

# HAWAII KAI SALTS NANCY GOVE

Nancy Gove is one of the most fascinating people I have ever met. Just watching her enthusiasm would be enough for anyone to fall in love with salt. Nancy owns Hawaii Kai Salts, located on Moloka'i. Her production site is on picturesque land, right on the beach, overlooking the harbor of Moloka'i. The serenity that fills the dark wood A-frame house, which serves as her commercial kitchen and retail store, is unmistakable.



*Nancy Gove & David Fisher*

Nancy's business venture began in the ocean, as she paddled the channel for years. She would lick the salt from the ocean off her body and realized that the salt in the ocean was an untapped treasure. Her thirst for knowledge took off at that point. She wanted to learn everything she could about salt and the processes associated with making it. Not only did she want to make salt that could be culturally linked to Hawai'i, but she wanted to do it in a fashion that replicates how it comes from nature.

With her now extensive knowledge based on salt production, Nancy applied and received a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant for \$70,000 and a matching funds award of \$25,000 from the High Technology Development Center (HTDC). This was no small feat, as the odds in receiving the grant are very slim, and this was the first one to be awarded to a business on Moloka'i. Phase I was focused on technical feasibility. The focus of this grant was specific to five locations on Moloka'i, each producing salt with an open pan evaporation method. Her process is a fascinating one, one that I am sure most people take for granted, I know I did. She collects water from the ocean, which is then filtered into bottled water standards required by the FDA and placed into large drying bins that rely on direct solar heat to evaporate the water and leave the salts. The salt is then collected and placed in a drying house.



*Nancy & David in front of her store & drying bins*

Nancy met David Fisher, Maui SBDC Center Director at an SBIR workshop. They then met up again when Nancy decided she would apply for the Phase II SBIR grant, which would focus on commercialization. Jointly, they came up with a draft. David then focused on working closely with the Hawai'i Business Research Library to provide more detail on markets previously identified in Phase I. David was also a valuable asset in helping to quantify production capacity in order to estimate the economic impact of the proposed project, which then allowed them to calculate short and long term economic impacts. Nancy was awarded a Phase II SBIR \$300,000 grant as a result of this proposal. Nancy characterizes her experience with the Hawai'i SBDC Network as "a good [business owners'] contact for receiving the confidence to move forward."

Salt has thousands of uses in this world. Food grade salt only accounts for 5% of the salt market. Around the world salt is also known as "white gold". Hawai'i Kai Salts is capitalizing on the capacity to make salt year round when most of the world has one salt season. Nancy Gove knows what she is doing.