

A Taste of the Islands on Menus at Aulani

KO OLINA, Hawaii – Hawaii is a melting pot of cuisines – tastes of home brought to the islands by immigrants from China, Portugal, Germany, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan. Mix all of those sunny tastes and you get Hawaii’s multicultural fare.

“At Aulani, we’re showcasing the abundant produce, the fresh seafood, the classic tastes of Hawaii,” said Executive Chef Patrick Callarac. “From simple plate lunches that are a typical part of the cuisine to local whole salt-crusted fish for two cracked open tableside, dining is a big part of the Aulani story.”

‘AMA’AMA – Contemporary Island Cooking

Inspired by a beachside house, ‘AMA’AMA—Contemporary Island Cooking is a stylish open-air restaurant just steps from the ocean.

The entryway is framed with a design inspired by the ancient fish traps still used by local fishermen, opening into the spacious dining room with a thatched roof, walls of mosaic, rough stone, or painted in cool shades of blue reminiscent of the waves of the ocean. A concrete fountain and reflecting pool are the restaurant’s fishing-themed focal point.

“‘AMA’AMA is a fish abundant in these waters, a local favorite,” said Callarac. “This restaurant, open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner, is right on the ocean, an attraction in itself.”

For breakfast, you can go for simple bacon and eggs or waffles, but the menu takes you to the Pacific Rim with dishes such as seared island fish, tamago, miso soup, steamed rice, fried seaweed and pickled vegetables; sweet potato and Portuguese sausage hash with poached eggs and marinated hearts of palm; or the traditional “Loco Moco” breakfast with a sunny-side-up fried egg, white rice and hamburger patty topped with gravy. The signature breakfast dish is chocolate milk-dipped *haupia* (how-pee-YAH) bread French toast stuffed with bananas and peanut butter. (*Haupia* is a traditional coconut-milk based sweet pudding.) And 100 percent Kona press pot coffee is the favorite morning beverage.

Lunch features American favorites with a twist: an Angus chuck burger with avocado, shaved radish, and Maui onion-tomato jam; Kōlua roasted pulled pork sandwich in steamed rice buns; crab and lobster rolls with wasabi mayo and cucumber; and sustainable catch fish tacos with slaw and salsa.

At dinner, sustainable fish roasted in the wood-burning oven is a signature entrée, as well as whole, salt-crusted catch for two, cracked open tableside. “The salt seals in moisture and flavors, and the fish steams without drying – and makes a dramatic presentation,” said Callarac.

Signature starter is a bigeye tuna and sea asparagus poke “martini,” also finished tableside. Other small bites include steamed manilla clams with smoked pork belly, lemongrass and espelette pepper; Hamakua mushroom tart with baby arugula, coriander crème fraîche and Parmesan; grilled jumbo shrimp with hearts of palm; and an apple banana and Maui onion soup au gratin.

Main dishes range from a seafood stew with lotus root, vadouvan (French curry), herb aioli and croutons to a grilled New York strip with creamed Swiss chard, soufflé potatoes and poivrade sauce. Of course, grilled lobster (from a farm on the Big Island) is on the menu, served with vanilla sauce and a Korean pancake. For vegetarians, there’s goat cheese ravioli with local baby vegetable stew.

A daily, four-course, prix fixe showcases cuisines from around the globe, such as the “Japanese Influence” with Peking duck salad with scallion pancake, miso-glazed shutome (swordfish) with jasmine rice and mochi ice cream

with green tea cookies. Other prix fixe menus include Polynesian, Korean, Portuguese, Latin, traditional and new influences.

AMA'AMA' features more than a dozen cocktails, including the KonaRed Lemon Drop with Ketel One Citroen Vodka, fresh lemon juice, organic agave nectar and KonaRed superfruit antioxidant juice, and a classic Tropical Mai Tai with Sailor Jerry Spiced Rum, amaretto and tropical juices topped with a float of Myers's Original Dark Rum. There also are wines by the glass and bottle.

Sweet endings are classics with flair, such as a Floating Island with guava, strawberry and lychee sorbet; coconut panna cotta with chilled passion fruit broth and green tea tuile; and pineapple tarte tartin with caramel cream.

Breakfast costs \$7-\$21; lunch, \$8-\$24; dinner entrées \$31-\$53.

Makahiki – The Bounty of the Islands

While 'AMA'AMA has the natural beauty of the ocean just steps away, the interior of Makahiki, showcases beautiful works by local artists, from paintings to glass art. In the entry, artists Butch Helemano and James Rumford collaborated to convey the story of the Makahiki season of peace, play and renewal. (The Makahiki season is the traditional Hawaiian celebration of the harvest.) Rumford sketched the designs and wrote texts for Helemano's wood carvings that illustrate the sights and events of the Makahiki season. Also in the restaurant, artists Al Lagunero and Solomon Enos collaborated on a mural that depicts feasting and gaming. As day turns to night, the restaurant lighting gradually turns from rose to indigo with the setting of the sun.

With a buffet that's open daily for breakfast and dinner, the spirit of the Makahiki is celebrated in the fresh and flavorful cuisine.

Starting with breakfast, the spread includes everything from a simple Continental offering to a Western breakfast with eggs, bacon, sausage, oatmeal, potatoes, pancakes, waffles, French toast – even baked beans with barbecued ham. The Chinese/Japanese buffet has soy milk, dim sum, crispy dough, wok-fried noodles, seared island fish, tamago, greens, miso soup, steamed rice, dried seaweed and pickled vegetables.

For youngsters, the "Keiki Corner" features fruit, yogurt, granola, waffles, pancakes, baked chicken strips, scrambled eggs, sausage, turkey bacon, frittatas, breakfast pastries and chocolate milk-dipped Haupia bread French Toast stuffed with bananas and peanut butter.

Favorite Disney characters celebrate with diners at "Aunty's Breakfast Celebration at the Makahiki" on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays.

Breakfast is served from 7-11 a.m. Cost is \$32, \$18 ages 9 and under.

The casual dinner buffet features line-caught sustainable seafood, fresh salads with local greens, rotating carving stations, Asian-inspired entrees and house-made desserts.

"Our goal is to get as much as we can from the local farmers," said Callarac.

A melting pot of cultures, the expansive buffet features starters from a Nicoise salad to cheeses, lobster bisque and cioppino. On ice, shrimp, marinated squid, scallops, mussels, lobster and tiger prawns showcase the abundance of seafood.

Entrees might include sustainable catch in banana leaves, seafood paella, grille poke, roast duck with plum sauce and chicken wrapped in seaweed. For Asian flavors, there's sushi and sashimi, Chinese pork buns, fried noodles, dim sum and wok-fried seasonal vegetables.

The grill heats up with chicken wings, pork chops, Asian-spiced lamb chops, sausages and assorted satay, while live-action stations feature pastas with vegetables, meatballs, clam stew, Portuguese sausage, and carved meats or fish.

"Keiki Corner" for youngsters offers macaroni and bay shrimp salad, chicken and sweet corn salad, finger

sandwiches, chicken noodle soup, crudités, pasta Lai, hot dogs, mini burgers, grilled mini steak, fish dog, pizza on a stick, Asian chicken strips, grilled chicken breast, spaghetti pizza, carved ham, macaroni & cheese with fresh peas, seasonal local fare such as poi fritters.

And there are plenty of sweets, such as chocolate brownies, no-sugar-added mango cheesecake, guava cupcakes, pineapple-coconut cobbler, molten chocolate cake, banana cream puffs and coconut bars.

Hours are from 5-10 p.m. daily. Cost is \$43; \$21 ages 9 and under.

Off the Hook

Next door to 'AMA'AMA near the ocean is Off the Hook, inspired by a fisherman's seaside shack, decorated with makau, or fish hooks, cowry-shell lures, shark-tooth knives and specially carved fish-shaped stones.

Open daily from 11 a.m. for tropical drinks and small bites, Off the Hook's signature is the Feast of the Sea platter, a build-your-own taste of the islands with oysters, prawns, clams, Keahole lobster and Kona abalone. Also on the menu are hamachi and ahi sashimi, prawns satay on sugar cane skewers, Kobe beef sliders, Peking duck flatbread, cheeses and a dessert sampler.

A colorful school of fish swims above the bar, which serves creative cocktails including a Wild Hibiscus Royale Sparkling wine cocktail, Island Red Sangria, a Pineapple Papaya Cosmo and Big Island Iced Tea. Non-alcoholic drinks range from a passion colada to a pineapple ginger splash. There's beer on draft – Big Wave Golden Ale, Fire Rock Pale Ale, Longboard Island Lager, or the seasonal Aloha Series. And every day there's an *'ike mua*, or "discovery drink of the day."

Other Dining

Also near 'AMA'AMA , **One Paddle, Two Paddle** offers quick-service sandwiches and wraps, and housemade desserts. **Lava Shack**, across from the Rainbow Reef snorkel lagoon, serves a traditional *an* "plate lunch" of cold fried chicken, meats and cheese or chilled miso-glazed salmon. **P?p?lua Shave Ice** is on the pool deck, and **Rip Curl Yogurt Bar** at the Laniwai Spa offers yogurt with fresh fruit and other toppings.

At opening, private dining is available 6 a.m.-midnight, later expanding to 24 hours. The menu features Hawaii-inspired specialties for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

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