

STUFF WE LOVE: MADE IN THE USA

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10 THINGS WE LOVE – MADE IN HAWAII



06.24.13 by [USA Love List Guest](#)

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Hawaii is a unique state, and not just because it is a tropical island chain and the birthplace of surfing. The state is literally in the middle of the biggest ocean in the world. In terms of manufacturing and production, this means that anything that is manufactured here would either need raw materials grown here or imported. Then the manufactured items would need to be sent back to the mainland for distribution. Due to the high cost of land to grow raw materials combined with an expensive or inadequate labor force, it is usually going to be cheaper to make almost anything somewhere else. Anywhere else.

But again, Hawaii is a unique state, and manufacturers are now taking pride in their 'Made in Hawaii' items, and these products can in turn get a higher premium.

So without further ado, here is my selection of Ten Things We Love : Made in Hawaii products, in random order.

About

Thanks for visiting USA Love List, a little project that grew by the day until it took off and couldn't be stopped. It is great to be involved in something that everyone loves to love! Our seven-person team is working every day to learn about great American products, add items to our catalog, and connect with American businesses.

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MADE IN HAWAII

1. Sig Zane Designs – (<http://www.sigzane.com>)

One of the first images that comes to mind when thinking about Hawaii is the iconic Hawaiian shirt, but the sad reality is that most ‘Hawaiian’ shirts aren’t made here. One company whose products stand out for many reasons is Sig Zane Designs, with bold and graphic prints, and products that are made by hand using high-quality materials on the ‘Big Island’ of Hawaii. Designer and founder Sig Zane started making pareus (sarongs) for his wife, Nalani, and then friends and family, each with designs based on images with Hawaiian cultural significance. With the exception of growing the cotton and weaving it into material (which is done on the US mainland), the entire process takes place in Hawaii; including the creation of each print design, the hand-screening of the prints onto the fabric and then the cutting and the sewing of the yardage. Only 60 yards of fabric are hand printed at a time, then sewn into aloha shirts, dresses, blouses, and pareus. Each piece is a limited item since each color combinations is only printed once. Sig Zane Designs are available at the retail store in Hilo, Hawaii, which opened in 1985, and online.

2. Ocean Vodka – (<http://oceanvodka.com>)

Handcrafted in Hawaii, Ocean Vodka is the only spirit in the world made with deep ocean mineral water, and the only vodka distilled from organic sugar cane. The high mineral content of the Hawaiian ocean water imparts a unique character to the vodka and adds a depth of flavor to the traditional vodka cocktail. Ocean Vodka, which is 100% USDA organic, has been the exclusive vodka on Hawaiian Airlines since 2007. In 2013, the company opened the Ocean Vodka Organic Farm & Distillery on the island of Maui, consolidating all supply and production, with farming, distillation, manufacturing, marketing and sales for the first time since the brand’s inception in 2005. In addition to being the best selling ‘Made in Hawaii’ spirit, Ocean Vodka is currently being marketed in 25 states and 3 provinces in Canada.

3. Martin and Macarthur – (<https://www.martinandmacarthur.com>)

When it comes to wood in Hawaii, nothing compares to the beauty and the history of Koa, and when it comes to high-quality koa craftsmanship, nothing compares to Martin and MacArthur. Koa, which only grows in Hawaii, was the wood prized by the Hawaiian royalty. Martin and MacArthur has been making furniture and accessories out of this prizes wood for over 50 years, longer than any other company in the state. Martin and MacArthur is a vertically-integrated company, overseeing everything from the harvest of the Koa, to production, to selling in the 11 retail stores throughout the islands. With a dedication to sustainability, Martin and MacArthur only harvests wood from dead and fallen Koa trees, and with each piece of furniture sold, a new tree is planted. After

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harvest, which mainly takes place on Hawaii Island, the wood is shipped over to Honolulu, where it is dried in one of the two huge kilns before being turned into a piece of quality furniture by one of over 30 craftsmen in their Furniture Workshop.

4. Queen Bee Productions – (<http://www.queenbeemaui.com>)

Queen Bee Productions, a honey-based skin care line, was founded in 2009 by an herbalist and an aesthetician; both with a passion for nature and its gifts. Together, the founders combine the medicinal features of herbs, healing powers of honey, and pleasure of the senses to create Queen Bee Productions body products. Cleansers, toners, balms and other products are made using all natural ingredients including raw honey and beeswax, organic herbs, oils and other fine ingredients for a high quality blend. There are no fillers, parabens, synthetics or chemicals; they take pride in the luxury of naturally clean and effective ingredients. Queen Bee sources ingredients locally, as much as possible, and uses traditional Hawaiian Healing herbs, such as Noni in their products. In the few short years that they have been selling their products, Queen Bee has become a powerhouse in the crowded 'made in Hawaii' body product category.

5. Island Slipper –

(<http://www.islandslipper.com/Retail/General/Home.aspx>)

Island Slipper is the oldest manufacturer of 'made in Hawaii' footwear. For more than 60 years, Island Slipper (the local term for sandals or flip-flops) has stayed true to the tradition of their hand-made quality product. The factory floor hums as experienced craftsmen cut, trim, wrap, sew, last, glue, and press pairs of slippers. Several of the employees have been at the factory for 20 years or more. Island Slipper got its start in the early 1940s when Takizo and Misao Motonaga opened their factory in Honolulu with five employees. Island slipper remained in the family until the Motonaga family offered it to John Carpenter in 1985. When Carpenter took over there were five sandal factories still producing in Hawaii. Today Island Slipper is the last of the original factories to make 100% of their product in the Islands. More than 80 styles of men's and women's slippers, all featuring comfort and durability, are available at two retail stores on Oahu and online.

6. Big Island Candies – (<http://www.bigislandcandies.com/BIC/>)

In 1977, Big Island Candies set out to create quality macadamia nut candy that uses 100% Hawaiian grown macadamia nuts. Over thirty years later, their gift shop, which includes a viewing window into the chocolate factory, has become a must-stop attraction for visitors to Hawaii Island. Their signature product, the Chocolate Dipped Macadamia Nut Shortbread Cookies, is world renown. All of

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their products are made with quality ingredients, including local eggs, real butter, high-grade chocolate and 100 percent Kona Coffee. Besides the tasty delights that one might expect, including a variety of cookies, brownies and chocolate covered coffee beans, Big Island Candies offers items that are bit unusual, including cuttlefish and other local favorites, each dipped in chocolate! Big Island Candies started with one employee in 1977 and now has more than 90 employees in the 40,000-square-foot Hilo facility. In fact, they recently won the state's Small Business Administration's Entrepreneurial Success Award, which is given to businesses that have shown above-average growth. In addition to their Hilo store, the treats are available online.

7. Sasaki Bags – (<http://www.etsy.com/shop/sasakibags>)

After a shoulder injury, Barb Sasaki sewed herself a small wristlet bag to avoid having to carry a heavy purse. She started getting requests from friends and co-workers, and in October of 2007, Sasaki Bags became a full-time business, with an order of 100 bags to Kona Mountain Coffee. Sasaki uses a variety of textiles from vintage kimono to coffee bags to create totes, purses, ipad sleeves and other accessories. Sasaki only uses real coffee bags from working coffee farms in Hawaii, striving for authenticity and finding satisfaction knowing that by up-cycling the bags, she is helping out the farmers as well. In 2012, she collaborated with Colleen Wilcox, a fine artist based on Oahu, to create bags using fabric printed with images from Wilcox's paintings. The first releases from the "Wilcox – Sasaki Collection" were released in November 2012. In addition to being in 12 retail stores throughout the state, Sasaki Bags enjoys success as a popular gift item for the numerous corporate and incentive groups that visit Hawaii each year.

Sasaki Bags are available for purchase on Etsy and selected items are available directly at the website.

8. Maui Brewing Company – (<http://mauibrewingco.com>)

Founded in 2005, Maui Brewing Company is one of Hawaii's fastest growing companies. The brewery handcrafts ales and lagers using only the finest natural and local ingredients. The owners' passion for creating a great tasting beer has been proven, with their beers winning awards every year since inception. The company is also dedicated to sustainability, donating spent beer grain to local farmers for feed and compost, installing solar panels on their brewery, and using bio-diesel from their brewpub for their delivery vehicles.

The brewery uses aluminum cans for their retail beers for several reasons, not the least of which is the preservation of freshness and taste, which can be affected by light damage through a glass. Aluminum cans are made on Oahu, where as glass bottles would have to be imported from the mainland. Glass can

also break, and when you are enjoying your nice cold beer on the beach in Hawaii, you don't want to have to worry about stepping on broken glass. In another gesture of environmental awareness, instead of the typical plastic rings that can ensnare marine life, a unique, recyclable plastic carrying device is used to hold the cans. Maui Brewing Company, which has a brewpub and separate brewery, tasting room and retail store in West Maui, offers 4 of its most popular beers in cans year-round. The cans can be found around the state and in a handful of states on the mainland, with various online retailers that can ship it right to your door.

9. Niihau Shell Lei –

(http://www.mauihands.com/artists/niihau/about_niihau.html)

A post about Hawaii would be remiss to not include an authentically traditional Hawaiian item. Just off the coast of the island of Kauai is a privately owned island called Niihau, which not only has its own dialect of the Hawaiian language, but its own unique history and culture. The origins of the Niihau shell lei are unknown, but residents of Niihau have been making shell lei from the tiny shells that surround their island home since at least 1778, when Captain Cook first visited the islands. The stunning pieces of jewelry were first brought to the attention of the courts of Europe when Queen Kapi'olani traveled to London to attend Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887. In fact, Ni'ihau Shells are the only shells recognized by gemologists as gems, consequently they are the only shells that are insurable as fine jewelry. The value of the lei can range from \$100 for a single strand, to over \$30,000 for multiple strands with the rarer and more desirable colors. Maui Hands, a gift and art gallery featuring 100% made in Hawaii products, has a selection of exquisite lei available in their four retail store on Maui, with a few selected pieces on their website. Each Lei (from Maui Hands) comes with a certificate of authenticity and a lifetime warranty.

10 . Wings Hawaii – (<http://www.wingshawaii.com>)

Wings Hawaii started as a class project by three young females at the University of Hawaii over 13 years ago, and is on its way to being a nationally recognized brand. The clothing and jewelry company, now based on the island of Maui, is comprised of a variety of unique designs, each inspired by their tropical island surroundings. All of the jewelry, clothing and accessories are made by hand in an old pineapple cannery.

The jewelry is hand fabricated using sterling silver and 14k gold fill, and many include shells that have been hand picked from the local beaches. The hand-sewn clothes are designed and fabricated using organic cottons and sustainable bamboo fibers, with non-toxic dyes and inks. All garments are cut one at a time and pinned by hand. All metals and fabric scraps are reclaimed or reused. The Wings Hawaii line quickly became a popular brand among the locals, but with

the success of their boutique store in the trendy town of Paia and their recent appearance in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue, orders for their products have been coming in from around the country and around the world. The Wings Hawaii collection is available at their retail store in Paia, Maui, at various shops around the state and the country, and online.

Liz Smith is a Maui-based publicist who is taking a break from the corporate world, staying at home with her two children. After meeting several talented crafters and designers on the island, and seeing the opportunity to get them more national exposure, she created her new Maui Made blog (mauimadeblog.wordpress.com). She's now busier than ever.

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