

# Kona Grill



By Sandra Halliday and Kim Burns

## East Meets West



It's a blend of umami-loaded Kewpie Mayonnaise and white miso, which brightened the dish in both sight and flavor.

Hawaiian poke is a raw fish salad served in a bowl with a variety of flavorings and toppings. The word poke simply means "chunk" in Hawaiian and the dish began its humble origins with fishermen seasoning the cut-offs of their catch to eat for a snack. Kona Grill's Original Poke is an offering of sushi rice, chunks of raw tuna and salmon, avocado, red onion, cucumber, and seaweed salad. A sweet sesame sauce provides robust seasoning.

Our sweet conclusion to a most spectacular meal came in the form of a large slice of Carrot Cake—a luscious presentation of 3 layers of shameless decadence with cream cheese frosting and a caramel sauce with toasted walnuts; and the Butter Cake with raspberry sauce and a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream. The acidity of the red raspberry sauce added color and kept the sweetness in check—a perfect yin-yang balance here. Josh tells us that Kona Grill's sauces are made from scratch. They taste as fresh as they look with their vibrant colors.

Most of the options on the menu is made to order. This flexibility allows the chef to modify the dishes according to the customer's dietary needs when requested. Our Asian-inspired meal concluded with hot tea. Josh presented



to us a box displaying an assortment of Organic China Mist teas. We tried the Earl Grey, Spring Jasmine, and the relaxing Sweet Chamomile Citrus teas. Our favorite was the Spring Jasmine with its scent of night blooming jasmine. Tea was served in a Japanese cast iron cube pot. Seeing it immediately transported us to a traditional Japanese tea ceremony in Kyoto and reminded us to be mindful of staying in the present moment. What a tranquil end to an unforgettable dining experience!

Kona Grill was built on the promise of providing exceptional experiences and meals that create memories. That aspiration was accomplished in our adventure at the Sarasota Lakewood Ranch location in a most delicious, and nutritious, fashion. We have no doubt that Kona Grill will soon become one of your favorite places to eat, drink, and practice your gastronomic Zen.



*This Pacific inspired cuisine compels you to stay in the present moment and to meditate on the goodness of eating a healthy meal.*

Aloha! Like the welcoming state that inspired their name, Kona Grill offers global food. Originating in Scottsdale, Arizona, their Hawaiian and Japanese style menu features contemporary American favorites, sushi, and specialty cocktails.

Josh Tolmach, our host and restaurant general manager, started our food adventure with 2 delectable cocktails to awaken our digestive juices. Kim had the Bee's Knees IV, which consisted of Stolichnaya vodka, ginger, liqueur, raspberry, honey syrup, and lemon. It was a delicious elixir that heightened the senses with a very unique taste. Sandra had the Red Sangria, a fruity blend of Bogle Merlot from California, Martell Cognac, hibiscus syrup, lemon, orange, and soda. The fruity aroma of black cherry and plum in the Merlot combined with the tropical and zesty citrus flavors was the perfect prelude to the symphony of flavors that was to follow

Without much hesitation, Josh presented us with a trio of the most colorful dishes from the menu's entrée selection. The Sweet-Chili Glazed Salmon had shrimp and pork fried rice, steamed broccoli, and French beans sautéed with thinly sliced garlic. A beautiful arrangement of translucent seaweed on top of the salmon garnished the dish. Getting flavor out of French beans is no mean feat. The chef accomplished magic by making the greens taste incredibly tender through the imaginative marriage of salt and seasoning.

Direct from Hawaii, The Pan-Seared Tuna plate consisted of perfectly cooked jasmine rice, sweet ginger-chili sauce, and baby bok choy. Teasing our olfactory senses with its delicate flowery perfume, the jasmine rice intensified our anticipation of savoring the dish placed before us. The freshness of the ingredients combined with its Asian-inspired use of seasoning and greens immediately took us back to a Hawaiian vacation amidst deep blue Pacific waters, green mountains, coconut trees, and tasting the freshest catch of the day.

Our favorite entrée was the Macadamia Nut Chicken. Lightly encrusted chicken sits on top of house-mashed potatoes accompanied by sautéed French beans, shoyu cream, and pineapple-papaya marmalade with black sesame seeds. Shoyu sauce, which is a mixture of soya beans and wheat, has a sweet alcoholic sherry-like flavor. It is used here instead of traditional soy sauce to impart a mild sweetness to the protein. All our entrees were beautifully presented and were good size portions, which made it possible for us to share generously and to enjoy each other's food.

From the selection of Kona Rolls, our host recommended the spicy Checkerboard Roll. A favorite of their regular customers, it has habanero-seasoned raw tuna and yellowtail, avocado, and asparagus. Spicy motoyaki sauce dots adorn the rolls. If you've never had motoyaki sauce, you must try it.

**Don't forget to let them know Kim and Sandra sent you!**

**Kona Grill**  
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[www.konagrill.com/locations/sarasota-fl](http://www.konagrill.com/locations/sarasota-fl)

**Dining Hours:** Mon-Thur - 11a-10p  
Fri-Sat - 11a-11p  
Sun - 11a-9p  
**Happy Hour:** Mon-Thur - 3p-11p  
Fri - 3p-12a  
Sat - 2p-5p and 9p-12a  
Sun - All Day