

Home Grown SUCCESS

Family-run Tamura Enterprises Inc. is a retail star on the Hawaiian island of Oahu • BY JESS MOSS

PHOTOS BY MARCO GARCIA

Glenn Tamura, president and CEO of Tamura Enterprises Inc., which operates Tamura's Fine Wines & Liquors and Tamura's Markets grocery stores, has created a brand of selection and service that infuses a distinctly Hawaiian flavor into its fine wine shops, which have become fixtures in the local community. Part of the Tamura's retail chain's success on the island of Oahu is the family's ties to the island.

"We're a true home-grown and local family business," Tamura says. "A lot of people in Hawaii claim to be a local Hawaiian business, but I'm born and raised here." Tamura says this makes a difference to customers, because Hawaii is very locally driven. "I'm fourth-generation native, and so is the business, versus the Wal-Marts and other big box or chain stores on the island."

Tamura Enterprises' roots go back to the early 1900s, when Tamura's great-grandfather Maketaro Tamura established the family's first store. Located in Waianae, about 40 minutes west of Honolulu in West Oahu, the family-run shop carried specialty ethnic food items such as pork laulau. Over the years, the business grew, and ownership was passed down first to Maketaro's son, Katsuichi, followed by Katsuichi's sons, Clifford and Herbert in 1957. In 1995, the family split the business. Clifford took over management of Tamura Super Market in Waianae, Hawaii, and Herbert left the store to form Tamura Enterprises Inc., which opened its first Tamura's Market outpost in Wahiwa in Central Oahu.

Herbert's son, Glenn Tamura, who worked in the Waianae supermarket in his youth, left Hawaii after receiving his master's in business administration and enrolled in the University of California to study supermarket retailing. He returned to Oahu not only with the skills to help grow Tamura's Market, but also with a new retail concept for the island. "I visited a lot of box stores on the mainland," Tamura says. "I studied them and realized that Hawaii didn't have anything similar. So I came up with the idea of a fine wine shop that had a little twist on the big retailers: a focus on personalized service." He sought to infuse the large selection and low prices of a big box liquor store with the "Aloha" spirit—a friendly and knowledgeable staff that could help customers with their purchases.

Tamura put his idea into action in 1999, launching the first Tamura's Fine Wines & Liquors store in Honolulu. After three years, the store relocated to its current site in Kaimuki, a neighborhood east of downtown Honolulu. Tamura's concept took off, and in 2007, a second unit opened in Kailua on the east side of the island. Then in 2010, the company added a third wine store, along with a warehouse and distribution center, near Pearl Harbor and Aloha Stadium in Aiea, northwest of downtown Honolulu.

Meanwhile, Tamura's Market continued to expand as well. In 2005, a second market opened in Hauula, farther north on the east side of the island, and in 2010, a third debuted in Kapolei in Southwest Oahu.

What Locals Want

While Tamura's Markets also sell beverage alcohol, Tamura explains that the Fine Wines stores are a different concept than the Markets. "They're different kinds of stores. The market is like a general supermarket—it has alcoholic products—but the wine shop goes the extra step in providing service," he says. "It's more of a hands-on experience."

Tamura's goal is for the fine wine stores to be a one-stop shop for party supplies. "In Hawaii, we often go over to friends' houses for dinner," Tamura says. "So the Fine Wines shop has a better selection of products, and you can go there to pick up everything you need to bring. We have beer, spirits and wine, as well as cigars and pupus (the Hawaiian term for appetizers)."

Tamura declined to give sales revenues for his stores, but he claims to have the largest selection of beverage alcohol products in Hawaii. Indeed, Honolulu Magazine named Tamura's Fine Wines & Liquors the "Best Wine Shop" in 2010 and 2011. Tamura's stocks roughly 3,000 wines, with prices ranging from \$4 to \$2,000 a 750-ml. bottle. There are

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Glenn Tamura, president and CEO of Tamura Enterprises Inc., operates three Tamura's Market grocery stores and three Tamura's Fine Wines & Liquors units on the island of Oahu. The chains provide a variety of local brews, Hawaiian cuisine and regional spirits to Honolulu and nearby communities.





approximately 1,000 spirits (\$6 to \$3,000 a 750-ml. bottle) and 600 beers (\$3 a 12-ounce bottle to \$25 a 24-pack of 12-ounce bottles).

In keeping with the company's local identity, all stores boast a selection of Hawaiian products, from Maui-made wine and beer brewed on the Big Island to rum distilled in Kauai. But one of the most popular items at Tamura's is not alcoholic at all. All stores feature a selection of freshly made poke—a Hawaiian raw fish salad dish. "People like the poke bowls," Tamura says. "The most popular is the Tamura's Special, with our secret sauce." Other flavors are constantly changing, but can include varieties like ahi (tuna), spicy king crab and tako limu (seaweed).

Community Character

The reputation of Tamura's Markets and Fine Wines outlets as Hawaiian-grown mom-and-pop has made them local fixtures in the community. Most of the stores' advertising is done in-house, and free tastings on Fridays and Saturdays draw



Tamura's Fine Wines & Liquors offers a personalized shopping experience with knowledgeable staff guiding customers through the store's selection of 3,000 wines, 1,000 spirits and 600 beers.

crowds. Tamura's also runs radio and newspaper ads on Oahu, and in 2010 both the Markets and Fine Wines chains launched new websites that detail events and store specials. In addition, events and news are posted via the stores' Twitter accounts, and both concepts have Facebook pages as well.

Tamura strives to remain active in the community to keep in touch with his clientele. He attends many local events, such as the Taste of Honolulu and Tamura's Craft Beer Fest. "A lot of what we do is based on what customers tell me," Tamura says. "I'll see a customer at an event, and he or she will say, 'I like what you did with the sake section.'" Tamura takes his customers' feedback to heart, in line with the brand of personalized service he hoped to bring to Hawaii's liquor stores. "Sometimes people will say they couldn't find a product in our stores," he says. "When that happens, we'll hunt it down for them. If it's available here in Hawaii, we'll get it."

mw

KEY FACTS—TAMURA ENTERPRISES INC.

Founded	1995
President and CEO	Glenn Tamura
Location	Oahu, Hawaii
Number of Stores	Three Tamura's Market grocery stores, three Tamura's Fine Wines & Liquors units and one warehouse distribution center.
Websites	Tamurasmarket.com; Tamurasfinewine.com