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Maui's Roselani Ice Cream wins top honor among Hawaii food manufacturers

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The Hawaii Food Manufacturers Association is recognizing [Roselani Tropics Ice Cream](#) for its more than century-long contributions to the Islands with one of the industry's highest honors: the Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award.

"We congratulate Roselani Ice Cream on this prestigious award," [Byron Goo](#), president of the [Hawaii Food Manufacturers Association](#) board of directors, said in a statement. "It's well deserved given all that the Nobrigas and their employees have contributed to our local food industry over the last century. It's also wonderful to see how the company has evolved to broaden its scope over the years and expand its business as it has passed through generations."

The award is given to a company, organization, or individual with an established history of distinguished service that has made a lasting contribution to the food manufacturing industry in Hawaii, exhibited leadership, and provided inspiration to others.

"It's quite an honor to be recognized by our counterparts in the food manufacturing association — it's hard to put into words," Roselani Tropics Ice Cream General Manager [Cathy Nobriga-Kim](#), a third-generation ice cream maker, told PBN on Tuesday. "We've been in business for so long that sometimes you just trudge along and know that one day you'll truly be recognized, and I guess this is the day."

Maui Mayor [Alan Arakawa](#) said he has known members of the Nobriga family from his childhood days when they participated in the island's 4-H program. He recalled that they have long been "the hard-core rocks of Maui and foundations of the business community."

"The Nobrigas have been fixtures in the Maui community for a long time, and they have always had a good product, so they're very well-known in the community," Arakawa told PBN. "They're

very well-focused on helping the community and have donated at every event and for any nonprofit at some point or another. They're very, very community friendly and are well-deserving of the lifetime achievement award."

That commitment to community service, Nobriga-Kim said, is something that her family takes seriously.

"Our philosophy is, yes, we have a job to do, yes, we have a product to manufacture and get out to the market to have consumers love and enjoy," she said. "But, we also have a commitment to our community."

Roselani Tropics Ice Cream's roots date back to 1888 when its parent company, Maui Soda & Ice Works Ltd., was started in Kahului, according to the company's website.

In 1932, then company manager [Manuel Nobriga](#) began making ice cream from scratch for local ice cream parlors. He eventually became a major stock owner in the Maui Soda & Ice Works, which is still run by his descendants.

The company underwent a multimillion-dollar plant expansion in 1997 to meet consumer demand.

Being in business for over a century, Nobriga-Kim said, has come with its challenges. Chief among them, she said, is the cost of doing business in Hawaii.

"We're little fish in the big sea of ice cream that you see here in the store — some are private labeled, or store labeled, and some are national brands," she said, noting that Maui Soda & Ice Works is a Coca-Cola franchise for the islands of Maui and Lanai.

"There are a lot of national brands and a few local brands that enter the market, persevere and survive, but there are costs associated with manufacturing here in the islands," she added.

"Roselani is a small piece of Maui Soda & Ice Works, so we operate our business like a family — each individual and each product takes care of each other and they both go hand-in-hand. I mean, what's a float if it's not made with Coke or Barq's Root Beer?"

Finalists for the Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award included former Hawaiian Host Inc. CEO and Vice Chairman Dennis Teranishi, FCH Enterprises, and Maui's Winery.

Roselani Tropics Ice Cream officials will receive the award at the Hawaii Food Manufacturers Association's second annual Taste Awards dinner Saturday, June 6, in the Pomaikai Ballrooms at Dole Cannery.

The winners of eight other awards also will be revealed at that time: manufacturer of the year (at least 50 employees), manufacturer of the year (49 employees or fewer), start-up manufacturer of the year, product of the year, advocate of the year, supplier of the year, community service award, and innovative marketing award.

Darin Moriki covers residential real estate, retail and restaurants for Pacific Business News.