

The Art of Seduction

Neighborhood spot marries authentic Mediterranean flavors with Island charm

By Bonnie Friedman | Photo by Ron Dahlquist

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Capellini alla checca with shrimp is a popular choice at the casual Bistro Casanova.

Bistro Casanova

33 Lono Avenue, Kahului; 1-808-873-3650

Prices: Lunch, \$9–\$18; tapas and crepes menu (available from 3 p.m.), \$3–\$14; starters, \$7–\$14; pastas, \$14–\$22; entrées, \$16–\$38; desserts, \$7–\$9

Service: Eager, friendly

Setting: Lively at the bar; comfortable in the art-filled dining room (can be noisy when busy)

Best dishes: Qwack Salad; *capellini alla checca* (angel hair pasta with spinach and tomatoes); crepes (savory and dessert); *bigoli neri al salmone* (house-made squid-ink pasta with smoked salmon); osso buco

More than 20 years after opening Casanova, Makawao's landmark Italian eatery, restaurateur Giovanni Steven Cappelli now presides over another success—[Bistro Casanova](#), smack-dab in the middle of Kahului.

At Cappelli's new casual spot, the food is a delicious mix of Mediterranean, Italian, and Island flavors with plenty of variety. The Qwack Salad of shredded duck over organic greens, Kula onions, dried cranberries, goat cheese, and raspberry vinaigrette is a little bit sweet, a little bit tangy, and a lot luscious. *Capellini alla checca*, tossed with spinach, pine nuts, garlic, and tomatoes and topped with shaved Parmesan, is the most popular pasta at lunch and dinner. Island-inspired sandwiches, such as 'ahi and kalua pork, come with a Caesar salad and fries with fresh rosemary. The Maui Cattle Company burger is a big, juicy, honorably local pick. Panini are served on house-baked focaccia with organic greens on the side; the Milano with prosciutto, fresh mozzarella, arugula, and tomatoes is *delizioso*. Crepes are the house specialty, and at lunch, savory combinations include everything from smoked salmon, capers, and sour cream to ham, Brie, and artichokes.

A rotating tapas menu—with about a dozen different choices—kicks in at 3 p.m. and is offered through dinner. Grilled asparagus wrapped in prosciutto with goat cheese and lemon dressing accompanied by a glass of crisp white Italian wine is a satisfying after-work treat. For something heartier, *bigoli neri* (squid-ink pasta) is tossed in a subtle creamy white sauce with smoked salmon, peas, and leeks and topped with a dollop of *tobiko* roe for a nice bright crunch. The dinner menu offers plenty of other pastas, as well as fresh fish, steaks, chops, and the signature paella and osso buco. Dessert crepes, such as the suzette with orange, lemon, and Grand Marnier, complement the meal nicely. The wines are

priced well (under \$10 per glass and \$30–\$40 for most bottles), and include offerings from California, Italy, France, and Argentina.

Bistro Casanova's decor progresses from warm Italian at the entrance, to fiery terra-cotta at the bar, to beach cool and calm in the dining room with lots of fabulous details. The restaurant's art—by such well-known local names as Piero Resta and Dario Campanile—is noteworthy, especially the dazzling "Red Shoes." Don't worry. You can't miss them.

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