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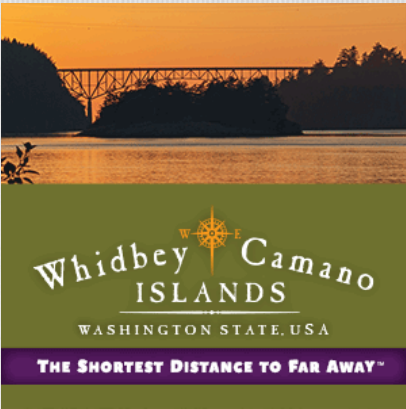
Seafood Tasting at Restaurants on Kauai’s South Shore

To prepare for our recent trip to Kauai, I researched online and prepared a list of notable restaurants offering seafood options along with nutrient-dense appetizers and side dishes. After Ira was diagnosed last summer with glioblastoma*, incurable brain cancer, we made significant modifications to our daily life. An emphasis was placed on eating homemade plant-based foods along with fresh fish options. We simultaneously eliminated cane sugar and processed foods. Our dietary changes, increased activity levels, and positive mindsets helped Ira cope with his brain surgery, radiation, and chemo treatments. Our travel schedule was more affected by COVID restrictions and concerns than by Ira’s cancer.

When getting ready for six previous trips to the Hawaiian Islands, it wasn’t necessary to book reservations in advance of our arrival. However, as a result of the pandemic, it is essential to plan Kauai restaurant choices long



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before your departure. Some restaurants have limited hours while others are not open every day. By the time I learned these important facts, some of our first choices were no longer available and we were unable to locate a restaurant with availability for our special occasion, our 46th wedding anniversary. Our hotel's concierge eventually found a place to eat with a late start time.

Flexibility with our daily activity schedule became the norm so we could accommodate our dining times. When our reservation coincided with the restaurant's opening time, we were surprised to see that the dining rooms were packed with people – others had had thought to schedule early too. We tasted delicious local seafood prepared in a variety of ways. And found a great place to rehydrate and reenergize after our lengthy jungle hikes. Menus can only tell part of the story. Sometimes it's useful to hear the experiences of others, like us, and to visualize some food choices you may find.



The view from the Ko'a Kea Hotel and Resort.

Seafood Restaurants in Kauai: RED SALT

This award-winning restaurant, voted the #1 restaurant in Kauai by *Honolulu Magazine*, is in the [Ko'a Kea Hotel & Resort](#). Unfortunately, the hotel's website does not inform guests that the restaurant is closed for dinner on Sunday and Mondays and that room service on those days only serves the lunch bar menu. I learned that the restaurant was closed on those two days when I called to make dinner reservations. Until we tried to order room service on Monday night, we were unaware of this additional limitation.

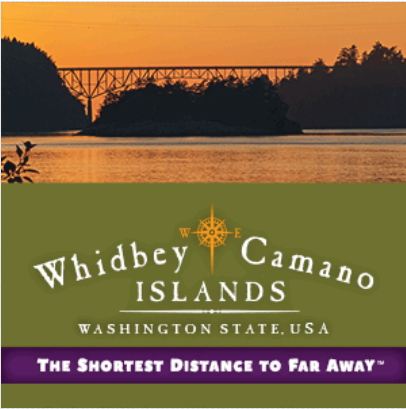


Breakfast

Our hotel reservation included a credit for breakfast. Each morning, we were greeted by a friendly and attentive waitstaff. The restaurant’s quick service enabled us to get early starts for our lengthy hikes. Our menu choices included an acai bowl, avocado toast, vegetable omelets, and lobster benedict with a scrambled egg substitute. For just a few dollars more than an omelet, the lobster benedict is a hearty and delicious option. On some mornings, it was hard to resist sharing a fresh fruit plate. Fresh baked muffins were served along with our beverages.

Dinner

With a mid-afternoon arrival, I knew our first evening may be chaotic. I reserved a spot in advance of arrival at this restaurant. We were introduced to local produce with a colorful Kailani Farms Green Salad. This nutrient-dense option was garnished with strawberries, toasted pistachio nuts, and shaved red onions, and topped with a sherry vinaigrette. Our dinners showcased two of Chef Planas’ popular seafood options. I tasted Hawaiian butterfish for the first time. This tasty entrée had been marinated in a miso sauce and included cauliflower rice, Japanese green beans, edamame, and a black bean chili glaze. My husband, Ira, preferred the Madagascar vanilla bean seared mahi dish served with forbidden black rice, avocado ginger salsa and topped with a mango vinaigrette.



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Butterfish with Miso Sauce from Red Salt.

Later in the week, we returned for an encore dinner. After hiking all day, we shared the tempura ahi roll created with sashimi grade ahi, tobiko, asparagus, and soy wasabi butter. The tempura coating was light, and it was impossible to detect any oil. Due to a shortage of fish selections, we were offered the Hawaiian butterfish served with the customary flavorings for the mahi entrée. Once again, we left the table fully satisfied.

Pool Bar

One afternoon, we stopped at the pool bar for an afternoon snack. We selected a Hawaiian favorite, a poke bowl with ahi tuna, rice, avocado, cucumber, wasabi aioli and sweet soy. Luckily, we decided to share one and not order two. This protein dense entrée kept our appetites in check while we waited for our late dinner reservation.

Room Service

When we learned that the dinner menu was not available, we had to be flexible. Our selections included a bowl of edamame and two orders of seared blackened ahi with buckwheat soba noodles in a ginger sesame soy sauce. Fortunately, the customer service representative was willing to include two simple salads so that we could have a nutrient-dense meal.



Blackened Ahi Tuna with Soba Noodles from room service.

Hungry for more? Try a food truck in Kauai.

Seafood Restaurants in Kauai: THE PLANTATION HOUSE BY GAYLORD’S

The restaurant is inside a mega-sized manor home built in the 1930s located on the grounds of a former plantation dating back to the latter part of the 19th century. In addition to dining at **Gaylords**, visitors can roam through the house to learn tidbits of history, participate in a luau on the grounds, visit an onsite rum distillery, take a narrated train tour or enjoy a nature walk adventure.

After being seated along the edge of a sunny courtyard, we continued to enjoy fresh Hawaiian fish as we ordered the seared blackened blue ahi appetizer with sliced pickled onions and bok choy drizzled with a Chinese mustard crème fraiche ikura and unagi sauce. Our server highly suggested the pan roasted monchong entrée, the fresh

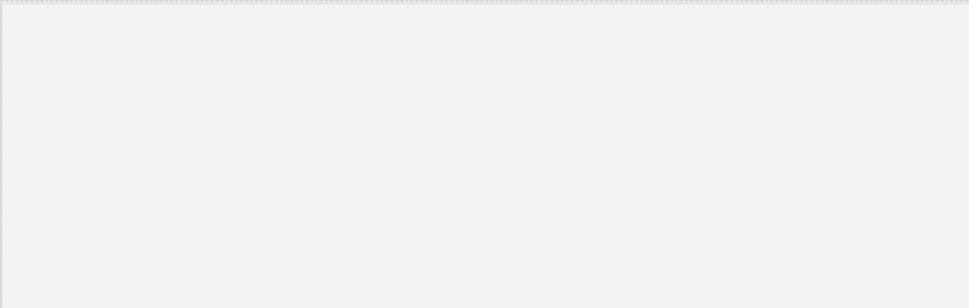
catch of the day. The whipped Okinawan purple sweet potatoes, ikura, and baby bok choy were delicious. Ira had the seafood trio highlighting pan roasted sea scallops, shrimp, and monchong with an assortment of local vegetables and coconut ikura risotto.



Pan-roasted Mongchong with whipped Okinawan purple sweet potatoes.

Restaurants in Kauai: KAUAI JUICE COMPANY (3 locations- Kilauea, Poipu, Kapaa)

After exhilarating hikes, our bodies needed to be replenished by more than water. We found this storefront to be the perfect place to refuel. In addition to a small selection of healthy grab-and-go foods packaged in glass jars, we could choose from a large variety of potent drinks that included veggie blends, deep greens, hydrating mixtures, tropic drinks, caffeine powered options, hand pressed nut milks, kombucha, bone broths, and elixirs.





Ira (right) and others, at the Kauai Juice Company.

Hungry for more? Learn about cheesemaking in Hawaii.

Seafood Restaurants in Kauai: BRENNECKE’S BEACH BOILER

Brennecke’s is just steps away from the Poipu Public Beach’s adjacent park. The restaurant’s second floor dining room is often cited for its wonderful views. Even though we had a reservation, we had to wait to be seated in the warm bar area. Fortunately, the sun was setting so we could take advantage of the cooling breezes coming through the open windows.

The stellar online reviews were not in sync with what we experienced. The tempura roll was oily, and the macadamia nut crusted marlin with roasted vegetables and lemongrass infused rice was nothing special.

Seafood Restaurants in Kauai: COCONUT’S FISH CAFÉ (1 KAUAI LOCATION, 3 IN MAUI, 1 IN CALIFORNIA, 2 IN ARIZONA)

After spending hours hiking The Sleeping Giant Trail, we were hungry. I had planned to stop at Russell’s By Eat Healthy Kauai. Disappointingly, I didn’t see at the bottom of their website that the restaurant was not open on Sundays or Mondays. A quick internet search came up with an alternative restaurant.

Our **Coconut Fish Café** entrees were swiftly delivered to our table outside. I had a mixed green salad with a piece of mahi and two grilled shrimp. A papaya dressing complemented this tropical lunch. Ira chose a seared ahi entrée seasoned with a spicy wasabi sauce served local style with brown rice, tomatoes, and coleslaw.



Coconut fish over salad at Coconut Fish Café.

Seafood Restaurants in Kauai: BEACH HOUSE RESTAURANT

Our evening flight home necessitated an early dinner. When we arrived at 3:45pm, this popular restaurant had people waiting outside the front door and others were sitting on lawn chairs in the back of the restaurant. Beautiful views of the coastline and surfers are possible from the outdoor seating as well as from most of the tables inside. With an emphasis on locally-sourced fish and ingredients, I was looking forward to an upscale meal supervised by executive chef Marshall Blanchard, a Culinary Institute of America graduate.

The handcrafted poke tacos were superb. The crisp wonton shells were filled with ahi, ginger, shoyu, cabbage, and avocado crème. In retrospect, we should have each ordered a starter and not shared the order of three tacos.



Poke tacos from Beach House.

Our macadamia nut butter sauteed fresh marlin, the fresh catch, was placed on top of a mound of cilantro sesame rice and a splash of citrus miso beurre blanc sauce. A small portion of bok choy and lawai oyster mushrooms was hidden under the fish. (See a picture of this entree in the featured image of this article).

With a long flight ahead and limited food service at the small Lihue Airport, we placed a carryout order for slow-roasted local beets. This hearty vegetarian entrée showcased a tomato cilantro salad, local roasted butternut squash, wilted arugula, and tempura broccoli. Everything withstood the wait time except for the tempura that had become slightly soggy. It was great to have something healthy to eat as we headed back to Colorado.

To plan your own visit to Kauai, start [here](#).

— Story by Sandy Bornstein. Photos by The Traveling Bornsteins.

** After U.S. Senator John McCain passed away from glioblastoma in 2018, a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators sponsored a bill to set aside a day in July to raise awareness for the research and treatment of glioblastoma, a deadly and rare disease with a median survival of 15 months. Earlier this year, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed the bill. This year, Glioblastoma Awareness Day will occur on Wednesday, July 21.*

The Traveling Bornsteins appreciate every day that Ira remains active and can travel. On Glioblastoma Awareness Day we publicly thank Dr. Kevin Lillehei, Dr. Douglas Ney,

and Dr. Chad Rusthoven at the Anschutz Medical Campus in Colorado and Dr. David Reardon at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Massachusetts for their compassionate care and expertise in treating glioblastoma. #GBMDay

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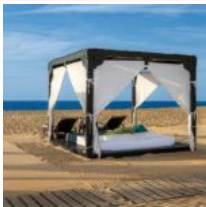
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Author: Sandy Bornstein

Sandy has visited more than 40 countries and lived as an international teacher in Bangalore, India. Sandy’s award-winning book, May This Be the Best Year of Your Life, is a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Sandy writes about food, family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences, historical sites, and Jewish culture and history. You can follow Sandy on Facebook and Instagram.

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