



*Becky Winters & Ed Fernandez*

## SAFEFOOD SOLUTIONS, INC. ED FERNANDEZ

Becky Winters has salmonella all over her hands! It's a good thing she has a nationally Registered Environmental Health Specialist in her office. Ed Fernandez is the owner, operator and sole employee of SafeFood Solutions, Inc. Between being a small business owner, working a part time job for the state and substitute teaching, he must have some incredible time management skills.

Ed previously worked for a Health Department in New Jersey and in Quality Assurance for a supermarket chain. When Ed's fiancé got a job teaching at an elementary school on the West side of the Big Island, he knew that he wanted to extend his food safety knowledge to Hawai'i. "Having worked in Quality Assurance, I saw firsthand the value of having food safety programs in place to protect the livelihood of businesses." Many states have mandatory food safety certification requirements. Although Hawai'i does not have this requirement yet, it doesn't diminish the importance of having a food safety program. "I want to prepare businesses for future change."



*Ed showing Becky the ServSafe curriculum*

Prior to moving, his ideas were already flowing. The only problem he had was in knowing how to proceed with opening his own business. Ed heard about the Hawai'i SBDC Network through a pamphlet he received from the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. He immediately contacted Becky Winters, West Hawai'i Center Director and the two set off on a mission to make his business a success. "Ed came in here wanting to start his own business, he has never been in business before and he needed guidance." Becky said. When asked what type of assistance Becky was able to provide him, Ed answered "Becky provided great suggestions. She pointed me in the right direction to start a successful business. She provided shortcuts and information on ways to avoid over spending. The SBDC has been a huge benefit, especially since I came into as a novice." Becky and Ed continued to write a business plan and also worked

steadily on marketing ideas.

Ed's business currently offers food safety audits to maintain compliance with state regulations and food codes. His approach to the audits is a proactive one, in which he identifies potential violations before citations, foodborne illnesses and lawsuits occur. Although it might sound like overkill, the idea is brilliant. Having routine audits can greatly reduce a restaurant's liability risk.

Ed also teaches ServSafe Food Safety classes. ServSafe is the largest food certification program available and has over 1.5 million people certified. Ed is currently offering these classes on each island throughout the state. Last year, Ed attended the Hawai'i Lodging, Hospitality & Foodservice Expo in Honolulu as a visitor, walking through the trade show, passing out his card. This year, he has been asked to provide a two day ServeSafe seminar at the expo.

These are huge accomplishments considering he only began his business fifteen months ago, and was only serving only Kailua-Kona. From Kona, he went island wide and now has taken off statewide.

Ed will admit that things have been stressful, but also says that he has thoroughly enjoyed each step that has brought him closer to his aspiration. According to Becky she has no doubt in Ed's ability. "Ed's business will grow. He is sticking to it and not giving up. He has come a long way, he's truly a success." I couldn't agree more. Now, go wash your hands, Becky.



*Becky & Ed providing a demonstration on clean hands*