

TRAVEL / LOCAL GETAWAYS

# Maui's Upcountry Delights

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Organic sugarcane is used to produce Maui's organic Ocean vodka and rum

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Whether you're heading to the summit of Mount Haleakala or want a pleasant venture away from [Maui's](#) beach and resort life, the island's quiet upcountry near Kula is a compelling destination for foodies—and families.

## Island spirits

Amid the vast commercial sugarcane plantations that rise into the hills above central Maui, [Ocean Vodka's](#) 80-acre farm and distillery on Omaopio Road is a hidden gem where organic sugarcane is transformed into fine [vodka](#) and rum. This family-owned venture is a state-of-the-art distilling and bottling facility tucked in amid tall cane fields. You can join a fascinating tour that included a native sugarcane exhibit, a factory tour and vodka and rum tasting (\$10 per

person or \$20 including tax). A small shop sells their vodka in decorative bottles modeled after Japanese glass fishing floats, rum and chocolate truffles made with cane sugar and rum. They also have a "martini" garden where you can take clippings of fresh herbs and florals for use in vodka martinis.

Like all 80 proof vodkas, Ocean's is comprised of 60% water. They use ocean mineral water taken from a 3,000 foot deep current off the Kona coast of Hawaii's Big Island. This water originated as Greenland glacier melt over 2,000 years ago, traveling gradually around the globe through deep ocean currents until arriving in Hawaii. Full of naturally occurring minerals, the water is organically purified and desalinated through a proprietary, natural filtration process that removes sodium while retaining rich minerals such as potassium, calcium and magnesium. To say the least, the organic sugarcane and deep ocean water ingredients make this Maui-made product truly unique.



Photo by Ben Davidson/www.bendavidsonphoto.com

### **Maui-made cheese**

If you love gourmet cheese, **Surfing Goat Dairy** is a cheese lover's heaven. Winner of 18 national awards, including "Best **Goat Cheese** Spread in North America" from 2004 to 2006, the 42-acre farm is home to the dairy's bucks and does, who graze in grassy pastures producing milk for their acclaimed soft and cream goat cheeses. Surfing Goat's cream cheeses run from plain "Udderly Delicious" to exotic Mandalay (apple banana and curry) and Pirate's Desire (anchovies and capers). Soft goat cheeses include those ripened in olive oil with garlic and brine-ripened feta cheese. The dairy is located next door to Ocean Vodka on Omaopio Road.

### **Sweet Scents**

Sweet scented **lavender** also grown in Maui's upcountry near Kula on **Ali'i Kula Lavender Farm**. Established by horticultural maestro, Ali'i Chang, the 14-acre farm offers gardens and guided walking tours, and produces a variety of lavender-infused products such as bath and body products (body creme, shampoo and honey scrubs), culinary products like herb tea and lavender strawberry pepper jam, and aromatherapy products (lavender essential oil, sachets

Ali'i Lavender resides at an elevation of roughly 4,000 feet and is home to approximately 55,000 lavender plants and 45 different varieties of lavender. Olive trees, hydrangea, Protea, succulents and an exceptional variety of other plants can be found on the farm. While not native to Maui, the lavender planted here has acclimated well to the mountain-slope terrain and Kula's Mediterranean climate. The farm's lavender blooms year round in the cool, dry climate. General admission is \$3 and guided walking tours (\$12 per person) offer breathtaking views and beautiful walking paths

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