

# Big Island Restaurants

## Waimea

### **HAU TREE**

*62-100 Mauna Kea Beach Dr., Waimea*

A perfect café on the sand, Hau Tree at the Mauna Kea has all the things you want a beachside café to have—club sandwiches and fries and ceviche. But they also know their customers, which is why they also offer smoothies and a superfood salad. No matter what you order, make sure to order dessert. The Ovaltine Froth is legendary—and exactly what kids want before they dash back into the water.

## Waimea

### **BROWN'S BEACH HOUSE RESTAURANT**

*1 N Kaniku Dr., Waimea*

Sitting between the beach and the pool at the Fairmont Orchid Hotel is one of the loveliest settings for dinner...anywhere. And when you factor in the watermelon salad with goat's milk feta, keiki cucumbers, and heirloom tomatoes and pumpkin gnocchi with mushrooms and black garlic cauliflower sauce, dinner becomes an occasion. But then you meet a waiter (hi, Tramaine!) who is professional and friendly and then delights the kids with spooky ghost stories from the island. Suddenly, one simple beachside dinner becomes the highlight of the vacation.

## Waimea

### **MERIDIA**

*62-100 Kauna'oa Dr., Waimea*

Just across the highway from the Mauna Kea is its sister hotel, the Westin Hapuna Beach Resort. And tucked inside the resort is Meridia, a restaurant with a heavily Mediterranean influence. Sitting on the balcony overlooking the ocean is one thing (and we're really in favor of it), but sitting on the balcony overlooking the ocean with a plate of fritto misto or crudo or caprese in front of you takes it up a level. The vibe is easy and pleasant, the food is fresh and delicious, and the sunset is sublime. It's one of those rare formal dining experiences that kids wholeheartedly endorse.

## Waimea

### **'ULU OCEAN GRILL**

*72-100 Ka'upulehu Dr., Kailua-Kona*

The dressiest restaurant at the Four Seasons Hualalai is half indoors, half outdoors, and utterly stunning. Being a few feet from the sand means that there isn't a reason in the world to stay inside. Book a table on the patio so the children can swoon over the firepit, and let the feast begin. Executive chef Thomas Bellec is a master—everything that comes out of his kitchen is the perfect blend of true to Hawaii and influenced by Asia. And you can't go wrong. But to go especially right, order the Waimea farmers' market salad, maybe the Hawaiian ahi poke with Maui onions, and the vegetarian stir-fry noodles with baby bok choy. The dishes, while elegant and miniature works of art in some cases, are surprisingly kid-friendly. We cleaned every plate on the table.

## Kailua-Kona

### **ROY'S**

*69-250 Waikoloa Beach Dr., Waikoloa*

Chef Roy Yamaguchi is a Hawaiian legend, with a corresponding empire of restaurants scattered across all the islands (Eating House 1849 in Kauai, etc.). This outpost is one of his classics, and is ideal if you're all-in for a tasting menu or have something to celebrate. It's exactly what one would expect from a fancier version of island food: Macadamia nut encrusted fish, baby back ribs done with Szechuan-style sauce, and a famous chocolate soufflé. It can get loud and noisy, so not always the best choice if you want to have an intimate conversation.

## Waikoloa

### **TAKENOKO SUSHI**

*578 Hinano St., Hilo*

There are only about 8 seats at Chef Igarashi's sushi bar, and you will have to line up for them (reservations book up months in advance). Igarashi focuses on perfect, incredible fresh sashimi and sushi—that he doesn't dress up with much beyond rice, wasabi, and shoyu—in short, get the omakase.

## Hilo

### **LA BOURGOGNE**

*77-6400 Nalani St., Kailua-Kona*

An excellent French restaurant seems unlikely on the Big Island of Hawaii, but La Bourgogne is exactly that: So when you've tired of poke and pork head here. It sits in a very unassuming building on the side of the highway in Kailua-Kona, but the menu is anything but: Very French options like frog legs and escargots are balanced by more accessible options like baked brie, lobster salad, and a really good filet mignon.

## Kailua-Kona

### **MOON & TURTLE**

*51 Kalakaua St., Hilo*

Earning rave reviews for its daily changing, farm-to-table, ocean-to-table small plates, this sweet little spot justifies a trip if you're not staying in Hilo (also consider a stop here for dinner on your way back from Volcanos National Park). The plates are truly inventive, blending the best of Hawaiian ingredients with Asian flavors, and they always sell the best of what's available, which translates to only having enough for a few of some plates. (The chef-owner Mark Pomaski got his training from Roy Yamaguchi, so the mastery makes sense.) Make reservations, though you can usually grab seats at the bar.

## Hilo

### **THE FISH AND THE HOG**

*64-957 Mamalahoa Hwy., Waimea*

While an excellent barbecue joint might seem unlikely in Hawaii, considering the island's natural predilection for pork, as well as Waimea's reputation as a "paniolo" town (i.e. cowboy), The Fish and the Hog makes perfect sense. What's fun is that you can get pulled pork, beef brisket, and all the requisite

sides (their Crackseed, Hawaiian-inspired sauce with Chinese plum is not to be missed), you can also get super fresh poke and delicious, chili dusted calamari.

### Waimea

#### **MERRIMAN'S**

*65-1227 Opelo Rd., Waimea*

Peter Merriman was one of the pioneers of the local food scene in Hawaii—he was at the forefront of efforts to grow vegetables in the local volcanic soils, so they could be eaten fresh (rather than after a lengthy journey on a boat). Today, he partners with local farmers to serve his three restaurants, and there's one each on Maui, Kauai, and the Big Island. The dining room and menu are dressed up without being overly stuffy, so it's ideal for a nicer family or group outing. Try the upcountry salad (made with kale and butter lettuce from local farms), the fresh-caught mahi mahi, and vegetarian taro cake.

### Waimea

#### **RAYS ON THE BAY**

*78-128 Ehukai St., Kailua-Kona*

Rays on the Bay: A totally cheesy name for the Sheraton's quality restaurant that is built into the lava rock cliffs on Kona's coast. (As guessed, you can see the local manta rays swimming at night just feet from your dinner table.) The head chef here, Francis "Junior" Ulep, is an Oahu native with a flair for island cuisine—from pupus (small appetizer plates) like ahi poke and raw crudo to Kona-coffee-rubbed beef.

### Kailua-Kona

#### **MANTA**

*62-100 Mauna Kea Beach Dr., Kohala Coast*

Even if you're not staying at hotel Mauna Kea, you should come to its flagship restaurant, Manta, for dinner. It's an especially good date-night spot, with stunning views of Kaunaoa Beach and an admirable wine-by-the-glass list. And this is one of those restaurants where you have to order dessert: Make it Manta's famous chocolate soufflé.

### Kohala Coast

#### **HUGGO'S**

*75-5828 Kahakai Rd., Kailua-Kona*

Although Huggo's isn't the healthiest option on the island—the barbecued beef ribs and teriyaki steak are favorite dinner dishes—you can get some of the tastiest local fish here. Founded in 1969 as a local fishermen joint, the dock-like restaurant is literally perched over the ocean; at high tide, the surf is just feet away.

### Kailua-Kona

#### **HOLUAKOA CAFÉ**

*76-5900 Old Government Rd., Holualoa*

Holuakoa is an artist enclave in Kona's coffee region, but it's good for more than a morning cup. Designed like an open-air house, and surrounded by gardens, this Holuakoa restaurant is known for

their tasty brunch and dinner menus. Most of their produce is organic and comes from farms located within five miles of the restaurant. Fish is caught by local purveyors; meat is sourced from local, grass-fed, organic farms as much as possible; the bread, pasta, and desserts are all made in the restaurant's kitchen; and the wines and spirits are biodynamic and organic. In front of the restaurant is a small coffee shop serving Kona's own Buddha's Cup Estate.

## Holualoa

### **CANOEHOUSE**

*68-1400 Mauna Lani Dr., Kohala Coast*

The CanoeHouse is the excellent oceanfront restaurant of Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection complete with an open-air dining room and outdoor patio overlooking the Pacific. Helmed by husband-and-wife duo Matt and Yuka Raso the menu draws heavily on local ingredients infused with a Japanese influence (nearly everything on the chef's optional tasting menu is sourced from the Big Island). We're especially partial to the Kona kanpachi, grilled Big Island hearts of palm, and outrageously good tuna warayaki.