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Down Home Dining in Lānaʻi City

The kitchens of Lānaʻi are busy. Good food comes easily here because Lānaʻi people love to cook. They start with beautiful gardens that produce fresh herbs and greens for the table. They love to visit over morning coffee. They honor the important things in life, like an old-fashioned homemade burger and a daily helping of fried rice. New York-style pizza, chocolate-dipped bananas, down-home ethnic favorites and pasta – they are all equally important, and readily available in a single, small, tree-lined square in a village named Lānaʻi City.

Dining out in “the city” is as comfortable and rewarding as going to a good friend’s home. The painted blue clapboard with the early-morning crowd is called Blue Ginger Café, where the three-egg omelets, fried saimin (a locally adored noodle dish) and roast pork are as famous as pigs-in-the-blanket. Some people dine here breakfast, lunch and dinner, then return bright and early the next day.

Canoes Lānaʻi, is also a popular option. Serving breakfast and lunch, “must orders” include the fried rice, wok fried menpachi and the grilled mahi mahi sandwich. Reminiscent of the old time saimin stands of days gone by, Canoes Lānaʻi is noted for its hearty homemade burgers, its ‘ohana (family) style atmosphere, as well as local favorites for both kamaʻāina and visitors alike.

Nearby is Lānaʻi’s java central, Lānaʻi Coffee Works – the only coffee house on the island, serving Kona fancy, Kona pea berry, Jamaican Blue Mountain, and a full menu of gourmet coffees, blends, flavored coffees, espresso and cappuccino. Formerly a plantation home, it has a wide, welcoming wooden deck shaded by umbrellas. You can order ice cream, pastry, gift items, and inexpensive T-shirts too, and sit on the deck and watch the light change through the Cook pines across the street.

Across the shaded town square called Dole Park, in the Hotel Lānaʻi, the Lānaʻi City Grille is a popular gathering place for dinner. The setting is the dining room of a 1923 country inn – a rustic American ambience of knotty pine, red brick, a courtyard and a fireplace. Created by one of Hawaiʻi’s most renowned chefs, Bev Gannon of Hāliʻimaile General Store fame, the menu offers a delightful mix of island-fresh ingredients, each course abundant with vibrant flavors and colors. Anticipate generously portioned entrees that range from locally caught fish to prime rib and the Grille’s signature rotisserie-roasted chicken. With a high variety of food at a great value, a well stocked bar and ample wine selection, there are sure to be items to please

every palate.

A few storefronts away on Dole Park, you can spot Pele's Other Garden by its cheerful yellow veranda, corrugated iron roof, and turquoise trim. A haven for diners with sophisticated tastes, it started as a New York-style deli and has only gotten better. Excellent gourmet pizzas, organic salads, smoked turkey and other made-to-order sandwiches, hearty soups and tasty burritos draw loyal lunchtime fans. They make box lunches and picnic lunches to go, and in the evening, out come the candles and tablecloths for the pastas and bistro fare. It's also the only eatery on the island outside of the hotels where you can order beer on tap, a glass of premium wine or a mai tai.

Another Lāna'i favorite is Café 565. From scrumptious pizzas, to hearty cal-zones and made-to-order sub sandwiches, this island dining spot is well known for its Filipino cuisine. The pansit (noodles) are always a hit along with traditional lumpia or Filipino-style egg rolls, plus local favorites like chicken katsu (breaded, fried chicken). Visiting Café 565 is like going to "Auntie's House" for lunch or dinner. The ambiance is unpretentious and comfortable, and the fare is as delicious as it gets.

One of Lāna'i's newer delights is the Sweetest Days Ice Cream and Candy Shoppe, a pint-sized Dole Park delight. Everything they scoop is Roselani Ice Cream, a premium brand homegrown on Maui – Kona Mud Pie is one of their most popular flavors. You can also splurge with a banana split, smoothie, or chocolate-dipped bananas.

At Four Seasons Resort Lāna'i at Mānele Bay on Hulopo'e Bay, Hulopo'e Court serves such delightful Pacific Rim cuisine as Hawaiian waffles with coconut tapioca and caramelized bananas in the morning, and miso-marinated mahi mahi in the evening. Mānele's signature 'Thilani is renowned for its romantic dinner ambiance and Italian fare, and the Challenge at Mānele Clubhouse for its mid-day gourmet salads and sandwiches for lunch.

The Four Seasons Resort Lāna'i, The Lodge at Kō'ele's Dining Room continues to win accolades with its intimate ambiance and sumptuous meals served in a formal octagonal dining room. Its contemporary creations are prepared with classic culinary techniques and local estate-grown ingredients.

Dining overlooking Mānele Small Boat Harbor is also a viable lunch option. Open daily, Harbor Café is conveniently located aside the Trilogy Pavilion. A small, but varied menu offers healthy salads, refreshing sandwiches, local plate lunches and boxed lunches to go. The Lāna'i sun can be scorching at the harbor making shaved ice and ice cream popular treats.

(pau/end)