

# The local flavor of Oahu: Hawaiian shave ice

by [Libby Zay](#) ([RSS feed](#)) on Oct 17th 2011 at 2:00PM



The recipe for Hawaii's signature dessert is simple: fill a cup with a mound of finely shaved ice and then top it off with a sugary syrup of your choice. If you want to get creative, add a scoop of vanilla ice cream or azuki bean paste at the bottom of the cup, or top it off with a "snow cap"-some sweetened, condensed milk drizzled over the top.

Although the recipe seems like a piece of cake, there's actually much more to the Hawaiian shave ice. The treat was actually [introduced by Japanese immigrants](#) working on sugar plantations, who would shave fine pieces from large blocks of ice using Japanese swords that were family heirlooms. The tradition actually goes back even further to the turn of the first millennium in Japan, when ice would be brought down from the mountains in the winter and stored in caves. Eating the flavored ice was a luxury reserved for royalty only, but in Hawaii it became commonplace.

When first introduced to Hawaii, shave ice was sold solely on Sundays-the only day of the week immigrants rested. Now, its available pretty much anytime and anywhere in touristy areas-but don't be fooled. Not all shave ice is created equal.

With some tips from locals (and after much debate), we've culled together a list of five of the best places to get

shaved ice on the island of Oahu.



**[Matsumoto Shave Ice](#)**: This classic shave ice stand in the North Shore of Oahu has been dishing out colorful treats since 1951. On sunny days, the shop sells around 1,000 cones of shave ice to surfers, locals, and happy tourists.

*66-87 Kamehameha Hwy., Haleiwa; 808-637-4827*

**[Aoki's Shave Ice](#)**: In a little red shack down the road from Matsumoto is Aoki's, a family-run business that has been serving shave ice for over 25 years. Although the line is typically long (especially on hot days), the wait is well worth it-and there's plenty of mom-and-pop kitsch to look at to kill time.

*66-117 Kamehameha Hwy., Haleiwa; 808-637-7017*



**Waiola Shave Ice:** If you can't make it to the North Shore, Waiola is a little piece of shave ice heaven in Honolulu. The store can be a little difficult to find, but once you get there the shave ice is cheap, they have a wide variety of flavors, and the ice is deliciously fine-like powdery snow. With a delectable melt-in-your-mouth texture, this place comes with my personal "severe brain freeze warning."

*2135 Waiola St., Honolulu; 808-949-2269*

**Ailana Shave Ice:** Also in Honolulu, Ailana Shave Ice has a mission to serve "fresh and tasty homemade syrups" to the masses. Try some of the local flavors-lychee, melona, or haupia-or stick to classics like blue Hawaii, pineapple, strawberry, or the ever-popular rainbow. This place also serves [plate lunch](#) on weekdays.

*1430 Kona St., Honolulu; 808-955-8881*

**Shimazu Store:** Tucked away in Honolulu's Chinatown is this neighborhood convenience store that whips up some mouthwatering shave ice. Lots of flavors-including red velvet, root beer, and crème brulee-are on the menu, and the portions are larger than most other shave ice places. If you're feeling up for the challenge, there's an oversized option called "The Larry" that is extra, extra large.

*330 N School St., Honolulu; 808-371-8899*

(All photos by [Libby Zay](#))

Filed under: [Food and Drink](#), [North America](#), [United States](#), [Budget Travel](#)

•  
• [2 Comments](#)