

MACHINE AUDITS, MANUFACTURING EQUIPMENT CONSULTATION, AND FOOD SAFETY TRAINING

ABOUT OKUHARA FOODS, INC. Okuhara Foods is highly regarded as Hawaii's first fishcake brand. The company began in May 1947, when Nobuichi "James" Okuhara purchased Aala Delicatessen. His brothers Kiyoshi, Charlie, and Tatsuo soon joined James at the delicatessen and together they converted it into a kamaboko factory. From here, additional family members joined, and they worked tirelessly to build the company into what it is today while maintaining their dedication to exceptional quality and traditional flavors.

Today, the company is known for a range of seafood options, however, their kamaboko (steamed fishcake), chikuwa (broiled fishcake), uzumaki (steamed fishcake), gobo (fried fishcake) and vegetable tempura (fried fishcake) are a few of their best sellers. Okuhara Foods products can be found throughout Hawaii in both grocery stores and restaurants. Their products are also available in select stores in California, Washington, and Oregon.

THE CHALLENGE. Lindsay and her two brothers are third-generation owners of Okuhara Foods. When they began running the business they were taking over a 70-year-old established company that was renowned for their exceptional seafood products but required updates on the operations and manufacturing side of the business to increase efficiency and reduce costs. The new owners did not have extensive manufacturing experience so they knew that they would need assistance with the necessary updates.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Lindsay and her siblings initially reached out to the Innovate Hawaii team, part of the MEP National Network™, for manufacturing assistance regarding equipment updates to decrease their growing maintenance costs. In 2017, they were granted a Manufacturing Assistance Program (MAP) Grant. The MAP Grant offers Hawaii-based manufacturers up to a 20% reimbursement (up to \$100,000) on qualified expenses to help Hawaii manufacturers become globally competitive. This grant let the new owners replace a packaging machine that was outdated, costly to maintain, and was ultimately slowing down their production line.

Next, the new owners turned to the Innovate Hawaii team to help them establish a modern Food Safety Program for Okuhara Foods employees. With the food safety training, employees learned about best practices when it comes to handling and storing food along with state guidelines and federal regulations. The food safety training then led the company to work with the Innovate Hawaii team on establishing regular metal detector audits with an experienced industry professional in preparation for their third-party audit.

"When we took over the business, we did not have any food manufacturing experience. Innovate Hawaii connected us with the necessary individuals and resources to lay a foundation for success. Beyond their expertise, what truly sets Innovate Hawaii apart is their genuine commitment to the success of businesses like ours, small and family-owned and operated. They go above and beyond to ensure that we have access to the tools, knowledge, and support needed to thrive in today's competitive market."

-Lindsay Teruya, Operations Coordinator

RESULTS



2 jobs saved



\$53,000 cost savings from improved manufacturing processes



5-10% year-over-year sales growth



3 new large distribution outlets



Preventive Controls for Human Food

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