

VJ’s ‘clean meats’ are Maui-bound

VJ’s Butcher Block in Haleiwa, a modern-day mom-and-pop shop, will expand to Kahului, and is in early talks for a mainland distribution deal for its deer sausage and possibly its beef bacon, said owner **Jenny Gaffer**. The shop and its adjacent food cart, VJ’s North Shore Dogs & Burgers, are popular refueling spots in Haleiwa, with seating for 60, said general manager **Justin Javier**, Jenny’s husband.

The two venues offer 100 percent grass-fed beef, locally raised chicken and pork, and wild-caught venison and fish. None has added hormones, dyes, preservatives or steroids, the company says.

“We’re so happy to be able to spread all this amazing local product and make it affordable to anyone who wants clean meats,” Gaffer said.

The shop gets its non-GMO pork from Pono Farms in Waianae, she said. “They are really a fantastic farm. They use Korean farming methods, all-natural, no chemicals, no waste products … very sustainable.”

**Austin Toohey**, the Haleiwa shop’s operations manager, is the franchisee who will take the concept to Maui Marketplace, where construction is underway.

The company hopes to open in December, when surf season hits.

Since VJ’s is still in the early stages of discussion about the mainland distribution deal, details are being held close to the vest for now.

The 580-square-foot Haleiwa shop sells local ground beef for $5.99 a pound, rib-eye steaks in the high teens and filet mignon in the high $20 range, Javier said.

The company website, currently offline, is undergoing an overhaul to allow for online ordering, Javier said.

VJ’s has been in business for about 3-1/2 years, and gained wider recognition after becoming a sponsor of the locally produced “Chef Roc Show,” which airs at 7 p.m. Mondays on KFVE. Through syndication the show reaches as many as 96 million households around the U.S. and other countries via TV and online outlets. “We give him all kinds of meats to cook on the show, and it blossomed into this huge thing,” Javier said. **Steve “Chef Roc” Cassarino** said that when he first walked into VJ’s, he thought, “This is the place. … I brought ’em into the show, they’ve been a big supporter and the business has grown so fast. They really put their heart and soul into it,” Cassarino said.

VJ’s sells TurboPot cookware that Cassarino brought to Hawaii through an endorsement deal with the inventor. Cassarino also supplies the shop with the GoSun solar cooker, which uses UV rays to cook food.

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