

# Jay's Island Fresh Cuisine *Is Simply The Best*



*Chef owner Jason Johnson*

This is one of the best places to eat on the Big Island. And, I don't say this lightly, I've never enjoyed such an unbelievable combination of flavors. Everything about our dining experience was excellent. It is so rare to discover such a place as they offer the best culinary presentation in Hilo.

At Jays you feel like you're in an upscale eatery because of the total pleasurable time: ambience and mood, service and food. For a new restaurant open less than six months we were more than impressed and will be telling our friends, "you absolutely must come here."

Chef Jason Johnson, a Hilo native son, is the experienced and humble owner of this modest establishment who prepares plates to perfection like a fine artist. He knows the business because he is a culinary master. This is truly elegant dining at mostly affordable prices. You won't regret your visit.

When the four of us arrived for dinner at 6 p.m. on a weeknight, the headwaiter Peter showered us with an unforgettable aloha greeting. Although busy, he gave us his full attention and

described some specials and various favorite items on the menu.

Peter was informative and knowledgeable about Jay's food while also being sensitive to our desires.

We selected some Island Tapas for starters which are their popular Spanish style appetizers. The Shichimi Seared Scallops with Kawari sprouts and Lilikoi butter sauce were succulent. The flavor of these moist and tender scallops were enhanced by the lilikoi reduction sauce Jay uses also on his famous homemade cheesecake.

The Crab Cake Spoons with mango salsa were topped with a spicy garlic scallion pesto. Nice and crunchy on the outside, these cakes were a little larger than bite-size and loaded with crab. Since we were sharing these tapas among ourselves, we were keeping score and these were my favorites.

The Eggplant Crostini was served with truffle oil and pecorino cheese. The small crusty bread was delicious topped with an ample portion of eggplant and capers with a hint of garlic. One of Jay's most popular tapas is Mama's Steamed Clams. You get a full pound of steamer

## EPICURIAN EPISODES

clams in the shell with tomatoes and fresh herbs in a white wine butter sauce served in a large bowl with crostini. We enjoyed dipping the crostini in the saucy broth for the full flavor of the clams. It's a fun dish.

We admired the way Peter and Chef Jay coordinated their timing. It was just

right. We dislike being rushed through one course only because the next one is ready. They were very attentive and you don't get that attention in most places today. It was refreshing that we could relax and really enjoy our dinner.

These guys know what they're doing and it shows. That's why we shared with

each other that their presentation was impeccable. It doesn't get any better than this. It was leisurely paced and we were having a pleasurable, easy going epicurean episode. It's the real thing! You'll be surprised.

Here's a fine restaurant in the heart of Hilo looking for people who like dining. What an experience especially with Jay acting as your very own personal chef. Our entrees began arriving and they looked beautiful with plates immaculately decorated and still hot from the kitchen. Jay makes each entree appear to look like very attractive fine art (which it is).

The Suga Shrimp Tempura was served with Sake Ponzu and steamed rice with a side of spicy ume slaw. Did I say spicy? The shrimp were the largest of jumbos that we had seen and tasted fabulous with the dipping sauce. This is a flavorful winner.

Aunty Dee Dee's Lamb Chops were scrumptious. I think we were tempted to fight over these. Served with smashed (as in mashed) sweet potato, there was over a half rack of lamb prepared perfectly to the color of rare to medium rare as ordered. This was melt-in-your-mouth delicious. The poha berry demi glaze brought out the savory flavor of the lamb ushering in a new dimension in dining.

I had the popular Hilo Surf and Turf, a local legend of its own. The grilled Kobe-style filet was a tender thick cut of grass-fed beef served with a robust mushroom cabernet sauce. Complimenting this was a half tail of spiny lobster tempura style with a delicate sweet chile butter sauce. This is not for those who have lost their taste for fancy restaurants. The artistry, grace and style of this was mouthwatering.

The special of the evening was Seared Ahi with



*Shichimi Seared Scallops*



*Crab Cake Spoons*



*Mama's Steamed Clams*

# EPICURIAN EPISODES

Okinawan purple sweet potato served with kim chee butter sauce. Whenever we go out like this and share the components of our entrees, there is, on occasion, some "table fighting." Tonight, this special was what we fought over for another bite. It had all the elements of an appetizing, lip-smacking delicacy.

The food at Jays is too good to rush through so when you arrive take plenty of time to enjoy it. You'll find yourself in a rare new world of culinary delight. Hilo is ready for this and probably has been waiting for it a long time. The word is out that Jay's planing a six course set dinner on Valentine's Day so

make your reservations early.

We were comfortably content at the end of our meal when Jay came to visit us. Here's a spam-raised Hawaiian-Portuguese-German-Irish local boy grinning ear to ear as we complimented him on his talents. He shared his ideas about the future of the restaurant with private parties, wine pairing nights and high end martinis coming soon.



Aunty Dee Dee's Lamb Chops



Hilo Surf and Turf



Chef's Special Seared Ahi

## POSTNOTES Jays Island Fresh Cuisine

776 Kilauea Avenue  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720  
808.935.8880

Dinner: 5:30 to 9 PM  
Lunch: 11 AM to 2 PM  
Daily Tapas Menu  
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