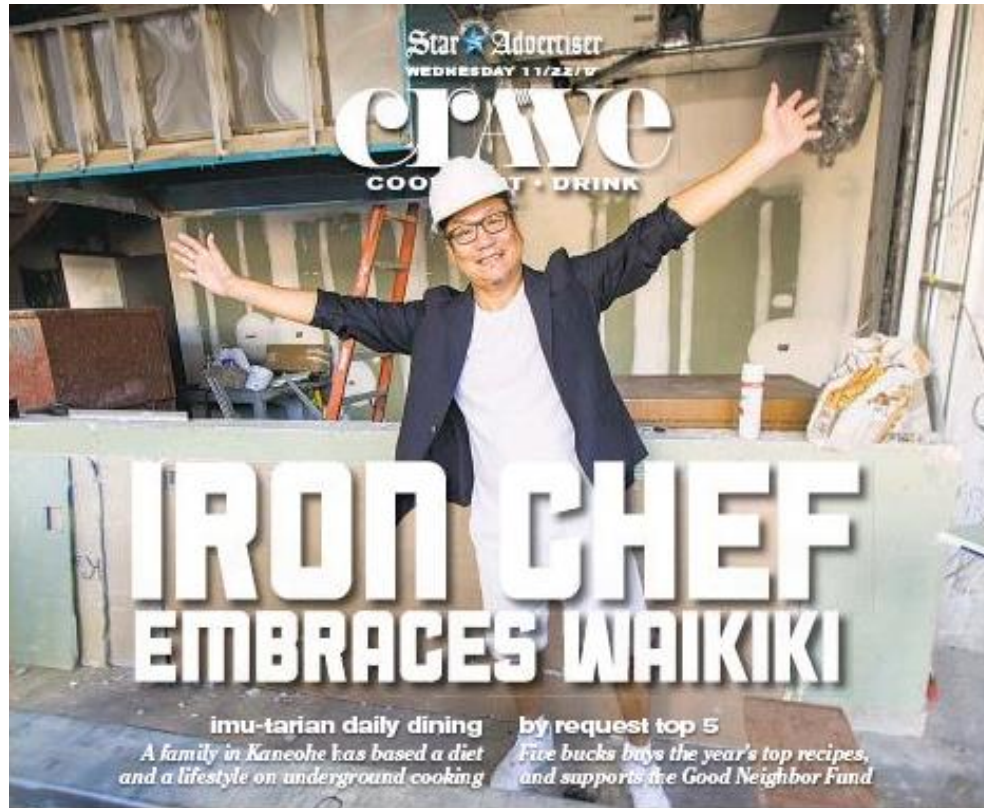


# HONOLULU Star Advertiser

HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER (print version)  
November 22, 2017



Star Advertiser  
WEDNESDAY 11/22/17

## crave

COOK • EAT • DRINK

# IRON CHEF EMBRACES WAIKIKI

**imu-tarian daily dining**  
*A family in Kaneohe has based a diet  
and a lifestyle on underground cooking*

**by request top 5**  
*Five bucks buys the year's top recipes,  
and supports the Good Neighbor Fund*



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The Kahala is incredibly grateful for your patronage and the opportunity to serve you. We wish you a gracious Thanksgiving filled with delectable food and fond memories surrounded by family and friends.

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Honolulu's Favorite Gathering Place

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(Crave / dining section front cover)

## 'Iron Chef' Morimoto takes up residence in Waikiki

By Betty Shimbukuro  
bshimbukuro@staradvertiser.com

Point a camera at Masaharu Morimoto and celebrity erupts. Great big smile, arms spread wide, as though ready for a hug or to take flight.

He is in "Iron Chef" mode, the man at the helm of more than a dozen restaurants, a full-on television personality. He climbs ladders, pushes a broom, pretends to operate a power saw, smiling and posing with anyone in his orbit.

Yet, he says, "What is celebrity? I am just a chef."

Yet, he also says, his job extends beyond the kitchen. "I try to make customers happy — not just food, also my hospitality."

Last week Morimoto toured the spaces that will be his two newest restaurants, in the Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach. The locations are hard-hat zones, crawling with construction workers, but the bones are in place. They will be beach-view and beautiful, he said. "Not yet. Now, ugly."

The chef has put down roots here: He bought a condominium in Waikiki, adding to homes in New York and Hiroshima (his true home base, where his wife lives). He also just picked up a new Mercedes G-Class SUV. It's orange.

"Nice color, huh?" he said as he approached the shiny vehicle parked just outside the hotel. He stopped to rub a fingerprint off the hood, using his coat sleeve. "Sunset color."

Hawaii is his paradise, Morimoto said. He already has six years of experience in Waikiki, at his former location at the Modern Honolulu, and he's had a restaurant on Maui for four. The Alohilani restaurants represent "my dream come true again."

**A chef's obligations:** "I want to stay just a chef," Morimoto said. "I want to stay in the kitchen."

But with restaurants all over the world — "13, 14, 15, 16 — I don't know" — he has responsibilities.

In Waikiki he'll have 100 to 150 employees, he said, and with their families that makes "500 people on my shoulders." Throughout his restaurants, "more than 2,000 people here" — he pointed to those shoulders.

"I have to be healthy, I have to be nice, I have to make my business busy."

And then, "That's why I quit drink." That was six months ago. Until then, his drink of choice: "vodka, with beer chaser."

**A chef's ambitions:** Morimoto just opened a restaurant in Qatar and will open another in Dubai around the same time that Morimoto Asia debuts here.

Will there be more Hawaii restaurants? He's not saying no. Perhaps, if things go well at Alohilani. "Depends on here," as he puts it.

At age 62 he shows no sign of stopping. "Sometime I want to go to the moon."



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARADVERTISER.COM

Chef Masaharu Morimoto shows off his brand new Mercedes G-Class SUV, parked outside the Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach. The vehicle will take Morimoto from his two new restaurants in the Alohilani to the condominium he's purchased nearby.



COURTESY ALOHILANI RESORT WAIKIKI BEACH

A rendering shows the bar area of Morimoto Asia.



DENNIS ODA

Construction worker Juli Kalana shows Morimoto the chop saw on the Asia site.

**The new Morimoto restaurants**  
The Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach, formerly the Pacific Beach Hotel, has revamped its restaurants to bring in two Masaharu Morimoto brands:

### MORIMOTO ASIA

The upstairs, upscale restaurant builds on the model of Morimoto Asia in Orlando, Fla. The menu spans the continent, going beyond Japanese to include cuisines of Korea, India, China, Thailand and Singapore.

The menu will be similar to Orlando's, with Peking duck, sticky pork ribs and Morimoto-style low mein, but he's adding a dim sum cart and new dishes that recognize Hawaii's closer connection to Asia and familiarity with the food.

The full menu "is here now," Morimoto said as he pointed to his temple. Open for dinner, Asia will seat 248 inside and out, with a glassed-in show kitchen and a private dining room that will hold about 30.

It opens in late December.

### MOMOSAN

On the first floor, directly off of Kalakaua Avenue, this ramen restaurant will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, opening early next year. The bulk of the 135 seats will be outside, although counter seating will surround a yakitori grill.

The only other Momosan is in New York. Morimoto described that location as an Asian pub and beer garden — "a little more drinking."

The Waikiki edition adds yakitori — including salmon and duck — to the menu, along with such small bites as mimigita (fried pig ears) and more ramen choices. Also: 20 types of sake.

Steps from the beach, it will be "in-and-out, easy, come in beach shorts," Morimoto said. "But no naked, OK?"



COURTESY MM MANAGEMENT

Pork ribs are a Morimoto Asia signature dish.



COURTESY MM MANAGEMENT

Momosan ramen is made with noodles from Sun Noodle.

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DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARADVERTISER.COM

Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach. The man is he's purchased nearby.



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