

Going gourmet at Turtle Bay

Talented chefs are my favorite people. Despite a physically and mentally punishing occupation, somehow the members of the gifted Hawaii fraternity are always passionate about their jobs while maintaining a great sense of humor.

One of our favorites is Fred DeAngelo. We first found him at Palomino where we loved his lamb shanks. Then at Tiki's in Waikiki where he served the best clam-fish chowder in Hawaii.

So when we read that he had opened a restaurant at Turtle Bay Resort, we manufactured an excuse to stay there with the prime objective of testing DeAngelo's table. His restaurant is called Ola, which translates into "life," "big," "expansive."

We weren't disappointed. Fred joined our table. He is a handsome guy reflecting his Italian-Hawaiian ancestry.

His beachfront restaurant consists of large lanais holding hardwood tables and padded chairs and enclosed by giant pillars made from ironwood trees taken from the property. Spotlights in the ceiling glamorize the setting, which looks out at the surf.

With Chef DeAngelo was a beautiful, exotic, local lady named Cheryl, or more properly, Mrs. DeAngelo.

"We were married in Florence last May," said Fred, bubbling with the memory of the event. "We had a party of 30 people and we were married by the mayor of Florence in the main piazza. Cheryl was dressed in a long gown and crowned with a flowered haiku. I was in black tie.

"Our reception was on the roof of the Continental Hotel across the river Arno and we had to walk from the plaza across the famous bridge [Ponte Vecchio] to the hotel. The people just lit up as we walked along — clapping, yelling, shouting 'baci, baci, baci' — kiss, kiss, kiss."

Upon leaving Tiki's Fred operated a successful catering business out of the kitchen of the Kaneohe Yacht Club. A friend told him about the possibility of leasing the facilities of the former beach restaurant at Turtle Bay

"It had everything going for it, a 450-room hotel with a solid class of guests," he said. "A superior location and surrounded by residents including condominium owners looking for a different style of cooking."



**JOHN
McDERMOTT**
HERE
AND THERE

We scanned the menu, which included Kahuku corn and Kahuku shrimp.

"I am surrounded by local products," Fred said.

Tempting was the ahi lobster poke and the ahi cakes. Also "Tahitian Pearls," baked crab-stuffed oysters with Tahitian vanilla hollandaise sauce.

My research assistant had bruschetta salad loaded with vine-ripened tomatoes, eggplant, grilled peppers and Waialua asparagus. Fresh mozzarella, sweet basil and pine nuts on top of grilled focaccia bread. I had an endive salad with mixed greens, sweet grapes, candied walnuts and crumbled blue cheese.

As a main course my lady then had a fish stew made up of lobster, shrimp, scallops, fresh baked fish and clam and fire-roasted ripe tomato broth.

My braised ribs were as rich and flavorful as I remembered them from dinner at Tiki's.

"Do you establish a successful menu and then just sit back and do the same thing every night?" I asked.

Always animated, Fred sat straight up and came on fire.

"Oh, no, no! First of all, I keep a close eye on the plates coming back. If something isn't working, I know it immediately. And then I am constantly tweaking the favorites to see if I can make them better.

"For example, one of the favorites at Tiki's was the salmon.

"Well, here I use a king salmon from New Zealand, which I first smoke slightly with kiawe chips. Then I use a bit of olive oil and a dusting of cane sugar and poach it in an envelope so as not to lose any of the juices. Then I serve the salmon with Okinawan sweet potatoes topped with Asian slaw.

"I just had a lady poke her head into the kitchen and tell me that her salmon was the best salmon she ever had. That always makes my long day worthwhile."

JOHN McDERMOTT writes articles for travel magazines and newspapers and is the author of several travel books. Reach him at pat-tjohn15@MSN.com.