

## Mixed Plates

A course in progressive dining

By Joan Conrow, Bonnie Friedman, and Christine Thomas

AAA Hawaii March/April 2012

Remember progressive dinners back in the '80s—traveling from one friend's home to another for each successive course? It was a good way to fill an evening with a leisurely meal, share the labor (and the cost), and check out a neighbor's new dining table. It could, however, get complicated. Every home had to be "company-ready," and then there was the progressive cleanup. Some dishes had to be made ahead or chosen more on the basis of serving temperature than anything else.

And it could be difficult to keep the party moving. A contemporary version might better be called "restaurant hopping." More fun, less work, and you can be picky—select each restaurant for the course it does best. When your time is limited, you can maximize your dining adventures. In neighborhoods like Kaimuki and Kailua on O'ahu and within resort areas or even shopping centers on the neighbor islands, you can certainly walk. In some cases, it's better to drive for the best experience. Plan either on virgin drinks or a designated driver, obviously.



Town Restaurant: Chef Ed Kenney

# Maui

Central Maui's excellent casual-dining restaurants are too often overlooked at dinnertime. Bonnie Friedman and her friends aim to change that right now.

## Pūpū

Veteran chef Tom Selman serves up substantial pūpū, divine cocktails, and refined comfort food at his low-key [Main Street Bistro](#). My friends and I were tempted to order every item on the menu. Good thing we didn't, because the portions were so big we would never have moved on. Selman mans the place himself in the evenings—host, chef, bartender, and waiter. It took 20-plus minutes to receive our extraordinary 'ahi cones, onion rings, and stuffed poblano pepper. We're glad we gave ourselves enough time here—at least an hour—to savor every bite and sip and start the evening off exactly right. *2051 Main Street, Wailuku. 1-808-244-6816.*

## Main Attraction

It's a quick 4-minute drive to [A.K.'s Café](#). Like Selman, owner Elaine Nakashima is a hard-working chef who handles the kitchen alone. She's extraordinarily organized, so wait time is rarely more than 15 minutes. We ordered the fresh fish special, the roast turkey, and the pot roast (better than mother's—sorry, Mom). We loved the crab cakes, which may be Maui's best. All entrées come with two side dishes. The purple sweet potatoes—steamed or fried—are, hands down, the most popular. Or double up on the sautéed veggies—how does she get them to taste so good? And we were pleasantly surprised when the bill came. *1237 Lower Main Street, Wailuku. 1-808-244-8774.*

## Sweet Tooth

After we finished all our vegetables at A.K.'s, we proceeded 2 miles to Kahului to the sophisticated [Bistro Casanova](#) for dessert. Since the focus here is Mediterranean, it makes sense that the dessert menu is composed of crepes and an exceptional version of an Italian classic—tiramisu. The relatively “late” hour at which we arrived, combined with the restaurant's efficient servers, meant we were diving into those desserts within 15 minutes of placing our order. An espresso and other coffee drinks concluded our evening on an upbeat note. *33 Lono Avenue, Kahului. 1-808- 873-3650.*

## Plan Ahead

- Start time: 5:30 p.m.
  - End time: 8:30 p.m.
  - Must orders: 'Ahi cones, onion rings, and lamb slider at Main Street; fresh fish special, roast turkey, pot roast, and crab cakes at A.K.'s; Madonna crepes and tiramisu at Bistro Casanova
  - Estimated wait times: 20-plus minutes at Main Street; 15 minutes at A.K.'s; and 15 minutes at Bistro Casanova
  - Distance: 4 miles, driven
  - Dress code: As casual as you like, but hey, it's an evening out so kick it up a notch
  - Reservations: Not necessary, but since Main Street and A.K.'s often do private parties and off-site catering, it's best to call a day ahead so you're not disappointed
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