

25 FREE MOVIE CHANNELS
HBO and Showtime / 3 MONTHS
FREE FIRST MONTH
OVER 200 CHANNELS

PLUS

FREE
DVR EQUIPMENT
UPGRADE

OFFER ENDS SOON!
GET DISH NETWORK

dish
NETWORK
Better TV for all.

— ADVERTISEMENT —

— ADVERT

Honolulu Star-Bulletin
**Features**
starbulletin.com

Wednesday, July 27, 2005



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM

Raymond, left, and Edwin Noh keep an eye on the machine that packages their seasoning mixes in their Kalihi factory. The machine can fill 80 packets per minute.

Just say Noh

What's new at Noh? Papaya seed dressing, garlic chicken and more ways to get dinner to the table quickly

» [Cooking with Noh Foods mixes](#)

By Betty Shimabukuro
betty@starbulletin.com

In the mid-1960s, Edwin Noh briefly considered opening the first McDonald's in Hawaii. Never having actually been to a McDonald's, the head of Noh Foods Hawaii asked if he could use his own packaged sauce mixes in the restaurants.

"They said, 'No, no, no. We're hamburgers, cheeseburgers and french fries,'" son Raymond recalls. "My Dad -- I remember him saying this -- 'Who the heck would eat that?'"

What's in a name? In that case, a small fortune, but Edwin Noh passed.

In the years since, however, the Nohs have played the name game very well.

It's not just the family name, imprinted on the Noh Foods packaged mixes that have become synonymous with quick convenience cooking.

The value of a good name crops up often in the family and business history.

Oz, for example. As in Wizard of.

The story attached to this name speaks to the creative thought that has powered the partnership of company founders Edwin and Miriam Noh.



COURTESY NOH FOODS HAWAII

In the late 1980s, the family gathered in the old Beretania Street factory. Miriam Noh is surrounded by sons Howard, left, husband Edwin, and sons Raymond and David.

It begins when Miriam went to buy a "Wizard of Oz" poster from a little stand in the International Marketplace. Across the way was an ice cream parlor. She stood there awhile, counting all the customers.

By the time she got home, she'd decided it would be a good idea to open an ice cream shop on the family property on Beretania Street. She called it Oz's Gourmet Ice Cream Shop, painted a yellow brick road on the floor and decorated the walls with posters from the movie.

"Every night at 8 o'clock, she'd play the tape of the 'Wizard of Oz'," recalls son Raymond, the current company president.

Never underestimate the power of a good name that leads to a good gimmick. "She wrote a letter to every single preschool on the island, inviting them to bring their kids for a field trip, have a free scoop of ice cream and watch 'The Wizard of Oz.' "

They came in droves, Raymond says -- and more important, returned on weekends with their parents, this time bearing cash.

The story of Oz takes place in 1987, roughly two-thirds of the way into the Noh's 55-year marriage and business partnership.



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM

The Nohs today in the kitchen of their Kalihi office: Raymond, left, Howard, Edwin and Miriam. Son David is now a film critic in New York. Raymond is president of Noh Foods and Howard runs the other family business, Launderland.

Every decade or so, reporters rediscover the Nohs. Copies of newspaper and magazine articles kept in their Kalihi offices recount the beginnings of Noh Foods, a few times over.

Quickly: In 1961, the couple opened Arirang, a Korean restaurant on Kaheka Street (meat jun dinner, \$1.)

The thing about a Korean restaurant is, kimchee must be made every day. That's a lot of peeling and chopping of garlic. To speed things up, Edwin began dehydrating the kimchee flavorings, so his workers could measure out portions by the scoop and mix them with fresh vegetables. Later, he bought dried garlic, ginger, chili pepper and soy sauce in bulk, and packaged a mix of ingredients.

That kimchee mix became the first Noh Foods product, followed by teriyaki and Korean barbecue mixes, "and every nationality you can think of," Miriam says.

The line now includes three-dozen packaged mixes, from Filipino adobo to Hawaiian haupia to Portuguese vinha d'alhos, and two sauces, barbecue and Korean chili.

Coming up in the next few months: papaya seed dressing and its byproduct, papaya seed tea, and new mixes for seafood scampi and garlic chicken.

Edwin is particularly proud of his barbecue sauce. "This is so good, you could put a piece of cardboard in it and it would taste good," he says.

By comparison, he once tasted ribs from one of the island's premier rib restaurants: "It was worse than junk."

The Nohs were married in 1950, after a four-year courtship. "He didn't want to get married," Miriam says.

"I was looking for rich, rich girls," Edwin says. (He adds that none of his three sons is married because they're *all* looking for rich girls.)



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM

Liko Leitu, front, and Dindo Tacla add dried spices to a mixer for one of the Noh seasonings. Mixes to be distributed on the mainland are partially blended in Hawaii, with heavier ingredients such as salt, flour and cornstarch added in California. But at least 50 percent is mixed locally, so the product can be labeled "made in Hawaii."

The real reason for the delay of the wedding was that Edwin was seriously ill. Cancer. In the end he lost a kidney, and Miriam helped nurse him through four months in the hospital.

Both Nohs were the children of Korean immigrants, their fathers plantation workers, their mothers picture brides.

"Both my grandmothers were very enterprising," son Raymond says. "They both got into the rooming-house business. Eventually they owned property in Waikiki."

His parents started managing their mothers' properties, while Edwin worked as a quartermaster at Pearl Harbor. But the entrepreneurial gene was strong in both of them.

First came a grocery store and a pet shop, then Arirang, followed by the founding of Noh Foods in 1963, plus lots of side ventures, such as the developing of the 10-story Boulevard Towers along the Ala Wai. The family lived in the penthouse of that complex, and Raymond, then around age 6, remembers how the first Noh Foods packages were filled right there in the living room.

Later came a drive-in, Howard's, named for their oldest son, which Edwin opened mainly so he could use his packaged mixes. And of course there was Oz's.

In 1980, Raymond returned home from college and persuaded his parents to concentrate on their seasoning line and give up their other interests. At the time, it was a \$300,000 concern; these days it's a \$3 million international business and growing, with a second office and distribution plant in Gardena, Calif. The only other family concern is the dry cleaner Launderland, which son Howard runs.

The Noh family does understand what's in a name. And the most important name? Hawaii.

When Raymond first placed Noh's Korean chili sauce in a West Coast supermarket chain 16 years ago, it didn't sell. But once he renamed it "Hawaiian Hot Sauce," "people started buying."

The company still produces the same sauce with both labels. "It's the same thing," Edwin says. "But isn't Hawaii the magic word?"

Hawaiian Barbecue Sauce does extremely well in Texas, a place you'd think would be inundated with such sauces. Hawaiian Iced Tea generally introduces the company in new markets.

On the other hand, Noh is downplaying the name "haupia," and repackaging that mix as "coconut pudding" for mainland markets. It will come in box so it can be sold next to Jell-O (which has no coconut flavor).

Double-labeling is a trick that's proved useful many times. The company's roast duck and roast chicken mixes? Same thing, different names. Beef tomato and stir-fry mixes? Ditto.

Husband and wife, now 81 and 80, are still in the office daily. The

FEATURES[NO FRAMES](#)[Wednesday,
July 27, 2005](#)[Just say Noh](#)[Fastball
frontman at
Hard Rock](#)[Hawaii's
Kitchen](#)[Stuffs:
Morsels](#)[Reel News
by Tim Ryan](#)[Wood Craft
by Ben Wood](#)[By Request
by Betty
Shimabukuro](#)[Key Ingredient
by Eleanor
Nakama-
Mitsunaga](#)[By The Glass
by Guest
Sommelier](#)[Art Week](#)[Family](#)[Free for all](#)[Garden](#)[Health](#)[Music](#)[Nitelife](#)[Radio guide](#)[Read All About It](#)[Religion](#)

mixologist has always been Edwin, who learned to cook from his mother. Miriam describes her role as "office girl," but son Raymond says she has always been much more.

In the early days, she hunted down suppliers for the spices Edwin needed and contacted U.S. chambers of commerce overseas that could help place Noh products in foreign markets. The seasonings are now sold around the world.

"It's really Mom who makes ideas happen," Raymond says.

"The two of them really made a great partnership. Without her, he would have been a man who had a lot of good ideas and never did anything with them."

Noh Foodswww.nohfoods.com[BACK TO TOP](#)

Dinner in a packet

For the most part, Noh seasoning mixes are a just-add-water proposition: Make sauce, pour over meat and simmer. But with a little more effort, fancier dishes are possible.

These suggestions were developed by Noh Foods Hawaii.

Hawaiian Curry Roast

1 package Noh Hawaiian-Style Curry Mix
1-1/2 cups water
2-pound beef roast
1 11-ounce can cream of mushroom soup

Combine curry mix with water; mix well. Place roast in crock pot. Pour curry mixture and soup into pot. Cook on low 8 to 10 hours or until cooked through. Serves 8.

Approximate nutritional analysis, per serving: 225 calories, 9 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat, 70 mg cholesterol, 680 mg sodium, 9 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 2 g sugar, 25 g protein.

Chicken Luau

1 package Noh Coconut Milk Mix
1 cup warm water
1 pound chicken
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon salt
1 15-ounce can whole spinach leaves

Combine mix with water. Set aside.

Place chicken pieces in large pot and cover with water. Boil 30 minutes, until done. Discard water (or save to make stock).

Add butter to chicken in pot. Cook 1 to 2 minutes, while stirring. Remove from heat.

Rinse spinach in water and drain. Combine salt with 4 cups water and add to spinach. Let stand 10 minutes, then rinse, drain and squeeze out excess water.

Add coconut milk and spinach to cooked chicken and simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serves 4.

Variation: Add cooked octopus or squid.

Approximate nutritional analysis, per serving, using butter: 300 calories, 25 g fat, 16 g saturated fat, 60 mg cholesterol, greater than 400 mg sodium, 5 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 18 g protein.

Paniolo Breakfast

1 package Noh Portuguese Sausage Mix
1/4 cup water
1/2 pound ground pork or turkey
1 dozen eggs
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1/2 cup diced green onions

Combine mix with water. Add to ground meat and mix thoroughly.

Beat eggs in a separate bowl.

Heat oil in skillet. Add meat and cook over medium heat until done. Pour eggs over meat and cook until set. Sprinkle with green onions and continue cooking until done. Serves 6.

Approximate nutritional analysis, per serving: 300 calories, 20 g fat,

6 g saturated fat, 450 mg cholesterol, greater than 400 mg sodium, 9 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber, 5 g sugar, 19 g protein.

Nutritional analyses by Joannie Dobbs, Ph.D., C.N.S.

[E-MAIL THIS ARTICLE](#) ||| [PRINTER-FRIENDLY](#)
[E-mail to Features Desk](#)

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Text Site Directory:
[\[News\]](#) [\[Business\]](#) [\[Features\]](#) [\[Sports\]](#) [\[Editorial\]](#) [\[Do It Electric!\]](#)
[\[Classified Ads\]](#) [\[Search\]](#) [\[Subscribe\]](#) [\[Info\]](#) [\[Letter to Editor\]](#)
[\[Feedback\]](#)

© Honolulu Star-Bulletin -- <http://starbulletin.com>

— ADVERTISEMENT —

[First Responder and Emergency Kits: Save](#)

Why pay retail? Wholesale direct online shopping for first responder kits, disaster/survival emergency preparedness supplies. Fast, secure and...



Pleasant
MAIN
U
geta



10%
ISLA

Un
MEDICAL
Earn

Un
CRIMINAL
Earn

Un
BUS
Earn

Un
COMMERCE
Earn

EARN
DE
WE

Ads b

Comm
You I

Real-tir
updates
traffic c
he

abclocal.g

€

— ADVERT