



## King's Hawaiian Brings the Aloha Spirit to Georgia

### WHO IS KING'S HAWAIIAN?

Founded more than 60 years ago in Hilo, Hawaii, by Robert R. Taira, King's Hawaiian makes the No. 1 branded dinner roll in the United States. The company is a family-owned and operated business that has been dedicated to making original-recipe Hawaiian foods made with the "Aloha Spirit" for three generations. King's Hawaiian is headquartered in Torrance, California and has baking facilities in Torrance and in Oakwood, Georgia.

King's Hawaiian aims to share the Hawaiian Way! A uniquely Hawaiian approach to hospitality based on graciousness, generosity, and a commitment to making everyone feel a part of King's Hawaiian Ohana's extended family.

### THE STORY

In the 1940s, the Taira family immigrated from Okinawa Island, Japan to Hilo, Hawaii to work on a sugar plantation. Their son Robert, who had an entrepreneurial spirit and a passion for cooking, decided to enroll in baking school and opened his own bakeshop in 1950, simply called "Robert's Bakery."

The bakery was a success and instantly became known for its signature Hawaiian sweet bread and generous hospitality. In the mid-1970s, Robert decided to commercialize his bread and took his product to the mainland, opening a headquarters in southern California. This is where King's Hawaiian was born.

In 2010, the company decided to spread their Aloha Spirit further and began a multi-state search to find another location for longterm growth. "We ultimately selected Georgia for our East Coast operations because of its pro-business environment - its infrastructure, workforce and reasonable regulations - as well as its existing ecosystem of food processing companies," said Dan Raatjes, Vice President of Operations.

Dan joined the King's Hawaiian family in 2012 and is responsible for the company's manufacturing operations. About a year ago, he relocated his family to Flowery Branch, right down the street from the facility.

### Company:

King's Hawaiian

### Industry:

Food Processing

### What Georgia provided King's Hawaiian:

- State and local assistance in locating East Coast operations in 2010
- State and local assistance in expanding Georgia operations in 2014
- Georgia Quick Start, the nation's No. 1 workforce training program, developed a customized training curriculum for their employees at no extra cost
- Partnerships with leading colleges and universities:
  - apprenticeship program at Lanier Tech
  - manufacturing and robotics expertise at Georgia Tech
  - food science program at the University of Georgia
- Access to a vast and qualified talent pool

### Awards:

- Large Manufacturer of the Year, State of Georgia, 2017



It wasn't long before they doubled their capacity and needed to add another production facility. After considering other states, King's Hawaiian opted to stay within Georgia and build an equally sized 150,000 square foot facility right next door to the existing facility. The company's operations in Georgia produce 70 percent of all King's Hawaiian bread and employ nearly 600 people.

The company sells their rolls in grocery stores nationwide from Kroger to Costco, and has a household penetration of 25 percent. In the fall of 2017, they will venture into the international market for the first time by exporting to Chile, and will open a fourth production line by spring 2018.

King's Hawaiian enjoys an incredible customer loyalty and is seeing more opportunities to spread the Aloha Spirit - from partnerships with the NFL's Atlanta Falcons and MLB's Boston Red Sox to appearing in the 2016 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, sponsoring Good Morning America's summer 2016 concert series, and debuting their first Super Bowl commercial in February 2017.

They also look for opportunities to give back to the community, partnering with Habitat for Humanity to build a home for an employee (a practice they hope to repeat annually) and hiring work-relief prisoners through Hall County's REACT program. "The people in the South get this concept of the 'Aloha Spirit' because the behaviors are very similar to Southern hospitality. That was a huge benefit - to have access to a workforce that is not only talented but understands hospitality, kindness and graciousness," said Dan.

Now who says Hawaiian food doesn't pair well with a Southern accent?

### HOW GEORGIA HELPED

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