

SMALL BUSINESS

OLOHANA BREWPUB

MEET HAWAII'S SMALL BUSINESSES AND NONPROFITS

KALIHI BEER REBRANDS AND RELOCATES TO CHINATOWN

Olohana Brewpub by Kalihi Beer has opened in the former location of Stewbum & Stone-wall Brewing Co. in Chinatown, after owner Chris Cook rebranded the business from Broken Bound-ary Brewery to Kalihi Beer in 2022.

A beer enthusiast and brewer since 2008, Cook originally began brewing beer on his lanai with a home-brew kit gifted from his brothers-in-law. Cook then became the first brewer at Lanikai Brewing Co. in Kailua after it opened in 2015, before becoming a partner, and then sole owner, of Broken Boundary Brewery in Kalihi during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, he and two brewers oversee four 20-barrel fermenters on-site at Kalihi Beer's 2,600-square-foot flagship location at 96 N. King St. The brewery offers a rotating assortment of global and local beer on tap, fresh-made pizza and snacks.

What are the benefits of the Chinatown location? I'm not a wealthy person - I can't go into Waikiki and master plan something with \$25,000-a-month rent. But I've lived in Honolulu for 17 years, and when I started spending time in Chinatown every day, I was struck by the vibrancy of the culture here. People think of Hawaii as a culturally diverse place - and it is - but Chinatown takes that to another level. If you step outside our door and head



CHRIS COOK

ewa, you'll find open-air markets, butchers, fresh vegetables and fish. But no coffee shops, no bars, no concept restaurants. Now, if you go the other direction, toward Diamond Head, there are half a dozen coffee shops, some of the best cocktails in Honolulu and award-winning restaurants. We're right on this line between

two very different cultures. And I think that's a beautiful place to be.

How does your business fit into both cultures, respectfully? This is something we're still exploring, rather than coming in with a set plan. What I know about Chinatown - from living here and from working here over the

Presenting sponsor:



ABOUT OLOHANA BREWPUB

Owner: Chris Cook

Address: 96 N. King St., Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: 808-200-2042

Website: olohanabrewpub.com

past six months - is that it has incredible potential. There's a real vibrancy, a kind of generative spark. It's a place full of creative energy and deep historical roots. When I moved here in 2008, Chinatown on First Fridays was electric - you couldn't even drive down Nuuanu [Avenue] because there were so many people. That energy was real, and it was being tapped into. But something shifted in the years leading up to the pandemic, and especially during it. That sense of Chinatown as a hub of excitement has faded. I think Chinatown can be the heart of creative passion for the whole city once again.

How have you seen the drinking culture change? I think the pandemic really shifted everything. Normally, trends evolve gradually, but that was a tectonic shift. People are starting to recognize that alcohol can be detrimental to their lives. The younger generation - those between 21 and 35, which is a key demographic in the brewing world - is more aware of their social behaviors than my generation was. That awareness is leading them to make different, often healthier, choices. Honestly, I admire them. In the industry, beer is stable or even declining. Local producers still get respect, but regional brands are seeing stagnation. People are exploring alternatives - wine, cocktails, even slushies. And many are choosing not to binge drink or use alcohol as a social crutch.

How have you approached this shift in drinking culture? The beer is good - don't get me wrong, I'm proud of it. But what I really wanted was a kitchen staff who felt the same pride in their food that I feel about the beer.

-Virginia Noone



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