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Kauai Restaurants

Many of the condos in my complex are Airbnbs or other vacation rentals. I often talk to the visitors in our parking lot, asking if they need help with anything. This summer I met Sue and Ed from San Diego. They had recently graduated from college and were here on their honeymoon. Our conversation went something like this.

Sue: Can you tell us how to get to McDonalds?

Me: The closest McDonalds is in Kapa'a, about a 35 minute drive from here.

Sue: Really? How about Burger King?

Me: That's also in Kapa'a. It's a tiny bit closer . . . about 30 minutes. The only national fast-food chain here on the north shore is a Subway in Kilauea, about 10 minutes from here.

Sue: Really? How about Arby's, In-N-Out, Wendy's, Carls' Jr, Chick-fil-A?

(I kept shaking my head while she asked about these.)

Me: We don't have any of those anywhere on Kauai.

Sue: OMG! Where do you guys eat?!?!?!?

I explained that we have great restaurants here, including some that could be considered "fast food," but are not national chains. I recommended several places close by in Princeville, Hanalei, and Kilauea. I also suggested that since they are here in Kauai, they might try some food that is different from what they usually eat at home.

They looked at each other and rolled their eyes. **"So, can you tell us how to get to the McDonalds?"**

That conversation got me thinking about dining on Kauai. For example, here are all the fast food restaurants on the island: 7 Subways, 4 McDonald's, 2 Taco Bell / Pizza Huts, 2 Burger Kings, 2 Panda Express, 1 Kentucky Fried Chicken, and a new Jack in the Box that opened in 2015. That's it. But the great news is that we have a lot of amazing fast-food restaurants and food trucks that are local and are NOT chains. One of the favorite fast foods here is fish tacos. Yummy!



It wasn't until I moved to Kauai that I discovered that the major fast-food chains have local menus in some locations. I'll bet that your local McDonald's doesn't offer a breakfast platter with eggs, white rice, Portuguese sausage, and SPAM. And it probably doesn't sell taro pie or haupia (coconut pudding) pie desserts.



And does your Jack in the Box offer a fried rice bowl with Portuguese sausage and SPAM? Ours does!



Speaking of SPAM, it is found on the menus of many regular restaurants here in Hawaii. One of my favorite Princeville restaurants is called Tiki Iniki. It is owned by 1960's rocker Todd Rundgren and his wife Michele. (One of Todd's biggest hits was "Hello It's Me.") Personally, I always order their fish and chips. But the ingredients in their Iniki Burger are "beef, spam, topped w/ onion compote, pickled jalapeno, provolone, cabbage slaw, and shoyu mayo." And, no matter what you order, when they bring your bill to the table it comes in an empty SPAM can!

Lava Beach Club in Kapa'a. It is right on the beach, and the view is spectacular. As they say on their website, "Get some sand between your toes!"



And . . . I know this will sound very strange . . . but I love the unique way they designate their men's and women's bathrooms. Surfing Ken and Barbie dolls are in shadow boxes on the doors.

As far as sit-down coffee shops or restaurants go, we don't have ANY national chains on Kauai. All of our restaurants are local. And we love it that way. Our restaurants are fantastic! Although we still see their commercials on TV, we have no Applebee's, Chili's, Cheesecake Factory, IHOP, Denny's, Outback Steakhouse, TGI Fridays, Olive Garden, Ruby Tuesday's, or any other chains. These restaurants are found on other Hawaiian islands, but not here on Kauai.

So, if (or when) you come to Kauai you'll get to eat lots of wonderful food from locally owned island restaurants. We have Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Korean, Italian, French, Mexican, vegetarian, vegan, and good old American cuisines, and more!