



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Office of Corporate Communications
1300 E Avenue, Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8524 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 4-8524

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 72-10
Date: August 4, 2010
Contact: Nancy O’Nell, DeCA West public affairs officer
Tel.: (916) 569-4839
E-mail: nancy.onell@deca.mil

Commissary agency seeks new products at ALA Hawaii Food Show

*By Nancy O’Nell,
DeCA West public affairs officer*

McCLELLAN, Calif. – Ice cream, honey, salsa and sizzling marinated beef will be among the foods presented by more than 80 small business owners from Hawaii to Defense Commissary Agency buyers during the 13th Annual American Logistics Association Hawaii Food Show, Aug. 19, at the Hawaii Prince Hotel in Waikiki.

The annual event provides DeCA buyers with the opportunity to taste-test locally produced products and interact one-on-one with business owners before selecting new products for commissary shelves. DeCA operates four military commissaries on Oahu.

“Selecting products and keeping store shelves stocked is the core of the commissary business,” said DeCA Acting Director and CEO Thomas E. Milks. “During the food show, we look for products that reflect the unique tastes and culture of the Hawaiian Islands to satisfy the huge demand military shoppers have for products made in Hawaii.”

The show is hosted by the American Logistics Association, known as ALA, a nonprofit trade association of manufacturers, manufacturer’s representatives, brokers, distributors, publishers and service providers who sell or provide products to the military resale systems and to various military morale, welfare and recreation services activities.

Commissaries in Hawaii routinely stock more than 3,000 grocery items from local companies and more than 100 varieties of locally grown fruits and vegetables. The value of these products combined is \$41 million. More than \$16 million of these grocery products are unique

Hawaiian items like coffee, marinades and bakery products.

“There are many ways for local business owners to present products to DeCA, but the Hawaii food show is the most popular method with vendors,” said Vicki Sliwicki, a DeCA buyer who will be attending the show for the 10th year.

One advantage of the food show is that DeCA buyers come to Hawaii for the presentation, so business owners can sell the attributes of their products in-person, and the product can be presented the way it would taste if cooked at home. A company with marinades or rubs can offer samples of their product on beef and chicken hot from the grill. Beverages can be served ice-cold.

DeCA buyers also provide each company with personal feedback within a few days of the show, a valuable education for any company wishing to do business with a government agency.

“Among other things, we provide one-on-one feedback to a company on their marketing plan,” said Sliwicki, “We explore whether the company has the resources to keep steady supplies of the product flowing to the commissaries.”

More than 161,000 military service members, retirees and their family members live on Oahu, making military commissaries an attractive market to local businesses.

Companies can also present products to DeCA by e-mail, fax or in person at the DeCA West offices in Sacramento, Calif. Information on how to present a product can be found by visiting the DeCA website at <http://www.commissaries.com>. From the homepage, select: About Us; Business with DeCA; Resale/Grocery Products & Services; and Brand Name Resale Products.

Over the past 12 years, DeCA has placed 1,571 products in commissaries as a direct result of the ALA Hawaii Food Show, and some of these products are now sold in commissaries worldwide.

“Service members travel the world over and taste foods from many cultures,” said Sliwicki. “We owe it to them to find the very best products from Hawaii.”

-DeCA-

Photo caption: Kevin Blecha, a commissary supervisory specialist, replenishes chocolate-covered nuts in the Pearl Harbor Commissary, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Store directors from the commissaries on Oahu and commissary buyers will attend a food show in Waikiki, Aug. 19, to evaluate and select products produced in Hawaii. DeCA’s Acting Director and CEO Thomas E. Milks said the buyers are looking for “products that reflect the unique tastes and culture of the Hawaiian Islands to satisfy the huge demand military shoppers have for products made in Hawaii.” (*DeCA photo: Helen Parubrub*)

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*