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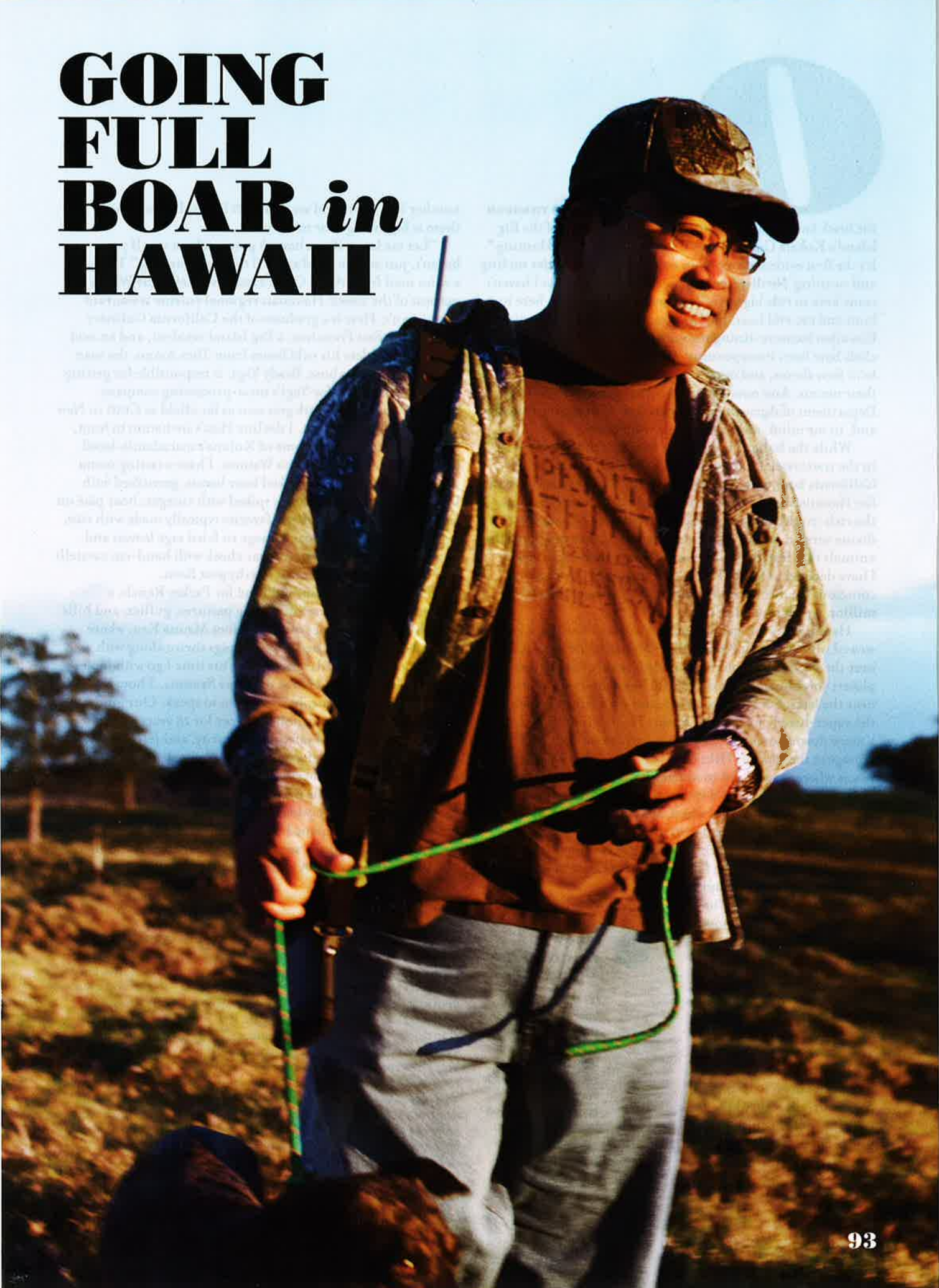
■ AT KONA VILLAGE RESORT, WILD BOAR IS BRINED FOR TWO WEEKS TO MAKE SUCCULENT HAM. OPPOSITE: EXECUTIVE CHEF MARK TSUCHIYAMA.

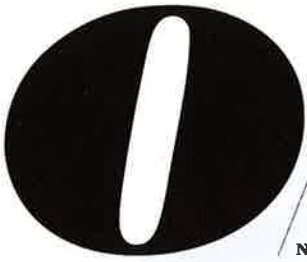
A CITY BOY TAKES  
CONSCIOUS  
CONSUMPTION  
TO THE NEXT  
LEVEL ON THE  
BIG ISLAND

BY  
**Hugh Garvey**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
**Jeff Lipsky**

# GOING FULL BOAR *in* HAWAII





## ON THE ROAD THAT CUTS THROUGH

the black lava landscape leading to the luxe resorts of the Big Island's Kohala Coast, there's a sign that reads "No Hunting." It's the first evidence I see of an outdoor activity besides surfing and sunning. No disrespect to my fellow tourists, but I haven't come here to ride big waves or to get all bronzed. I'm here to hunt and eat wild boar, the latest ingredient in the booming Hawaiian locavore dining revolution. In recent years, island chefs have been incorporating Waimea tomatoes, wild honey, *ho'i'o* fern shoots, and other indigenous ingredients into their menus. And now, with the recent approval of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, they can serve, more dramatically and, in my mind, more deliciously, wild boar.

While the Italians braise boar to transcendent effect in the trattorias of Italy, and Michael Pollan recounts his California boar-hunting experience in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, the Hawaiian wild boar is unique. It feasts on macadamias, the rich tropical nuts that when roasted taste like some divine version of puff pastry and impart a sweet quality to the animals that feed on them. For the whole-hog experience, I have decided to follow Pollan and the other outspoken conscientious carnivores who've joined the ranks of the 14 million Americans who hunt.

Hawaii knows its game. You can eat wild boar sausage on stewed white beans at Kona Village Resort while the sun sets over the Pacific and you're serenaded by a slack-key guitar player; you can enjoy a roasted wild boar chop while sitting near the latest hot Hollywood director on a family getaway at the super-luxe Four Seasons Resort Hualalai; or, if you're in a more down-home mood, you can have pasta with wild boar sausage at the raucous Hilo Bay Café. Sure, there are other places where you can get in touch with the local foodways, but when given the choice, I'd rather rough it in the islands.

I question my decision when, at 4:00 a.m., I try to wake up with a grande Kona coffee in the passenger seat of Kona Village executive chef Mark Tsuchiyama's truck as we bounce along a ranch road. We're following Wade Cypriano, a meat cutter; his son, Wayne; and his friend Kalena Honda. They have dogs, a gun, and more than 50 years of hunting experience among them. "Why would I buy meat in a store?" asks Wade. "When I hunt, I know that it's a healthy animal that's totally organic and hormone-free." This is the best time of day to hunt, as boars are nocturnal feeders. As the sun rises, they head back to shady spots in gullies and under fallen trees to bed down. For boars, it's rush hour.

After Wade drops a 120-pound male, we hunt for

another five hours and see some 40 boars. But not one of them is big enough for me to take.

"Let me know if you haven't gotten a boar yet. If you haven't, just say the word and I'll take you hunting." That's a voice mail from Allen Clark Hess, the chef at the Waimea outpost of the classic Hawaiian regional cuisine restaurant Merriman's. Hess is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, a Big Island resident, and an avid hunter. He orders his wild boars from Tom Asano, the man who along with his boss, Brady Yagi, is responsible for getting USDA certification for Yagi's meat-processing company, Kulana Foods. That pork gets sent as far afield as Craft in New York and Cleo in Boston. I decline Hess's invitation to hunt, but ask him to cook me some of Kulana's macadamia-laced boar instead. At Merriman's Waimea, I have a tasting menu that includes thick-cut smoked boar bacon, garnished with local asparagus and tomatoes spiked with vinegar; boar pâté on *loco moco*, the Hawaiian diner favorite typically made with rice, egg, and hamburger; boar sausage in fried sage leaves; and, best of all, unctuous braised boar cheek with hand-cut cavatelli and fresh goat cheese from a nearby goat farm.

Time is running out, so I head for Parker Ranch, a sprawling 130,000 acres of rolling pastures, gullies, and hills stretching up the slopes of 13,796-foot Mauna Kea, where grass-fed cattle are raised and wild pigs thrive along with feral sheep, game birds, and deer. This time I go with James Babian, the executive chef at the Four Seasons. Though a hunting novice like me, he's game, so to speak. Our guides are Shane Muramaru, a police officer for 15 years and now the ranch's director of safety and security, and Jesse Hoopai, a third-generation chef-cum-*paniolo* (cowboy). Shane gives us *pipikaula* (Hawaiian beef jerky) to snack on. It's salty-sweet and still warm from the oven. Chef Jim is happy to be out of the kitchen: "Perfect *pipikaula*, an ex-cop with a truckful of ammunition, a dog named Bullet. This is good."

We drive for a while, see another 30 pigs or so, and then one that's ideal to take. A handsome thing, all black and P. 98 ▶▶



### Boar Hunting for Beginners

It's open season on boars year-round on the Big Island, with sightings at historic highs. If you want to get in touch with your inner Michael Pollan, here's what you need to know before you get your ethical and sustainable game on.

**GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.** You're going to have to wake up at an ungodly hour; trek from your hotel to a remote location, likely at an oxygen-deprived elevation, and run after boars, heart pounding, hand unsteady, and then try and get a clean shot. And that's if you're lucky. So bring a camera and enjoy the scenery—it might be the only thing you shoot.

**FIND A REPUTABLE OUTFITTER.** Parker Ranch, the Big Island's largest cattle ranch, is also home to some of the biggest feral pig populations. Their ranch hands are experienced hunting guides and will set you up with proper permits and a firearm. Prices start at \$800 (one animal per person). [parkerranch.com](http://parkerranch.com)

**ARRANGE FOR SHIPPING AND HANDLING.** Bring a cooler and some ice; if your guide is up for it (perhaps for a handsome tip), you can take some butchered, frozen portions back on the plane with you. It's kind of a hassle, but the bragging rights are without peer.



■ AT MERRIMAN'S WAIMEA, LOCO MOCO, MADE WITH WILD PIG; CHEF ALLEN CLARK HESS IN HIS HERB GARDEN; KONA VILLAGE RESORT.





### **Tusk-to-Tail Dining**

At the better Big Island restaurants, chefs are keeping wild boar—arguably more sustainable than more popular Hawaiian proteins like bigeye tuna and opah—in heavy rotation on the menu.

#### **MERRIMAN'S**

Peter Merriman was an early champion of the Hawaiian local food revolution. The Big Island outpost of his group of restaurants serves exquisite boar dishes, from boar bacon at lunch or dinner to a massive smoked chop at dinner. [merrimanshawaii.com](http://merrimanshawaii.com)

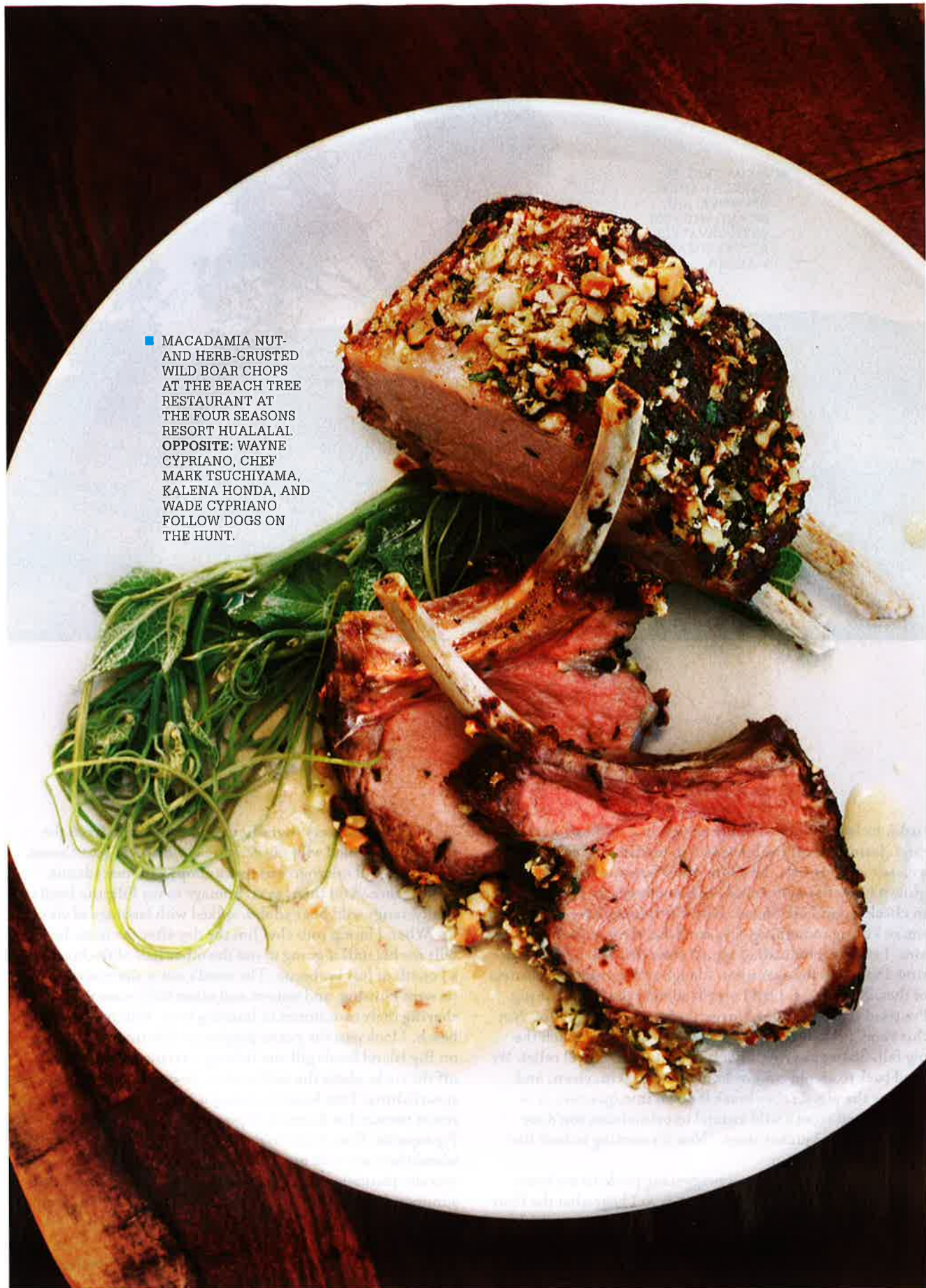
#### **KONA VILLAGE RESORT**

Wild boar marinated in garlic and ginger and then slow-cooked in a traditional La Caja China roasting box makes the lunch buffet at this retro-chic resort one of the best on the island. [konavillage.com](http://konavillage.com)

#### **BEACH TREE**

Call ahead to see if boar-hunting chef Nick Mastrascusa has any wild game specials on the menu. If he doesn't, this restaurant at the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai is still worth a visit for its modern Mediterranean menu, the view of the ocean, and the glittery scene. [fourseasons.com/hualalai](http://fourseasons.com/hualalai)

■ MACADAMIA NUT-  
AND HERB-CRUSTED  
WILD BOAR CHOPS  
AT THE BEACH TREE  
RESTAURANT AT  
THE FOUR SEASONS  
RESORT HUALALAI.  
OPPOSITE: WAYNE  
CYPRIANO, CHEF  
MARK TSUCHIYAMA,  
KALENA HONDA, AND  
WADE CYPRIANO  
FOLLOW DOGS ON  
THE HUNT.



■ A KOA TREE AT PARKER RANCH. OPPOSITE: BIG ISLAND WILD PIG WITH CAVATELLI AT MERRIMAN'S WAIMEA.



tusks, its back is turned to the trough in a standoff with the dogs. Jesse calls off the hounds. I'm holding a Marlin 30-30, a classic cowboy rifle. It's a how-the-West-was-won sort of gun; it's how the western side of Kona keeps its pig population in check today. I ask Shane about the firearm's recoil. "When you're killing something, you don't feel the gun kick." As I aim, I realize that in all of my 40 years this will be the first time I've killed my own meat. I laugh at the preposterousness of that. Next thing, I find myself silently thanking the pig. I've tried thanking a hamburger before, but it felt false. Not this time. I steady the gun, pull the trigger, and watch the pig fall. Shane was right. I don't feel the kick. I feel relief. We head back to an old cowboy homestead to skin, clean, and butcher the pig. As they break it down into quarters, it is transformed from a wild animal to primal cuts you'd see in an artisanal butcher shop. "Now it's starting to look like dinner," says chef Jim.

The next day, there's no swaggering pride in my heart, but something approaching gratitude as I hear what the Four Seasons kitchen does with my quarry. The members of the kitchen staff, many of them experienced boar-hunting locals, are excited by the quality of the meat, pale pink with a half-inch layer of snowy fat. What follows is the locavore meal of

my life. Almost every ingredient on each plate is from the Big Island: grilled wild pig skirt steak with local goat cheese, tomatoes, and microgreens; pork chops with macadamia cream sauce. And then, as an homage to my Filipino heritage, a salty, tangy wild boar adobo, spiked with lashings of vinegar.

When I bump into chef Jim the day after the feast, he tells me his staff is going to use the other half of the boar at a Fourth of July barbecue. The word's out at the resort that we went hunting, and waiters and other staff make a point of sharing their own stories of hunting boar. Walking along the beach, I look past the guests jogging or sunning, and I focus on Big Island locals gill-net fishing, carving edible limpets off the rocks where the surf crashes, or coming up for air after spearfishing. True locavore eating is everywhere here, often on resort menus that formerly depended on imported ingredients. Pig supplier Tom Asano told me that on the other side of the island there are wild pigs in the mango, banana, papaya, and avocado plantations. I make a mental note to come back next summer. Or, even more sustainably, given the carbon footprint of my overseas plane ticket, maybe I'll just move here.

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*Deputy Editor Hugh Garvey last wrote about Amalfi Coast-inspired cooking for Bon Appétit.*



## BIG ISLAND WILD PIG with CAVATELLI

PREP 1 hour TOTAL 4 hours

**4 SERVINGS** If you can't secure any Big Island wild boar, use some free-range pork instead. If you've got the time, try to order a boar shoulder from Texas-based Broken Arrow Ranch—a favorite of chefs like Dean Fearing—or send for a full-flavored heirloom pig breed like Berkshire or Red Wattle from Heritage Foods USA ([brokenarrowranch.com](http://brokenarrowranch.com) and [heritagefoodsusa.com](http://heritagefoodsusa.com)).

### pork

- 2 teaspoons fennel seeds
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika

- 2 teaspoons (packed) golden brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- 1½ pounds boneless pork shoulder (Boston butt) or wild boar, excess fat trimmed
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 3 cups low-salt chicken broth

### pasta

- 12 ounces cavatelli, campanelle, or tubular pasta (such as penne)
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled, pressed
- 2 cups diced plum tomatoes (preferably organic; about 14 ounces)
- 8 cups (packed) arugula (preferably organic; about 8 ounces)
- 1¼ cups coarsely crumbled soft fresh goat cheese (about 6 ounces), divided

**INGREDIENT INFO** Smoked paprika is sometimes labeled Pimentón Dulce or Pimentón de La Vera Dulce. It's available at some supermarkets, at specialty foods stores, and from [latienda.com](http://latienda.com). Wild boar is available from [preferredmeats.com](http://preferredmeats.com).

**PORK** Preheat oven to 375°F. Enclose fennel seeds in resealable plastic bag; using mallet, coarsely crack seeds. (Alternatively, crack seeds in mortar with pestle.) Mix seeds, smoked paprika, brown sugar, crushed red pepper, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon black pepper in small bowl to blend. Place pork on sheet of foil. Sprinkle spice mixture all over pork and roll pork on foil sheet, pressing firmly so spices will adhere.

Heat oil in heavy large ovenproof pot over medium-high heat. Add pork to pot and sear until brown on all sides, 8 to 9 minutes. Add 3 cups broth and any seasoning mixture remaining on sheet of foil; bring to boil. Cover pot tightly and transfer to oven. Braise until pork is very tender, turning pork every 30 minutes, about 2 hours total. Remove pot from oven. Uncover pot and cool pork in pot 1 hour.

Transfer pork to cutting board. Cut pork into ½- to ¾-inch cubes. Spoon off fat from top of sauce in pot. Return pork cubes to sauce in pot. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Chill uncovered until cold, then cover and keep chilled. Rewarm pork and sauce over medium heat until heated through before using.

**PASTA** Cook pasta in large pot of boiling salted water until tender but still firm to bite, stirring occasionally. Drain pasta. Set aside.

Melt butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic to skillet; stir 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and arugula and toss until arugula wilts, 2 to 3 minutes. Add drained pasta to tomato mixture in skillet and toss 1 minute to blend. Add 1 cup crumbled goat cheese to skillet and toss just until cheese softens slightly but does not melt, about 1 minute. Season pasta to taste with salt and black pepper. Transfer pasta to large bowl. Spoon pork and sauce over. Scatter remaining ¼ cup goat cheese over and serve.

FOR COMPLETE **NUTRITIONAL INFO** FOR ALL OF THE RECIPES IN THIS ISSUE, GO TO [bonappetit.com/recipes](http://bonappetit.com/recipes)