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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **34th Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo finally makes triumphant return**

*'The little craft fair that could' fights through pandemic cancellations, family loss*

In a hard-won but triumphant return, the 34th Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo — a kamaaina favorite tradition since 1987, and named Hawaii's "Best Holiday Market" by Food & Wine magazine — finally relaunches on Black Friday weekend, Nov. 24-26, at the Blaisdell Center ... for the first time since 2019.

### **34th Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo**

**Nov. 24-26, 2023, at Blaisdell Exhibition Hall**

**Hours:**

**Friday, Nov. 24 - 4-8 p.m.**

**Saturday, Nov. 25 - 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Sunday, Nov. 26 - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**\$8 general admission; \$6 for military with ID and seniors 65+; free for keiki 12 and younger**

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- Featuring 200 vendor booths filled with the islands' most lovingly made handcrafts and delicious local foods.
- Exciting entertainment, including headliner Melveen Leed onstage at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 25.
- Prize giveaways, surprises and fun!

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo to be canceled in 2020 and 2021. And then in 2022, just a few weeks before the expo was due to return, its beloved Founding Director, Caroline M. Infante, unexpectedly passed away, prompting a third cancellation.

At first Caroline's four grown children — Esme, Sonia, Serena and Brandon — struggled with whether and how to continue the expo. But the Infante siblings resolved to push forward as a team, establishing a new company and picking up where their Mom left off.

"The answer was clear when we remembered how important it is to carry on this Hawaii tradition treasured by both our shoppers and vendors, and continue our Mom's rich and unique legacy," said Esme M. Infante, one of four sibling Co-Directors of the Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo.

“It’s been really tough at times, but we are doing it!” added Co-Director Sonia Infante. “Even as we modernize some parts of the business and move it into its next great version, we are striving to stay as true as we can to Mom’s uniquely warm, homespun, relationship-based style of doing business.”

“The 34th Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo will still offer all the wonderful made-in-Hawaii shopping and fun that have made it a favorite of kamaaina and visitors for over three decades,” said Co-Director Serena Cook. “If you’re going to hit only one Hawaii craft fair during the holiday season, this is it!”

“We’re also proud to announce new special touches added to our Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo to elevate the experience for both our shoppers and vendors, and support our community and local small businesses,” said Co-Director Brandon Infante. Among the new features:

### **Kokua Corner**

The Infante Ohana has renewed their commitment to give back to our local community. So several Hawaii nonprofit and community organizations have been provided with free booths in a special section called the Kokua Corner, to sell local crafts or food, or provide fun or healthful activities or services for keiki or adults.

### **“Craft Fair Cash” giveaways**

Thousands of dollars in “Craft Fair Cash” will be given away. The specially issued gift certificates will be good to use with any vendor during the Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo, to encourage shoppers to spend their winnings immediately at local small businesses.

### **“Outstanding Booth Presentation” awards**

A friendly competition among our vendors to offer the highest quality booth decorations, staff attire, customer engagement and overall visual presentation, in an effort to create a high quality shopping experience for vendors and shoppers alike. Winning vendors will have their awards displayed in their booths.

## ***About the Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo***

The Islandwide Crafts & Food Expo is a favorite kamaaina tradition, held annually every Black Friday weekend since 1987 at the Blaisdell Exhibition Hall in Honolulu, Hawaii, and named Hawaii’s “Best Holiday Market” by the renowned Food & Wine magazine. Begun by the late Founding Director Caroline M. Infante, the expo continues to grow under the direction of her four grown children as a family-owned and -operated Hawaii small business. Learn more at [IslandwideExpos.com](http://IslandwideExpos.com).

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