



Top Maui Restaurants 2008

From Thrifty to Four Star

Indispensable Advice from Experts
Who Live, Play & Eat on Maui

by James Jacobson
& Molly Jacobson

Praise for Top Maui Restaurants

“We just got home on Friday from an amazing week in Maui and I wanted to tell you that we only ate at restaurants listed in your guide! It was so great because they came with a little ‘assurance’ that we were not going to be scammed! Your info was invaluable to us and I will definitely hold onto it and make sure I tell everyone I know who is going to Maui to get the newest version. Thanks again for making our trip a wonderful dining experience!”

—Jeani Adams, Anaheim, CA

“Mahalo for your great guide! We’ve just returned from our fifth trip to the island in five years, and we used our guide for the first time on this trip. What a great time and money saver! It was nice to have some information about places that weren’t there last year (Fred’s), and places we’ve been by in the past and hadn’t tried before (Joe’s). This guide is worth every penny, and I bet you guys have a lot of fun researching it. Let me know if you need a helper - I come from a long line of good eaters!”

—Samantha Mar, Seattle, WA

“Wonderful guide!!! One of the highlights of our trip was trying an Ono sandwich at the Fish House in Pa’ia. Delicious – and I would not have found it otherwise. Thanks so much. I’m planning a trip next January so I’ll update as the date gets closer. Wouldn’t leave home without it!”

—Dorothy Rivett, Lincoln, NE

“Just wanted to let you know that I’ve been to Maui over 20 times and this is the first time I’ve bought the guide. It is excellent! I’m recommending it to my friends here and on the mainland.”

—Mike Dinstell, Moraga, CA

Introduction

A Magical Meal on Maui

“I don’t ‘like’ food. I *love* food. If I don’t *love* it, I ***don’t swallow.***”
- *Ego, Restaurant Critic, Ratatouille*

This book is born of desperate necessity and soul-searing, passionate love. It has taken two years to write, decades to research, and was inspired by a glorious Maui sunset and an unforgettable meal.

The story is so magical and romantic you might not believe it. Even my own mother can hardly believe it happened to me. But everything I’m about to tell you is true. And it could not have happened anyplace else on earth but Maui.

Two years ago Jim and I met on a beach on Maui. With our first glance we were catapulted into an intense love affair. We each gasped a little in recognition of our connection; it felt downright mystical. Our hands took the initiative and reached for each other. As they intertwined for the first time, Jim murmured “Where have you been all my life?” (Yes, he really said that.)

I couldn’t answer. I could only stare, a wide-eyed child, then look away at the sky above his head still streaked with my first Maui sunset. The first quarter moon was already bright and two stars popped out as his eyes twinkled.

He asked, “Are you hungry?”

I nodded, my head heavy on my suddenly weak neck. I *was* hungry. I was also struck dumb and a little dizzy. My arms tingled just above the wrist. Was my circulation cut off? But he persisted: “Do you like sushi?”

This snapped me out of my moonstruck state. My head cleared and I

spoke crisply, “No, I don’t. I *love* sushi. But I have to warn you, I think most of what passes for sushi shouldn’t be fed to a stray cat.”

Jim smiled and drew me to his side. We turned and faced the distant island of Lana’i, arms wrapped around each other, pulling our quickly beating hearts close together. Watching the sky shift from pink to indigo to velvet, he said, “That’s my girl. I knew you’d drift in someday.” The waves crashed louder and louder until they were all I heard.

When time started again, Jim took me to my first Maui restaurant.

Following the petite hostess in her silk kimono through a large, lusciously draped room filled with long-haired beauties and a piano player pouring honey-sweet music all over the floor was like walking into my most private dream. We were seated at a table along the rail on the wraparound lanai (porch). Two waiters immediately hustled away for our drinks.

We toasted each other, tinkling our white porcelain cups brimming with warm sake. The miso arrived and we drank the deep, rich, hearty broth straight from the bowl. We told our life stories and held hands in between plates of fish and bowls of rice. Our fingers and our chopsticks cradled the tender pink and yellow and white morsels before delivering them to our tongues, where they quivered a little before giving up their sweet ocean flavors.

Every once in a while I pinched my thigh beneath my napkin. Was this really happening?

We stayed until the pianist had retired, other diners had departed, and the lights were dimmed. As they cleaned and stacked and cleared, the servers brought us cool water, tiny coconut creams, and refreshing green tea, assuring us that we should stay until we were ready to go. It was clear to all of us that magic was happening, and no one wanted to interrupt it.

On the drive back to the beach, heavy perfume from plumeria trees lining Wailea Ike Drive rushed through the open windows. I asked Jim “Is this heaven?”

He smiled and said “I think so.” I had never felt so content, relaxed, and beautiful.

After we parted for the night, I called my girlfriends back on the east coast and woke them up one by one. As I giggled and swooned and stammered my

Top Fish & Chips

ALEXANDER'S FISH & CHIPS

Ambience: 11 *Food:* 17

Service: 13 *Value:* 20

Overall: 61

The fish and chips meal at this ultra-casual Maui landmark isn't just the best on the island. We think it's the best we've ever had (and one of us is from Boston). At only \$7.95, it's a bargain.

At the Kihei location, across from the giant whale in Kalama Park, you'll find a steady stream of families, locals, and very friendly sparrows just waiting for a fumbling finger to drop a piece of luscious, tender fish. Why all the fuss for a takeout window and outdoor seating? The super-secret batter recipe and delicious, freshly made sauces make everything taste "ono" (Hawaiian for delicious).

They cut their fresh fish on site, including mahi-mahi, ono, and of course, ahi. They dredge, dip, and deep-fry everything to your order. Minutes later a plastic basket arrives overflowing with steaming, succulent fish, fries and slaw on the side.

If you're cautious about deep-fried food, anything on the menu can be prepared under the broiler. You can also have calamari, shrimp, oysters, and chicken, all for less than \$11. And if you like ribs, try theirs – many locals like them best of all – with the tangy, sweet secret sauce.

It doesn't get better than this for an inexpensive vacation lunch or dinner. Alexander's is a must-visit while you're here, and don't feel bad if you eat here more than once.

Hours: Monday-Saturday 10:30am-9pm; Sunday 10:30am-6pm

Meals: Lunch, Dinner **Cost:** \$9-12 **Known for:** Seafood, Chicken, Ribs

Kid-Friendly: Yes **Credit Cards:** VS, MC

Location: South Maui, Kihei 1913 S. Kihei Rd. **808-874-0788**
How to Find: In Kalama Village, across from the giant whale statue
in Kalama Park. **Parking:** Kalama Village parking lot

Location: Central Maui, Lahaina
Queen Ka'ahumanu Mall Food Court **808-877-5566**
How to Find: The mall is at Kahului Beach Rd. and Kaahumanu Ave.,
anchored by Sears and Macys. **Parking:** Mall parking lot

ANTONIO'S

Ambience: 16 **Food:** 18

Service: 17 **Value:** 16

Overall: 67

Our grandmothers were wonderful creative home cooks and we wouldn't trade them for the world. We would, however, like to adopt the Nonna mentioned on Antonio's menu as our own. Billed as the creator of delicious, well-balanced red sauces, homemade ravioli to die for and Tiramisu that lives up to its original meaning of "carry me up" (to heaven), she must have had it going on. We don't at all mind leaving palm trees behind and stepping into this haven for spicy, comforting, homemade Sicilian.

With a new owner/chef plying the original's tried and true recipes, things have improved markedly in the last year.

The menu is traditional and nods to the many vegetarian locals by pointing out the eligible dishes in the sidebar. With burgers and sandwiches at lunch, pasta anytime, and plenty of entrees at dinner, plus salads and anti-pasti, anyone can find something to eat here.

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Daily specials usually feature a fish, chicken, or steak dish. Recent winners included chicken and artichoke heart pasta in cream sauce, as well as scampi prepared with mussels, shrimp, and clams.

There may be no greater culinary crime than overcooked, stiff calamari that greases your gullet as it slides down. Nonna wouldn't do that to you – the calamari is very good – tender and lightly battered, and the accompanying marinara is just spicy enough to offset the sweet taste of the fish.

The homemade *salsiccia* (sausage) is fantastic. The pasta entrée features their tender, flavorful version over your choice of penne or spaghetti, garnished with green peppers, red peppers, onion, garlic, and a delicious chunky tomato sauce. The hearty portion is served in a deep round bowl with a wide lip, and the bottom shows itself way too soon.

The *ravioli con verdura* is gorgeous homemade pasta stuffed with spinach, garlic, onions, and Gorgonzola and ricotta cheeses. It comes with your choice of tomato, cream, or pink sauces. Go for the creamy pink tomato vodka sauce, a perfect blend of rich cream and acidic tomato.

If you're in the mood for *osso bucco*, this is a good bet. By far the most expensive dish, you'll find the veal tender, the sauce intensely flavored, and the risotto nicely done.

The wine list is adequate, and there are two Italian beers on the menu. If they had a bring-your-own-bottle policy, we would consider this the perfect restaurant. (Long's next door is the best place to buy wine on Maui.)

End your meal with the delicately layered and artfully flavored Tiramisu, and you will be well-prepared to step back out into tropical paradise, ready to take a long walk on a moonlit beach and begin digestion.

Hours: Tuesday-Sunday 11:30am-2pm; Daily for dinner 5-9pm

Meals: Lunch, Dinner **Cost:** \$9-30 for dinner

Known for: Italian **Kid-Friendly:** Yes **Alcohol:** Yes, wine and beer

Reservations: Recommended **Credit Cards:** VS, MC

Location: South Maui, Kihei 1215 S. Kihei Rd. **808-875-8800**

How to Find: in the corner of the Long's Shopping Plaza, next to the Birkenstock store. **Parking:** Shopping center parking lot