

## Yanagi Sushi Wagon/Makai Sushi



Matt is a driven young entrepreneur. A key to his business future is learning. Matt approached John Latkiewicz at the Hawaii SBDC Network (SBDC) wanting to explore a mobile food operation focused on sushi and operating in the Poipu area of Kauai. It became clear that although Matt had the drive and ambition, the smarts to pull it off and the funding from family, he really didn't have the background in the business and in the cuisine in particular. As John often does in such situations, John advised Matt to find some way to get his feet wet in the business. That advice all too often falls on deaf ears with many clients. Not with Matt, however.

After graduating from the Sushi Chef Institute in California, Matt worked in sushi restaurants learning by doing, observing and asking questions. He then launched the Yanagi Sushi Wagon in December of 2013. Matt experiencing steady growth operating three days a week at the National Tropical Botanical Gardens, doing Hanapepe Art Night and doing catering.

Although the lunch wagon was profitable, it was too close to being a break-even proposition. The answer – take the lessons learned and evolve into Makai Sushi. In September 2014, Matt was invited to build and operate a sushi bar in the Kukuiula Market near the Poipu roundabout. Makai Sushi has been hugely popular (and much more profitable) with both tourists and locals who enjoy his quality sushi, his outgoing personality and his enthusiasm for what he does.

Matt has plans for a upscale restaurant and hopes to realize that vision in the next couple of years. He's also working with John to find a way to

organize a periodic evening event in the Poipu area that involves the restaurants and other business in the Poipu area. The SBDC will be there to support him. As Matt says, you're my business advisor.

