

Think pineapple and Hawaii probably comes to mind. Which is why it might be surprising to learn that though the 50th state led pineapple production in the 1960's, Hawaii doesn't even rank in the top ten global producers now. But Lisa and Craig Bowden have a plan to change all that.

They have a tiny company, less than 20 employees and their business [Hawaiian Crown](#) is the last and only family-owned commercial pineapple farm in the state. But what Hawaiian Crown lacks in size, it more than makes up for in spirit. Even though Lisa and Craig may be outgunned by produce giants, they have still managed to invest more than \$3 million and 20 years of research and development.

"Pineapple has a very special place in Hawaii as a symbol of hospitality," says Craig Bowden. Yet, quality and quantity has "declined relative to cheaper, lower cost sources around the world."

Disappointed in the fruit they found in supermarkets, which they say is a product of outsourcing and mass farming methods, the Bowdens, along with a childhood friend, developed their own variety: a low-acid, golden colored pineapple that's a throw back to their youth — and it's stimulating a resurgence of the popular fruit.

"Our competitors, the big guys, tend to harvest the entire field whether it's ripe or not," says Lisa Bowden. "We wait until the fruit is ready. We're picking only what's ripe as we go along."

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The Bowdens sell to supermarkets and directly to consumers at a local green market every weekend.

"This year we expect to grow over a million and a half pounds of pineapple," says Craig Bowden. "From the moment you put those plants in the ground to the time you harvest, it's 18-20 months."

Because the company operates with a lean staff, efficiency and innovation are essential. Hawaiian Crown has developed techniques for farming and systems for harvesting and packing that allow them to keep costs low and quality at a premium.

Additionally, value added products are leading the company's expansion efforts.

"Any blemish on a whole product would be graded out and that would go basically to waste so you're looking at 40 to 50 percent of the product in order to make money," says Craig Bowden. "We found ways to put it into fresh cut, dry and juice. Those things have a much better margin than the whole product itself."

That means chocolate-dipped pineapple sections, dried fruit, trail mix and similarly packaged products. Hawaiian Crown is also expanding with a stand-alone shop in Waikiki, allowing tourists to purchase authentic Made-in-Hawaii products to take home.

The idea for a shop came from an unlikely influence: the Bowden's teenage daughter, Marisa, who plays an active role in the company — something her parents hope will continue for the next generation.

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"Like all parents, we're looking to build a future and help our daughter be successful in her life," says Craig Bowden. "We have worked very hard to create an asset that would be something that would carry on with or without us."

Tory Johnson hosts My Family Business, a Yahoo! Finance original series. As a champion for small business owners, she runs [Spark & Hustle](#), appears weekly on [ABC's Good Morning America](#) and will gladly talk to you anytime@[ToryJohnson](#) on Twitter or [Facebook.com/Tory](#).