



\$



CASH

Cool Cat Café *(continued)*

Address: 658 Front St., Lahaina, West Maui
 Location: Upper floor of the Wharf Cinema Center
 Meals: Lunch, Dinner
 Hours: Daily 10:30am–10:30pm
 Parking: Street, Lot
 Phone: 808-667-0908
 Website: www.coolcatcafe.com

Costco Food Court *(American)*



We had to think long and hard about including Costco's food court in this edition. But ultimately, we decided that you should know that we eat here occasionally when we're in Kahului and just want a quick bite to eat. So do most Maui residents (almost everyone has a membership to Costco, which makes living on Maui a lot more affordable than it would be without it).

The pizza is heavy duty and one slice is like three everywhere else, and the hot dogs are Kosher franks. You can't argue with the prices (a hot dog and coke is still \$1.50 here just like at every other Costco), and if you're a member you're going to be glad you don't have to pay \$8 for a gallon of milk.

In addition to their food court, you might want to check out their refrigerated foods section, much of which has local food. Their vegetables are surprisingly local (and very often organic), and the La Brea bread they sell in their bakery is the best "supermarket" bread on Maui.

You can also get lots of books on Maui, plenty of Hawaiian chocolate and macadamia nuts to bring home as gifts (all packaged for travel).

One of our top tips for visiting friends is to check out Costco as the first stop after picking up the rental car. Pick up tasty treats, sunscreen at deep discounts, and beautiful fresh leis at the best prices around.

Address: 540 Haleakala Highway, Kahului, Central Maui
 Location: At the intersection of Dairy Road and Haleakala Highway
 Meals: Lunch, Dinner, Snacks & Treats
 Hours: M–F 11am – 8:30pm; Sa 9:30am – 6pm; Su 10am – 6pm
 Parking: Lot
 Phone: 808-877-5248
 Website: www.costco.com



Cuatro Restaurant *(Latin/Asian Fusion)*



Cuatro Restaurant, which is *Sansei's* new sister restaurant in Kihei, is a nearly perfect square. This may seem trivial, but this *feng shui* fact seems significant to us. The sense of balance, harmony, and intimacy can also be found in the food, the wine list, and the service. Rarely are we as excited about a new restaurant as we are about **Cuatro**. Quite simply, we love

everything about it.



The food is a Latin-Asian-European fusion that makes liberal use of cilantro, truffle oil, balsamic vinegar, chilies, and butter (and many other things). In most dishes you can taste the four corners of the globe – and yet those far flung flavors don't fight with each other. The cuisine offers an easy approach for the spice-wary, with plenty of choices for those who are more adventurous.

A good example is the spicy tuna nachos appetizer. Six wonton, crisp and fresh, are laid on top of baby greens. A spicy tuna mixture that *Sansei* fans will likely recognize is scooped on top of each wonton. Next comes a layer of truffle aioli, then a cilantro pesto heated up with kochujang (a red chili pepper paste from Korea), then an avocado relish. Each serving ends up being either two perfect bites or one big mouthful of East-West Love.

The pupu steak is another good starter, and sized generously enough to be a small entrée. The steak is marinated until tender and then sautéed with earthy local mushrooms in a spicy teriyaki sauce. The sauce also features a little truffle oil, which melts the spice to the salty, and transitions the mushrooms to the meat. The end result is a cohesive taste experience that, in our opinion, is what good fusion is about: the sum must be equal to much more than the individual ingredients, and the different cuisines must marry each other, not threaten divorce.

The fresh fish of the day changes, of course, but can be prepared in one of four styles, each unique. You cannot go wrong with a fresh piece of mahi-mahi sautéed with rock shrimp in a classic lemon caper butter sauce, but we like the more adventurous "house" preparation. Try a fish like ono or ahi blackened with Mexican spices, served over rice pilaf in a cumin-oregano beurre blanc with an avocado pico de gallo. Heat in the back of your throat, yes, but the rich beurre blanc and creamy avocado smoothes it all out.

Our favorite fish preparation, however, is the "Mauiterranean Grill." Garlic mashed potatoes are spread in a bed on the plate, with perfectly grilled vegetable slices on top – eggplant, onions, and whatever else is fresh. The fish is rubbed with what's almost a steak rub, grilled, and topped with tomato-caper relish. The basil beurre blanc is not enough – it would be just spicy citrus and creamy nutty flavors. Where's the sweet to balance this out? It's in the balsamic syrup drizzled over the fish and the plate.

A very good meat entrée is the marinated pork. Pork is so easy to dry out, and so often rendered like sawdust, that we hesitate to order it. But this is so tender, juicy, and flavorful after its marinade and grilling session (Chef really knows how to grill) that we will order it again and again. Sweet green chilies in the *chili verde* sauce give way seamlessly to the sneaky heat in the back of the throat, and overall it's a satisfying dish. Another good choice is the roasted chicken breast. Stuffed with green chilies, ham, and a little pepper-jack cheese and then swathed in a southwestern butter sauce, it's perfectly tender and juicy. Is there anything better than a perfectly roasted chicken?

Dessert pickings are slim; there is only a dish of locally-made ice cream with local fruit and caramel sauce. While, on the one hand we appreciate the honesty of not offering dessert if you can't do it well, it's a hole in the repertoire of what, otherwise, is a nearly perfect dining experience.

continued on next page

\$\$\$



Cuatro Restaurant *(continued)*

The wine list is very small, but carefully selected, and there are some bottled beers available. The keiki (children's) menu is simple: grilled fish, chicken, or steak, plus veggies and potatoes or rice. They can also get pasta with butter and cheese, or a cheese quesadilla.

The service is friendly and proficient, and they know the menu well. The nearly exhibition style kitchen gives you glimpses of the action through the Asian-style door panels (the closer you sit the more you can feel the energy of the grill). You will not have trouble getting a server's attention in the small room. There's an early bird special everyday from 4-6pm: 25% off food (as of publication, please call to verify).

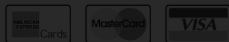
Cuatro Restaurant operates like the best of city restaurants: proficient, energetic, confident, and hospitable – and it doesn't need a view to entertain you. Along with **David Paul's Island Grill**, **Cuatro** is our pick for favorite new restaurant.

NB: Catering and private dining are also available. If you are planning a wedding on Maui, put **Cuatro** on your list of places to check out.

Address: 1881 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei, South Maui
Location: in the Kihei Town Center near Sansei
Meals: Dinner
Hours: Daily 4pm-10pm
Parking: Lot
Phone: 808-879-1110
Website: www.cuatromaui.com



\$



Da Kitchen *(Local/Plate Lunch)*



A major distinguishing feature of good local food is that you get a great deal of it. Engaging with mixed plate could be called "eating until you are sore," and it's practically a sport in Hawaii.

Local food is not to be confused with Hawaiian food. Hawaiian foods are traditional to these islands and include items like lau lau (any protein cooked in a ti leaf), lomi lomi (salt-cured salmon) and poi (taro or other root pounded into a nutritious paste).

Local food, on the other hand, is the best or favorite dishes from each of the cultures that make up the local population. Over the centuries, that has included Hawaiians, of course, but also Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Koreans, and Portuguese or Brazilians. The favorite foods from each culture make their way into what we call Local Food. Just like visitors to New York should make a point to try the native's bagels, visitors to Hawaii should try Local Food. It is not fine dining, but skipping it is like skipping a lobster shack on the Maine Coast or a pig palace in Georgia.

We recommend **Da Kitchen** for your particular adventure. The restaurants are clean, the food is good, and the portions are Hawaiian-sized so you can split them and still have leftovers.