

11. Central Market: The Heart of Honiara

Solomon Islanders have always traded commodities at regular markets and Honiara needed a local food supply. The two needs came together in the establishment of Honiara's Central Market. After the Second World War, the Department of Agriculture established experimental farms at Ilu and Kukum, and distributed root crop stock and vegetable seeds to surrounding villagers—sweet potato, yams, taro, corn, shallots, water melon, pumpkin, tomatoes and beans. The first Solomon Islanders to sell produce in Honiara were door-to-door hawkers who arrived in about 1947. They established contacts with labourers employed in the town and began selling root crops. Once they understood urban market requirements, the villagers added bananas, pineapples, citrus fruit, the new vegetables, and varieties of Chinese cabbage and watercress to their cultivation.

In the 1950s, people from the Gela Group, Malaita, and further away areas on Guadalcanal also began to travel to Honiara to market their produce. Fish and vegetable markets were established at the District headquarters in 1952. Eventually, Central Market was begun close to its present site, equidistant from Port Cruz and Chinatown. The present building was constructed with the assistance of Japanese funding in 1996. Many Solomon Islanders visit the market every day to obtain fruit, vegetables, fish and poultry. Flowers and jewellery and shell wealth items are also available. It is a meeting place for the diverse ethnic communities. Central Market is one of two markets operated by the Honiara City Council; the other one is at Kukum. There are also many smaller markets and road side stalls spread through the suburbs. They are a focus for women's commercial activities and empowerment.



11.1. Central Market, 2015. The market is the heart of Honiara. It now operates every day, supplying fresh fruit and vegetables for the population. (Clive Moore Collection)



11.2. Selling coconuts, 'Kong Kong' taro, sweet potato, pineapples, pumpkin, local taro, cooking bananas, and yams, Central Market, 2005. (Clive Moore Collection)



11.3. Flower-sellers at Central Market, 2005. (Clive Moore Collection)



11.4. Bananas, peanuts, young coconuts, lady finger bananas, cucumbers, water grass, mandarins, pumpkins, ngali nuts, and bottled water on sale, 2014. (Christopher Chevalier Collection)



11.5. Watermelons for sale, 2014. (Christopher Chevalier Collection)



11.6. Coconut oil on sale, flavoured with sweet-smelling flowers, 2014. (Christopher Chevalier Collection)



11.7. Malaitan shell valuables in their original forms and as modern necklaces, 2014. (Christopher Chevalier Collection)