



Tri-Star Restaurants CEO & President Aaron Placourakis says the challenge is always, "How can we make it better?"

Sarento's On the Beach

Superior service and stellar cuisine with an ocean view.

Mary Lawrence

standing," they agreed. "The mahi mahi served over real zucchini pasta—never had that before. So good!"

The couple said they were served "a great meal at a reasonable price" and commented on the "priceless atmosphere."

The food is mouth-watering, the atmosphere is casual-chic, the smack-dab-on-the-beach locale is "wow" and owner Aaron Placourakis' concept of offering "Mediterranean Rim" cuisine in Hawai'i is a winner.

Bev Gannon, one of Maui's premier award-winning executive chefs and owner of The Hali'imaile General Store Upcountry, Joe's and Gannon's, A

Pacific View Restaurant, in Wailea is a major Sarento's fan and patron.

"It's a little known fact that when I started out years ago, I had zero knowledge of food," said Bev. "When I opened Hali'imaile and it went from a take-out place to a restaurant, the guy I called for help and advice all the time was Aaron. He's a consummate restaurateur. He's at the top of the list."

"I go to Sarento's because I go where I know I'm going to get good food and good service," Bev continued. "This guy is so much about the customer—you just have to appreciate his style and how he trains his people. People like Aaron want it to be a great experience every time."

Aaron is CEO and president of Tri-Star Restaurants, which owns Sarento's Top Of The "I" in Honolulu, Nick's Fishmarket at the Fairmont Kea Lani Resort in Wailea, Son'z At Swan



Sarento's On the Beach has received AAA's Four-Star Award every year since 2004.

Hoping I'd get a good photo of the restaurant's entrance with the mid-morning sun shining down from Haleakala, camera ready, I drove into the parking lot of Sarento's On the Beach.

"Good morning," I said as I walked past a couple headed toward their car from the adjacent resort, "by any chance have you ever eaten here?"

"Yes, we had dinner here the night before last," the man replied.

The couple, first-time Maui visitors Mike Ewing and Peggy Kercher, was on their way to the airport after spending a week on the Valley Isle, but graciously delayed their departure long enough to answer some questions about Sarento's On the Beach.

"We stayed right next door, and after coming over one night for happy hour, we decided to try it for dinner the next night," said Mike, an Indiana attorney. "We wanted to watch the sunset," added Peggy.

"Great service and delicious food!" they commented.

"We passed on the \$2,400 bottle of wine for a very satisfying \$10 glass of Riesling," they chuckled. "Actually two glasses each," Peggy corrected.

"The grilled ahi was out-



Portobello Napoleon is one of many scrumptious appetizers offered at Sarento's On the Beach.



Sarento's Cotolette Capricciosa is a favorite among regulars and first-time visitors alike.

Court at the Hyatt in Ka'anapali and Sarento's On the Beach on South Maui's gorgeous Keawakapu Beach.

"We have over 200 employees and over 50 of them have been with us for more than 10 years," Aaron said. "My father always used to say, 'You become friends with your family and family with your friends.'"

Dining recently at Sarento's, I met the very personable dining room manager, Michael Santa Maria, who has worked with Aaron for more than 30 years, and General Manager Ryan Hertz, who started at Sarento's cleaning silverware and has worked his way up to management over the past nine years.

"I've got a great career," the Montana native said smiling ear to ear.

Though born and raised in California and a Hawai'i resident since about 1985, Aaron's roots remain deep in Crete, where his father, Manoli, and grandfather, Sarento, were born.

"I go to Crete every year," Aaron said. "My youngest son (Manoli) was baptized in the same church my grandmother was baptized in 100 years before."

"Hospitality is second nature in Greek culture," Aaron said.

When asked if customers ever complain the service is too



Visitors Mike Ewing and Peggy Kercher say their experience at Sarento's was outstanding.

attentive, he laughed and said, "That's like complaining a woman is too beautiful. I'm old school. In my home, when a guest's water glass needs refilling, I fill it. I'm not going to change my concept of service. You have the right to have a concept—and I have one."

I could go on and on about the superb food and wines offered at this beautiful restaurant, recipient of AAA's Four-Star Award every year since 2004, but you're just going to have to experience Sarento's On the Beach for yourself.

Sarento's is located at 2980 S. Kihei Road. Call for information and reservations at 875-7555. ●