

## Episode 8 “The Big Island”

Hi, I'm Michael, your cultural Alaskan Chef

I'd like to share with you my recent adventure to the Big Island of Hawaii. This adventure is on my bucket list and is among the craziest.

Pam and I left Alaska around March 1 for a trip to get warm in a sunny Hawaii. We arrived in Hilo after a direct flight to Honolulu and no TSA delays. We contacted the host of the bed and breakfast we would be staying at. The place was located near the golf course driving range within walking distance of the Hilo Municipal golf course. We had got in late and just crashed out waking up the next morning.

We decided after breakfast to take a walk to the golf course to check it out. I haven't the energy any longer to do 18 holes, so I checked to see if 9 was going to be possible. The course was longer than expected which was not going to help with my amyloid cancer and heart issues. This is a cancer that is un-curable and I've been fighting for 3 years. I feel blessed to wake up every day. However, the driving range was accessible and covered. That made my day.

As we walked we came across the course restaurant. It's called the Fairway Grill and out in front we found the owner Mark setting up some tables in front of the grill. There was going to be a tournament the next day, but he invited us to visit his restaurant saying that it was one of two that he owned and operated. Pam and I checked out his menu and decided that we would go there to eat. We waited for two days to be sure the tournament was over while shopping around Hilo and discovering other places to eat and buy groceries.

We finally made it to the grill restaurant and checked out the cuisine. The food was diverse and amazing. A person could sample Hawaiian, Mexican, Asian, Philippine and American cuisine. The prices were reasonable too! Pam ordered the Carnitas Street Tacos and I ordered a Mahi Mahi Sandwich. We ate here many times and I will share an appetizer with you at the the end of this story.

Pam and I also made a trip to downtown Hilo to visit the downtown market and found a triple D place Guy Fieri ate at called Pesto. The meal I had there was another knockout. There was shrimp as large as my hand combined in a salad. Pam ordered a different salad on the menu. I did not

## Episode 8 “The Big Island”

have what Guy ordered, but the restaurant seemed to be always full and busy.

Now for the adventure part of our trip to Hawaii. Pam and I had many trips planned and one was to the volcano park just 20 miles from where we were staying. We took off in the morning just after breakfast and headed toward the park. We arrived less than an hour later within a half mile of the park when the volcano decide to explode. I pulled into a information area just prior to the entrance of the park. The beautiful blue sky was filled with a plume of smoke and chunks of the volcano were raining down around us. We got out of the rental car and began to look for someone that may have information. Was it safe to continue or should we turn around. It only took a couple seconds to decide not to continue. Ash and other types of volcanic ejection were pelting us and the rental car. We turned the car around and made it back to the road which was filling with fleeing buses and cars. Luckily for us the volcanic stones and fragments were light. I heard someone call some of it Pele’s hair. The car was not harmed and we made it back safely.

### **The Storm**

After we arrived back at the b & b, I mentioned how much I missed fishing. Pam made some phone calls and we managed to obtain a charter leaving from the Kona side of the island a week from that day. We began searching for another b & b and found one not far from our charter. The place was a yurt. I’ve never spent the night in a yurt before and we were spending two nights. The yurt pictures online were enticing with a beautiful layout; a stove, a large shower, bath tub and kitchen. It was located on a working vegetable farm as well.

So after roaming around Hilo for another week we packed the car up for the weekend and began our drive to the Kona side of the island. It turned out to be around a two and half hour trip.

When we arrived we drove the main street we had been on a few times before with all the little shops and restaurants. We drove out of the main part of town and into the hills and found not only our yurt but also a coffee plantation along the way called Kona Joe’s, a place that we had visited before. We made our way into the store and purchased some merchandise. Upon leaving I noticed the wind had increased perceptively

## Episode 8 “The Big Island”

and when I turned on the car radio there was a weather warning about an expected storm with flooding on the Kona side of the island.

We still had a couple hours until checkin so we decided to shop in a small village not far from the yurt. As we shopped the wind picked up a little more and clouds began moving in. Pam and I found some shelter in a small espresso shop where I ordered us both beverages. Time came and went and we looked at our clocks on our phones. It was close so we got back in the car and proceeded to our yurt where our host greeted us and showed us the accommodations. The yurt was a large one with an adjoining structure that housed another bedroom with a spacious bathroom previously described. The place appeared pretty sound in structure and we were on high ground so I thought nothing more of it.

We unpacked the car and settled in for the evening making cold cut sandwiches for dinner and sipping bottles of water. As the sky darkened the wind came up more and it began to rain. We received a knock on our door and our host mentioned that there would be a storm and if it was alright she and an employee would secure our windows for the night. It was about then we received a phone call from our charter who was cancelling our trip because of high tides!

I looked and Pam and I believe we both were thinking “What did we just get ourselves into.” We spent a most miserable night in the yurt which had no insulation and sound barrier. The yurt did stay dry but the sound of the wind and rain was deafening. Critters like lizards and ants were trying to get in We spent the next two nights with the storm hammering us. We were lucky the power did not go out but the gas stove began making a ticking sound like it wanted to power on by itself. We called the host and she came over. I disconnected the stove from the gas and pulled the electrical plug. The stove stopped and so we averted what may have been a catastrophic explosion. On our way back to Hilo we stopped that second morning and found a simple McDonalds from which we both got a breakfast and coffee to go.

I have never experienced so much in such a short time! Aloha!!

The next two weeks were normal. Pam and I visited more of the island on the Hilo side and found it to be beautiful. We found a botanical garden, went to the Hilo Zoo, then shopped and ate at many good little

## Episode 8 “The Big Island”

restaurants. One of my favorites was the Booch Bar, a small restaurant with an amazing menu. They served a traditional breakfast with a special sausage locally made and other meals on the menu creating sandwiches and salads I wanted to try. I don't know how Guy missed this one.

### **Edamame Pods with sauces**

Here is a short recipe I think many of you may like. The key to the flavor is in the sauces provided with it. It was a favorite at the Fairway Grill near our b & b. First boil a pound of edamame in a large pot of water for 4 to 5 minutes and then cool.

For the first sauce mix together ground garlic, ground ginger, chili flakes and reduced sodium soy sauce to taste and then drizzle over prepared edamame.

Another sauce I liked is soy sauce and toasted sesame oil mixed to taste and then drizzled over edamame, You can also add some lemon juice to taste.

If you're interested in viewing the episode of Diners, Drive ins, and Dives, the Season is 40 and episode 7. You may find it on the Food Network website.