

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH SHOPPING

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Time to Play

GREAT GOLF IN THE 805, GIFTS FOR DAD
NEXT STOP KAUAI, SAKE, AND MORE!

undergoing a multimillion-dollar expansion to make it the largest on the island; and Stevenson's Library, an elegant lounge whose handcrafted koa-wood surfaces were refinished.

But it's **Tidepools**, one of four fine-dining venues on-property, that can't be missed. Locals won't even deny it.

"The food here is tough to beat," Poipu Bay's director of golf, Craig Sasada, tells me one evening, as I savor seared opah with bok choy and vanilla hollandaise.

One establishment that's been driving Kauai's culinary ascent since its renovation in 2004 is **Plantation Gardens**, just a few miles from the Grand Hyatt. Set in a botanical oasis of koi ponds, orchids, and bromeliads, the former plantation manager's house oozes freshness. A spacious veranda, Brazilian cherry floors, big wicker chairs, and vintage photos add to the pleasing atmosphere, but it's the menu that unleashes every sense.

Executive chefs Teri McLeod and Thomas Connolly use produce grown organically and picked on nearby farms to create dishes that reflect the fare of bygone-era Hawaii. A sucker for fish, I try the Tuna Sashimi Platter, followed by the Seafood Lau Lau—fresh mahimahi with large shrimp, jumbo scallops, and julienne vegetables, wrapped in a ti leaf. With my glass of Edna Valley Chardonnay, every bite is to die for.

Around the corner and right on the water, Todd Barrett sparks the same kinds of thoughts in patrons at **The Beach House**, where the scent of items such as Cajun-spiced ono (a catch of the day) and macadamia-nut-crust crab cakes wafts through an open-air dining room with views of the Pacific. Owned by the same duo that established the lauded Seawatch and Plantation House restaurants on Maui, it also offers the highest quality of service as well as a *keiki* (kids) menu.

"We think it's important to cater to everyone," says Barrett. "We want to provide as much as we can for the traveler, so we prepare every dish with the same kind of care."

Epicurean pride runs just as deep at **Gaylord's**, an iconic venue a mile west of Lihue. Located in a restored 16,000-foot home on a working sugar plantation, the historic eatery is renowned for its breakfast buffet. Guests are greeted with a shell lei—and frowned upon if they don't try the cinnamon rolls; they're the kitchen's claim to fame, and the cooks get up very early to bake them.

When satiated, visitors may wander the manor's boutique shops, art galleries, and Tudor-style rooms, or go for a horse-drawn coach ride around the original 35-acre property, listening to the driver talk and the Clydesdales clomp. A recently improved railroad line allows for tours of the entire 100-acre property—including sugar, pineapple, and banana fields—on an authentic narrow gauge train. But don't stick around forever. After all, Kauai is an island that has it all. Just ask Sasada.

"Lanai is good if you just don't want to go anywhere or see anybody. And Oahu and Maui have got a lot going on," he says. "But here you have the best of all worlds. Plus, the serenity. The beaches, the pastures ... and have you seen any of the waterfalls or rivers yet?" ■

