

GYOTAKU

Japanese Restaurants



From L to R: Vice President of Operations - Hisashi Teddy Uehara; Executive Chef - William Okimoto; President - Tom Jones; Executive Vice President - Nobutaka "Tony" Sato; Controller - Shinichi Tsutsui; Office Manager - Judy Koza



Thomas Jones and Nobutaka "Tony" Sato, Managers for Kyotaru Co. LTD which operated Kyotaru Japanese and Columbia Inn Restaurants in Hawaii from the mid 1980's decided to continue the Japanese family restaurant concept under a new brand after being notified that Kyotaru would be divesting all of its overseas operations in early 2000. "We just couldn't see ourselves giving up the successful business we had worked so hard to build over 15 years. We felt a deep obligation to the employees and guests to keep this business going," recalls Tom. Joined by Kyotaru Controller Shin Tsutsui and Chef Willy Okimoto, REI Food Service, LLC was founded and re-opened in Pearl City as Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant on August 1st of 2001.

A lot of time was spent during the transition on their business plan and developing a core ideology in order to ensure that Gyotaku would be successful. In retrospect, that was critical to their success. Within six weeks of opening, Gyotaku's endurance was duly tested by the 911 event. "It was a very trying time, as we were just getting used to the responsibility of ownership, being employers and were already in negotiations on acquiring our second restaurant on King St. Our commitment and belief in our core purpose and values enabled us to acquire and open our 2nd restaurant within our first 6 months during the most uncertain times in our lifetime," Jones explained.

In addition to offering tasty menu items, REI Food Service core values include commitments to employees, community and the environment. Annually recognized as one of Hawaii's favorite places to dine, Gyotaku is also a popular stop on the City & County's Tour D' Trash and has been cited for its leadership in business recycling by City and State officials.

Both Tom and Tony feel that it is important to give back to the community. Gyotaku has been a sponsor of the Junior

Japanese Chamber of Commerce's Annual Cherry Blossom Festival for the past decade. Tom has served on the Board of Directors and as Chairman of the Hawaii Restaurant Association, as a Boy Scout Leader and is an active member of the Lions Club for over 20 years. Tony served on the Board of Directors and as Vice President of the Japanese Rainbow School.

Gyotaku recently opened its fourth Japanese restaurant at Aikahi Park Shopping Center and is a Managing Member of AGU - A Ramen Bistro in Moilili.

Other facts:

- 250+ employees
- Gyotaku - King St opened January 2002
- Gyotaku - Niu Valley opened in April 2008
- Gyotaku - Aikahi Park opened March 2014
- currently serving over 1,500 meals per day
- Gyotaku is the Japanese art form of printing images of real fish with ink and paper. Naoki Hayashi's gyotaku artwork of locally caught game fish can be found on the walls of the restaurants voted Hawaii's Best Japanese restaurant for over 10 years in a row by the readers of the Honolulu Star Advertiser.



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