

## 808 Deli *(American)*

This little deli tucked next to *Fred's Mexican Café* features sandwiches, paninis, hot dogs, salads, and breakfast sandwiches. Paninis are made to order (which you factor into the wait time) and we like them because they're not so cheesy that they sploosh all over your hand when you bite into the grilled sandwich. The hot dogs are kosher and come with a wide array of toppings. Sandwiches include deli meats, tuna salad and chicken salad. There is also locally-made gelato (not as good as *Ono Gelato*, but closer to the beach). A good choice to take to the beach or on a long drive is the \$10 boxed lunch, which includes sandwich, chips, cookie (homemade), and a drink.

Address: 2511 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei, South Maui

Location: Across from Kamaole Beach Park II

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Hours: Daily 7am-5pm

Parking: Lot, Street

Phone: 808-879-1111

Website: [www.808deli.net](http://www.808deli.net)



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## A Saigon Café *(Vietnamese)*



*A Saigon Café* is one of our favorite restaurants, even though it features run-down decor, is difficult to find, and the waiters can't seem to stop telling cheesy jokes. We ignore the barely acceptable ambiance, and return our focus to the food, which is some of the freshest and most delicious on Maui.

What's on each plate is well-prepared Vietnamese classics, including a superlative pho, deeply flavored with beef, yet still light on the tongue.

There's a deep commitment to fresh food here. We've never seen a wilted lettuce leaf. We've never bit into a piece of mint without that snap from a just-picked sprig. The fish is fresh and the shrimp are plump and pink. Some of our favorite dishes include the crispy, spicy Dungeness crab, and the chicken and shrimp braised in a brown sauce in the traditional clay pot. If you like fish, ask the waiter what they have that day for whole-fish preparations. They can wok-fry or steam fish – either style is delicious, so follow their guidance on which preparation to use on whichever fish they have that day. The wok-frying leaves a thin crust on the outside, which hides the tender chunks of flesh underneath and protects them from drying out. The steamed version with ginger and garlic shuts our other senses down so that picking the fish off the bones becomes a meditation.

We also love their "burritos." A stack of rice paper and a bowl of warm water are served first, followed, in short order, by a platter of raw shrimp, chicken, beef (or some combination), sliced cucumbers, pickled carrots, bean sprouts, fresh mint, and lettuce leaves. A fondue pot containing a light broth, pineapple slices, vegetables, and herbs bubbling over a carton of sterno appears next. The waiter will show you how to assemble your burrito, but essentially you drop your protein into the fondue to cook it while you dip your rice paper

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## A Saigon Café *(continued)*

into the warm water to soften it. Then you pile vegetables, sprouts, mint, rice noodles, and hoisin sauce onto the sticky paper, and once your meat or fish is cooked to your liking, you place it on the bed of fresh food and carefully wrap the thin, stretchy rice paper around the whole thing. We like to place our burrito in a lettuce leaf to make it easy to bite. Delicious and fun, we leave it to the authorities to decide if the sterno presents a fire hazard.

There's no sign on the outside of this restaurant, and the inside could use fresh paint, retiling, new booths ... well, a big renovation. Some find the brusque, jokester waiters rude, but fans like us think of them as the "show" and laugh along with them. If your cell phone disappears during dinner, don't worry. It will reappear with the bill.

All jokes aside, the servers provide brisk, efficient service and are knowledgeable about the food they serve. The wine list is nothing special, but they have the usual Asian beers that complement the cuisine. We like their lemonade, which is sweet and made with both limes and lemons. We recommend skipping the Thai dishes and the desserts, (a five minute drive gets you to **Thailand Cuisine** for the first and **Bistro Casanova** for the second).

Reviewing restaurants can be grueling work. After days of eating so-so meals that have lightened our wallets, added paunch to our waistlines, and flattened our taste buds, we make a trip to **A Saigon Café** to soothe our palates and remind us of how wonderful food can be.

Address: 1792 Main St, Wailuku, Central Maui

Location: This is "under" the highway overpass in Wailuku. As you drive into Wailuku on Kaahumanu Ave., look for the neon shooting stars and the pink building to the right of the highway overpass as you drive over it. Turn right on Central Avenue at the KAOI Radio Station intersection. Take your first right onto Nani St. Drive to the first stop sign. Turn right onto Kaniela St, and the restaurant is on the left.

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Features: Outdoor Seating, Take-out, Bar Seating

Hours: M-Sa 10am-9:30pm and Su 10am-8:30pm

Parking: Lot, Street

Phone: 808-243-9560

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## Alexander's Fish & Chips *(American)*

**Alexander's** used to be our favorite place for fish and chips, but new owners seem to have killed the magic. As you probably know, fish requires close attention to get perfect; it can go from tender and delicious to rubbery and tasteless in mere seconds. The fryer cooks let their minds wander a little too often, and we suspect the "secret" to the "secret batter" has been lost. Ribs are no longer what they once were. The outdoor location in Kihei used to be spotlessly clean for a beach fish shack, but that's no longer the case. The mall location has too much competition to hold its own. This is a loss for the Maui food scene. If you're in Kihei and hankering for fish and chips, check out **Coconut's Fish Café** or even **Eskimo Candy**. If you're in Kahului, take the ten minutes to go to Paia and visit **Paia Fish Market**.