

## from island to mainland (and mainstream)

Started at a local farmers market, The Maui Cookie Lady now has wide appeal and some famous fans.



Nestled in Makawao Town, a rural community located on the northeast slope of Haleakala on East Maui known as the hub of Upcountry Maui, The Maui Cookie Lady offers some of Hawaii's most delicious exports. The company's motto is "to make the world a smaller place one cookie at a time," and it has achieved that over the course of eight years.

It all began in 2012, when founder and long-time cookie enthusiast Mitzi Toro began baking cookies as a fundraiser to thank the nurses at Maui Memorial Hospital for taking great care of her terminally ill father. After raising funds for the nurses for a few months at a local farmers market, Toro was encouraged to transform her cookie fundraiser into a full business by her regular customers who loved her treats.

Toro's love of baking began when she received a fresh-baked cookie on the first day of high school. Since then, she has been baking for classmates, neighbors, coworkers, friends and just about anyone who was willing to accept her crazy cookie concoctions over the years.

"I remember how comforting it was to receive the freshly baked chocolate chip cookie and it gave me a moment of comfort from the first day jitters starting at a new high school," says Toro. "I asked the teacher for her recipe and that started my lifelong passion for baking. I learned early on that it does not matter who you are, where you come from, what culture or language you speak, good food unites everyone."

Sweets fans across the globe (and especially throughout the United States) have certainly been united over their love of Toro's six-ounce cookie creations. After building her own commercial kitchen and officially beginning the Made in Maui cookie production line, the company quickly gamered fans from as far away as the United Kingdom, Japan and even Dubai.

The little island boutique bakery continues to gain

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loval customers due to its creative, decadent flavor

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