

Ethnic Markets

We explore five of the city's best ethnic-food markets, and find homemade salsa, fragrant curries and budget-friendly bentos.

BY JENNY QUILL



Nijiya Market

Nijiya, which has nearly a dozen Mainland locations, opened its first Hawai'i store in Mō'ili'ili. The squeaky clean, well-organized grocery offers its own brand of products—some 100 items, including organic rice, nori and coffee—in addition to organic produce grown at its Southern

California farm and baked goods made at the company's bakery. The bentos and sushi are great for nights when you don't feel like cooking, while the budget-friendly selection of meats and fish is ideal for when you do feel like whipping up dinner. 1009 University Ave., 979-8977.

Asian Grocery

Local restaurant chefs and home cooks rely on this small, but well-stocked, shop for foodstuffs from Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, China, India and Malaysia. "Our business is wholesale and retail," says general manager Ravy Winter. "We supply to the majority of ethnic restaurants in Honolulu—Thai, Vietnamese, Filipino and fusion, including Indigo and Roy's." In addition to such staples as teas, spices, fish and tamarind pastes, curry powders, noodles, jasmine and basmati rice and chili sauces, shoppers will find fresh produce and herbs,



Martha Sanchez, owner of Mercado de la Raza ("The People's Market") grocery store, takes care of a customer. Sanchez offers spices, like fragrant chiles, and other authentic products.

including kaffir lime leaves, mint and lemongrass. 1319 S. Beretania St., 593-8440.

Mercado de la Raza

Martha Sanchez moved to Hawai'i from Cuernavaca, Mexico, 30 years ago, and in 1994 opened Mercado de la Raza, a Latin American market that sells dry and canned goods (including Goya products), sauces, drinks, sweets and spices. "We sell the largest selection of dried chiles in the Pacific," says Sanchez, pointing to a back wall lined with fragrant bins of dried ancho, guajillo and cascabel chiles. In addition to running the place, Sanchez also makes the mercado's homemade tamales (available on the second and last Saturdays of every month), flan and salsa. Sanchez's salsa, which she makes on Thursday nights, has become such a hot commodity that it's often sold out by Saturday. 1315 S. Beretania St., 593-2226.



DID YOU KNOW?

Piñatas, though they've become part of Hispanic culture, are believed to have original in China.

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**India Market**

India Market smells pleasantly of nose-tingling aromatics, due, no doubt, to the shelves lined with spices—everything from cardamom to cumin. There are also curry pastes, chutneys, teas, Middle Eastern sweets and the island's only selection of *halal* (Arabic for lawful or permitted) meats. "We sell a lot of heat-and-eat items," says owner Shereen Khan. The selection includes pre-made samosas, curries and naan (leavened, oven-cooked flatbread), all of which make for an easy dinner. Round out the evening with a Bollywood DVD from the store's rental selection. 2357 S. Beretania St., 946-2020.

Palama Supermarket

Palama, which has three locations, is the go-to source for all things Korean. On a recent visit to the Kalihi store, the store's plate-lunch eatery was, as always, busy with folks ordering barbecue and fried *mandoo* (Korean dumplings). The grocery section has everything—well-priced meats, fish and produce, kim chees galore, as well as dry and canned goods, sweets and drinks. But garnering the most attention were the grab-and-go meals, which included pigs' feet and seasoned octopus. 1210 Dillingham Blvd., 847-4427; 1670 Makaloa St., 447-7777; 98-020 Kamehameha Highway, 488-5055.

PAU

Norman Salva
(at right) with the
day's shipment of
yellow melons.

