



# Island Life

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## Royals' chef goes local, organic

Hootkins' education in seasonal foods began with royalty in England

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Earlier this year, Halekulani general manager Janis Clapoff was browsing through *C*, a California lifestyle magazine, when an article caught her eye. It featured Carolyn Hootkins, a chef known for her way with organic ingredients, cooking simple, yet artful seasonal food with the emphasis on the natural flavors.

Hootkins earned her organic chops at one of the world's most famous organic farms — the Prince of Wales' Home Farm at his Highgrove Estate in Gloucestershire, England. Clapoff was familiar with Home Farm and Hootkins' work, and got excited when she read that the chef had recently moved to California.

With the hotel's Halekulani Living program — comprised of events that cover wellness, fine cuisine and the arts — "I thought it would be cool to have her be a guest chef," says Clapoff, who promptly Googled Hootkins and found that she now runs an organic catering company and planned to compete in a triathlon on Maui. After a game of phone tag, the two connected, and the results can be tasted tomorrow night, when Hootkins teams up with Halekulani executive chef Darryl Fujita to cook a four-course meal using local ingredients.

Hootkins' first job out of cooking school (she attended the U.K.'s prestigious Tante Marie School of Cookery) was with the duke and duchess of Gloucestershire in 1987. But in 1989, she moved on to her employers' royal neighbors — Prince Charles and Princess

Diana. "They came to dinner one night and I was offered a position," says Hootkins in a soft, English-accented voice that doesn't give away her South African roots.

That's when Hootkins' organic education began. "(The prince) is one of the forerunners of the organic movement in Europe," said Hootkins by phone from her home in Santa Monica, Calif., where she moved 18 months ago. "That was before (organic produce) was readily available in stores. It was hard to get organic at the time."

Hootkins explains that as part of the royal staff, she was based at St. James Palace in London, and "we were moving all the time," to places such as Scotland and Wales. But while at Highgrove, which was certified organic in 1986, she cooked off the fat of the land, so to speak. "We used a lot of game that the prince had shot, or from one of the other royal estates. Most of the fruits and vegetables were homegrown, eggs, milk — we were largely self-sufficient."

And seasonal. "Everything is much more seasonal if you're truly organic," said Hootkins. "In Europe, you'd never have strawberries or asparagus at Christ-

mas, only summer. Using organic ingredients makes people much more aware of the seasons."

Today Hootkins will see what Hawai'i has to offer — Fujita is taking her to O'ahu markets, producers and suppliers. In turn, "I'll be able to give him information on how to run an organic kitchen," said Hootkins. "The ingredients don't have long shelf life. You have to order more frequently, and have to be more flexible because not everything is always available."

Hootkins has been to Hawai'i once before — in June to compete in Maui's King's Trail triathlon, a sport she recently took up. She raced as part of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team in Training program, to raise funds for cancer research. Her husband, actor William Hootkins, died of pancreatic cancer last October.

During her six-day stay on Maui, between training and racing, Hootkins didn't have time to look around, "but I certainly had some great food," she said.



Hotels and Resorts of Halekulani

Carolyn Hootkins, Prince Charles' former executive chef, cooks her trademark simple yet artful food at the Halekulani tomorrow night.

The four-course dinner she will be cooking tomorrow will highlight onaga, locally-made goat cheese, North Shore-raised, grass-fed beef and a British dessert with an Island spin — Pavlova made with raw sugar, pineapple, liliko'i and papaya.

Since striking out on her own in 2000, as a consultant Hootkins has helped open a food-importing business in Dubai ("It was hard to get fresh ingredients"), launched her own organic catering company and is putting the finishing touches on a cookbook with an organic slant and emphasis on farmers' markets and locally produced food.

What simple dish does Hootkins like to cook for herself at home?

"Risotto would be my favorite, with whatever's in season. In summer, I like it with tomato and basil, in winter with roasted butternut squash or leek and red onion," she said, then murmured "caramelized onion." When it's a professional chef at the stove, the term "simple" is always relative.

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