

# Shrimp Truck in Paradise

By Skye E. MacBroom

**R**oadside food vendors are a great way to get a true taste of the culture in a particular town or city. These restaurants on wheels (or even stands or walking vendors at a ballpark) are a culinary microcosm filled with personality and style. After all, if a traveling vendor doesn't have good food and service, then how can they survive?

Oahu is Hawaii's most populated island, and Hale'iwa is a quaint, sunny beach town filled with bronzed surfers seeking out the world famous Bonzai Pipeline and the Triple Crown. If you want to dine in true

North Shore style, find a local who can point you in the direction of the shrimp trucks. Follow the signs for shaved ice and keep your eyes peeled, much like you'll be doing with the shrimp later! There are several different shrimp trucks on this side of the island. They get their shellfish fresh from the farm ponds that dot the landscape along quiet country roads lined with grapefruit trees and other exotic, yet often unrecognizable fruit bushes.

Besides the tasty seafood, Hale'iwa is way worth the trip for its famous sandy beaches with crashing curling waves and dreamy names like Sunset Beach, but also for its surf shops, carrying everything from boards and bathing suits to cocktail dresses and handmade beaded jewelry.


Giovanni's Shrimp Truck is the oldest and most well-known traveling vendor on the North Shore. If Giovanni's has a real address, no one on the island seems to know it, even though it's been around for over a decade. It's usually parked in downtown Hale'iwa on the main drag just as you come around the corner near an old fashioned general store and a seemingly out of place art gallery and McDonald's.

Giovanni's Shrimp Truck looks like a mega-sized ice cream truck. It's covered in graffiti, autographs, and cartoons. Kids line up with thick black markers in hand, eager to sign their name and leave their mark in history. The truck is parked in a dusty parking lot that slopes down away from the road. The gravelly picnic area is also home to a Thai food truck and a smoothie vendor. A small stream runs behind the edge of the property and a handful of old but sturdy, long wooden picnic tables sit, flanked by mango trees which soar high above the trucks.

Propped up against the truck is an erasable white board listing the menu items. The Shrimp Scampi is the local favorite with its rich buttery flavor and big chunks of garlic – delicious! But be prepared to commit to this strong garlic taste (or bring a bottle of mouthwash), as you'll likely be "re-tasting" this flavor for the next 24 hours! There is also Lemon Butter Shrimp and a Hot and Spicy Shrimp. The latter comes with proper warning, a handwritten note under



## VIRTUAL ROAD TRIP



it that says, “Super Hot, NO REFUNDS!,” because the shrimp is actually cooked right in the special spicy sauce.

Each shrimp dish costs around \$11.00 and comes with two scoops of plain white sticky rice to sop up the shrimp’s sauce and spices. They also give you a wedge of fresh lemon. The citrus fruits like lemons and limes on the island are to die for – fresh and juicy with a real sour zing. Add another dollar or two for soda, passion fruit juice, or water. You can leave a tip in the jar for the bustling workers behind the counter who serve you efficiently and with a smile, say, “Mahalo!” Be sure to grab a pile of napkins as the un-



peeled shrimp can get quite messy, although there is a small sink behind many of the trucks.

Once you place your order, call dibs on a table because the place gets packed and you may have to wait for 20 or 30 minutes, but it’s worth it. You’ll probably end up sharing a table with other diners, mostly townies. Everyone jostles for a table – shirtless young surfer dudes with blonde streaked hair, aloha-shirt wearing tourists with sunburns and sneakers, little island girls

with flip flops and shell necklaces, and shaken-up post skydivers who just came back from their “jump” at the airfield down the road. It’s a good-looking, family-friendly crowd – the ultimate in al fresco dining. When you’re done with your meal, walk down the road to try a shaved Hawaiian ice, a chilled fruity treat that nicely complements the hot and spicy shrimp. All in all, it’s the perfect ending to a culinary trip that’s just off the beaten path.

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