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## PBN names Peter Merriman as Career Achievement honoree for annual Business Leadership Hawaii awards

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Pacific Business News is excited to announce chef and restaurateur Peter Merriman as this year's Career Achievement honoree for the annual Business Leadership Hawaii awards.

"I'm glad it's the career [award] and not the lifetime because I thought hey, how old am I?" Merriman said with a laugh.

"It's a real honor," he added. "It's an interesting time to be getting honors — it's a precarious moment for any business in Hawaii, let alone the restaurant business."

After cooking at resorts across the country and in Europe, Merriman came to the Islands in 1983 to work as a cook at the Mauna Lani Bay Hotel. Within just two years, he was appointed as executive chef of the hotel's Gallery Restaurant.



ANNA KIM  
Peter Merriman

Since the earliest days of his career, Merriman has been dedicated to utilizing local ingredients and was one of the founding chefs of Hawaii Regional Cuisine.

A movement that has shaped the Islands' culinary scene, HRC focused on utilizing Hawaii's ingredients in partnership with local farmers, ranchers and fishermen.

In 1988, Merriman opened his first restaurant, Merriman's, in Waimea on Hawaii Island. Over the years, he has expanded the brand to include four locations across the state.

Alongside restaurateur Bill Terry, Merriman also founded Handcrafted Restaurants, which is now comprised of multiple concepts: Moku Kitchen in Kakaako; The Beach House on Kauai; and Monkeypod Kitchen, with one location on Oahu and two on Maui.

Amid Covid-19, all four Merriman's restaurants have reopened, although two of them — Kapalua and Honolulu — feature a new, fast-casual concept.

"Considering that it's just take-out and it's such a different experience, we are actually doing okay," he said. "But we're not even hitting 20% of our former volume ... With the PPP money available, you can break even on that, but we would be out of business really rapidly if we didn't change our model."

All three Monkeypod Kitchen locations, as well as Moku Kitchen, remain closed, but Merriman said they are looking to reopen all of them in the coming weeks. Those, too, will likely look a little different, possibly with a new concept, and almost certainly with reduced offerings.

But no matter what changes might come, Merriman is working to evolve with the times.

"We pride ourselves on our ability to be sensitive to the customers' desires ... We are trying to take this time when we have [PPP funds] available to develop a model that might work for us in the shrunken market post-PPP money."

**Christina O'Connor**  
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