



## **Cristina and Devin Pagaduan**

We had our first child in 2011. When our daughter was in preschool, Devin had to miss out on a few 'family nights' at preschool. After a few missed activities, we realized that we wanted to be parents who were "present" for our children. We knew our jobs at the time wouldn't allow us the freedom to do that. Devin left his job as a Maui Police Officer and I left my job as a (Part-Time) Teacher and an After School program Coordinator. With no prior cooking education, just a love for food, we decided to open a Food Truck. In 2015, we successfully opened Pastele House Maui Food Truck. We started off with just a few specialty dishes but we have since expanded our menu to not just Puerto Rican cuisine but Hawaiian and local dishes as well.

Fast forward to 2019, and a total of four children later, the coronavirus pandemic hit. I vividly remember the day when Mayor Victorino ordered our island, Maui, to shut down. He ordered an island lockdown. We were listening to the news while watching our 4 children play outside on the water slide. Fear, worry and sadness fell over me. I was so afraid what the coming days would bring. How would we feed our 4 kids? How would our bills get paid? This was a nightmare! It was an emotional day.

Fortunately for us, that evening, we found out that Food Trucks were considered 'Essential' workers. (Although less.) We would be able to continue to provide for our children. Although we were relieved, I couldn't shake the earlier feelings of fear, worry and sadness. I knew that my friends and family didn't fall into the same 'essential' category as we did. Without any doubt, Devin and I knew that we needed to step up in an effective way. After numerous phone calls, we were set to serve free keiki meals at a county site (Waiehu Golf Course). We served 250 meals on our first keiki meal drive thru. It was a blessed day. Since that day, we have served over 10,000 free meals to children.

March 25th, 2021 marks 1 year of free keiki meals! We are so excited. We serve free meals to children every day we are open. Our biggest keiki meal pickups are on Sundays at Maui Sunday Market. We love seeing the same families come by. We have made so many wonderful friends over the past year. In addition to free keiki meals, we have also:

- Hosted a keiki drive thru carnival
- Organized multiple food supply pickups
- Held a school supply drive
- Hosted an Easter Egg coloring Contest for children
- Hosted a Christmas drive by with goodie bags and snacks

Even though this past year hasn't been an extremely profitable year for us, this past year has still brought us an incredible amount of joy. Our two older children (9 and 8) have been distance learning so we have had the privilege (most days, hehe) to have all 4 children home with us. In addition to textbook learning, we have been able to teach them life skills and other important things in life, especially about how to treat others.

Making free meals has been a family affair. All four children find special ways to help contribute to our efforts (no food contact). The best days are when our children can come with us to serve these meals! Our children's favorite part is when they get to see their friends/classmates.

This past year has been an incredible journey for Pastele House & the Pagaduan family. As more people start to 'get back on their feet' and recover from a difficult year of COVID, we vow to continue to be there for our community. We hope that we are able to continue to give free meals to our island keiki for as long as free meals are needed.