, acne, diabetes and to improve digestion and blood circulation (Kuti & Torres 1996). It also contains less moisture compared to for example lettuce and spinach and hence naturally more nutrient by weight (Ross-Ibarra & Molina-Cruz 2002). Before eating, chaya should be cooked 10- 15 minutes which will destroy the toxic hydrocyanic. According to (Kuti & Kuti 1999), cooking chaya leaves slightly reduces its nutritional contents. In Hawaii I could not see any chaya leaves in supermarkets or farmer's markets.



Chaya plant at the farm.

Table 6: Nutritional information comparing raw chaya and spinach (100 g).

	Chaya*	Spinach**
Water (%)	80	92
Energy (kcal)	64	22
Protein (g)	6,2	2,7
Fat (g)	0,6	0,4
Carbohydrate (g)	10,7	3,5
Vitamin A ((iu)	N/A	6,7
Vitamin C (mg)	194	28
Thiamin (mg)	0,2	0,08
Riboflavin (mg)	0,2	0,19
Folate (mcg)	N/A	194
Niacin (mg)	1,6	0,7
Calcium (mg)	234	99
Iron (mg)	11,4	2,71
Zink (mg)	N/A	0,53

*New Crop Resource Online 2009, Tindall 1978,

**USDA 2011)



All chayote leaves can be eaten when boiled, but the younger leaves are usually sweeter and more tender (Elevich 1998).

WEEK 6

This week all my meals consisted of local grown food, which hit me first afterwards, when I did an overview of the week. I found both green beans and pigeon peas at a farmer's market. I have been looking for beans since the start of this food journey and suddenly I find two varieties. I wonder if they have been available all the time and I have just missed them or if they recently got available for the season. This week I also made a coconut grater in order to grate my own coconut and make milk. Many things that are imported are available if you are willing to do it from scratch, as for example coconut milk and vegetable broth. I suppose the question is if I am always willing to do that.

MAIN MEALS



Day 1: Baked sweet potato, carrot, broccoli, green beans and macadamia nuts with pigeon peas tomato and salsa.



Day 2: Salad with kale, avocado, tomato, spring onion and taro.



Day 3: Fried egg with fried kale, onion and tomato.



Day 4: Fried egg with tomato, taro and green bean.



Day 5: Taro, broccoli, zucchini and pimento cooked in coconut milk.



Day 6: Taro, pimento, broccoli and chaya in coconut milk.



Day 7: Baked sweet potato, carrots, green bean, tomato and cauliflower with mashed avocado.

TARO



Taro plant.

Taro is a big herbaceous plant with large leaves growing from a tuber, or corm, below ground. It is thought that the plant originates from the tropical rainforest in India, and today taro is grown throughout the Pacific Islands but also in regions such as Australia and the southern parts of Europe (Manner & Taylor 2011). In ancient Hawaii, taro was the mainstay of the diet with over 300 varieties cultivated (HawaiiHistory.org 2011). It played a larger role in the culture and taro was recognized as an older sibling to the Hawaiian people and also used in medicine and rituals. There are two different management systems under which the plant can be cultivated (Fleming 1994). *Dryland* taro is grown in dryer uplands, and *wetland* taro grows in shallow water similar to how rice is cultivated. In Hawaii, areas producing Taro have declined even though the demand for poi, a traditional viscous food, is high.

Poi is nowadays mostly made from wetland taro, which requires heavy labor. The high cost of land is another contributing reason complicating the situation.

Taro vs. spaghetti

Taro is cooked like potato and can be processed in many ways. It can be eaten boiled, fried, mashed into poi, and also used in deserts. Taro chips are a common snack with eight small companies in Hawaii (Manner & Taylor 2011). Also taro leaves and stalks can be eaten and are used in many traditional dishes throughout the Pacific Islands (Bailey 1992). Before eating they need to be cooked and the leaves are rich in vitamin A and potassium. Me with a small variety of Taro.

In Hawaii taro can be found in farmer's markets and some supermarkets.



Table 5: Nutritional information comparing baked taro and boiled spaghetti (1 cup).

	Taro	Spaghetti
Energy (kcal)	190	196
Protein (g)	3	7
Carbohydrate (g)	45	39
Total fat (g)	0,3	0,9
Total fiber (g)	7	2
Vitamin A (mcg)	6,6	0
Vitamin C (mg)	5,7	0
Folate (mcg)	30,4	107,8
Calcium (mg)	73,9	9,8
Magnesium (mg)	56,8	25,2
Phosphorus (mg)	142,6	75,6
Sodium (mg)	627	324
Potassium (mg)	1006	43
Iron (mg)	0,9	1,9

(USDA 2011)

SUMMARY

In the beginning of this project I felt like I could hardly eat anything. Many food items I wanted to buy such as bread, cheese, cream, pasta and canned food were all imported. I tried to find replacements for the food I felt I was missing, which sometimes worked. For example coconut milk can replace cream and there are several starches that can substitute pasta. But the main conclusion I came up with throughout this project was that the change that was required could not only be applied on the meals, it was me and my preconceptions about the ingredients that needed to make the biggest adjustment. I am sure that Hawaii has potential to feed its population if we were willing to adjust our diets and eating habits. I noticed though that I had some personal obstacles to overcome in order to do so.

I realized after only a few days that I had a sugar addiction and how my cravings tend to control me and what I choose to eat. As the weeks went by I did not only overcome the addiction, but also my thoughts of sugary food. It hit me at the end of the project that I nowadays basically only think about eating something when I am hungry. I have not been aware of that before and to me that experience was truly liberating. As my sugar addiction that I experienced as a very dominant feeling faded, I became aware of other feelings. Most importantly, I noticed a shift in how I feel. In general it feels like my body is more balanced and more sensitive to flavors and smells. I stop eating when I am satisfied and I recognize how the foods I eat help my body, not just make me full and satisfied. When I look at it that way a whole new world, full of nutritious vegetables, leaves and fruits opens up. Simply by changing my diet and eating in smaller portions I have also lost almost ten pounds. Hence the problem, as I see it, about eating local food in Hawaii does not really concern finding ingredients. The problem is rather the demands and ideas of how we want the meals to taste and look like. In general I think we have gotten very passive today in the western society regarding food. I have come to realize that food for most people is not anymore about giving the body healthy energy and getting full. Meal time's primary purpose is rather about getting us satisfied. We keep eating after we are full from the food that often consist of sugars in various forms and have desserts or snacks rather often. And these food items are readily available at any store.

In this publication I have not given my breakfasts much attention. However, my breakfasts are actually the meal I am most satisfied with. Each morning I have a smoothie with coconut water, banana, papaya, and macadamia nuts. I have also added fruits I had bought at the farmer's market or that we had at the farm such as oranges, tangerines and passion fruit. To me this has been the perfect breakfast and it makes me sad that most of these ingredients in Sweden are imported. I noticed that if I for some reason skipped breakfast I was much more likely to snack and get off rhythm with meals. In my experience one must stay focused in order to eat local food in Hawaii. Most, if not all, ready made meals which are tempting to buy when you get really hungry are imported. The trick is to bring food with you when you go somewhere and not to simply wait until you are hungry for meals.

I still find it hard to resist buying something sweet when I go to the supermarket or when snacks or other unhealthy food, that most often are imported in Hawaii, is available. Since I

have been rather limited here with no car, those temptations have not really been an issue. I buy my groceries about once a week, and many fruits and vegetables are grown in the garden. I have on occasion bought a cookie while shopping but I eat it right away so I have not had any unhealthful food at home, which has made things much easier for me. Despite this I still think food enhances life and there are some food items I decided I do not want to give up. For example, I would like to enjoy bread and chocolate on the weekends and in amounts that don't get me addicted. I hope I will be strong enough to manage that when I get back to my usual environment with supermarkets, restaurants and cafés just round the corner or have access to a car.

LOCAL FOOD ITEMS I HAVE INCLUDED IN MY MAIN MEALS

AERIAL YAM

AVOCADO

BANANA

BREADFRUIT

BEETS

BROCCOLI

CASSAVA LEAVES

CASSAVA ROOT

CAULIFLOWER

CHAYA LEAVES

CHAYOTE SHOOTS

COCONUT MEAT

COCONUT MILK

COCONUT WATER

COLLARD

CUCUMBER

EGGPLANT

GREEN BEANS

KALE

KATUK LEAVES

EGGS

LIMA BEANS

MACADAMIA NUTS

ONION

OKINOWAN SPINACH

PASSION FRUIT

PIMENTO

PERENNIAL CUCUMBER SHOOTS

PUMPKIN

PUMPKIN SEEDS

SISSOO SPINACH

SWEET POTATO

STRAWBERRIES

TARO

SPRING ONION

TOMATO

ZUCCHINI

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About this project

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