

PACIFIC FOOD HUBS: GUAM ISLAND-STYLE

By Peter R. Barcinas

Documenting the geographical boundaries of where our food comes from is a discussion occurring throughout the continental U.S. and in the Pacific Territories. Albeit the geographic regions and the distances food travels in the U.S. compared to Guam are vastly different. Consider Guam's geographic isolation: it's approximately 6,000 miles west of San Francisco; 3,700 miles west-southwest of Honolulu (its closest U.S. neighbor), and situated on the Pacific Rim of the Asian countries (according to the Guam Economic Development Authority website). This article tries to draw such comparisons and how islands can benefit from understanding what makes up a jurisdiction's food system and the need to support food localization strategies.

Guam is experiencing a renewed island food campaign infused with the latest buy-fresh, buy-local themes representing a shared food hub vision between government, industry, and consumers. The buy-local campaign is the next phase in the ongoing Government of Guam-sponsored everything Guam campaign (made-in, grown-in, and caught-in Guam). This idea of "buy local" and the benefits of keeping such economic activity within the island economy seeks to promote the associated positive economic impacts of local purchases of produce and innovative ways of channeling foodstuff to the consumer. This desire to increase buy-local sales exists amid a long-standing import substitution interest. Increasing transport and their associated logistical costs and the known trade policies that add to the overall cost of imported commodities. While food localization offers numerous benefits, it also comes with its vulnerabilities forcing the community to rely on contingencies such as increasing reliance on imports and response to high

transportation costs, and islands' susceptibility to natural disasters and increasing concern over climate change.

Village Festivals Serve to Unite

Guam is investing in bolstering its cultural capital through village festivals, and through these festivals is developing village-based food localization efforts as a means to nurture food hub opportunities and build viable, island-based agriculture economies. Festivals have celebrated the Mango crab, banana, Donde (pepper), and coconuts. The village festivals are connecting local growers to the consumers and drawing not only local residents to the event but also serving as village-based events offering a myriad of opportunities for barter and exchange of both food and nonfood items. The festivals are providing opportunities for villagers to rediscover what they can grow and market close to home and plan community-building initiatives.

The spotlight on everything Guam continues to uncover new opportunities for promoting agricultural enterprises in both fresh and value-added food markets. Nineteen villages add to the diversity of supporting local purchasing policies that reflect a community-based interest each having a unique location and characteristic and increasing interest in marshaling village assets. Five villages embarked on marketplace specific strategies offering a sound practical setting for carrying a food hub base for a true village food system. ●

Resources

www.investguam.com
<http://buylocalguam.org>



PICTURED: ROADSIDE FOOD STAND, GUAM.



PICTURED: BANANAS GROWING IN THE VILLAGE OF SANTA RITA, GUAM.

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