

Hawaii's Hanauma Bay named best beach in America

By CALEB JONES
Associated Press

HONOLULU — When you come upon an ocean bay that has features known as “Toilet Bowl” and “Witch’s Brew,” you may not envision a welcoming tropical oasis. But Hawaii’s Hanauma Bay, nestled inside a breeched volcanic cone on the southeastern shore of Oahu, has some of the state’s calmest waters, most pristine beaches and world-renowned snorkeling over coral reefs that teem with colorful fish.

For the second year in a row, a beach in Hawaii has been selected as the best beach in America by a Florida professor who’s made a career ranking and studying beaches around the country. This year’s top spot goes to Hanauma Bay, a picturesque nature reserve with gin-clear, turquoise water and abundant sea life.

Florida International University professor Stephen Leatherman, also known as Dr. Beach, uses about 50 criteria to assess and rank beaches across the country. In recent years, he has given extra points to beaches that prohibit smoking, saying cigarette butts are not only environmentally damaging, but can ruin the experience for beach-goers. Safety and environmental management are other major factors, he said.

“It’s so safe and easy. A lot of times if you want to see those kinds of fish you’ve got to go offshore, you’ve got to go take a boat ride somewhere,” Leatherman told The Associated Press in a telephone interview last week. “I’ve never seen so many fish swimming around your feet.”

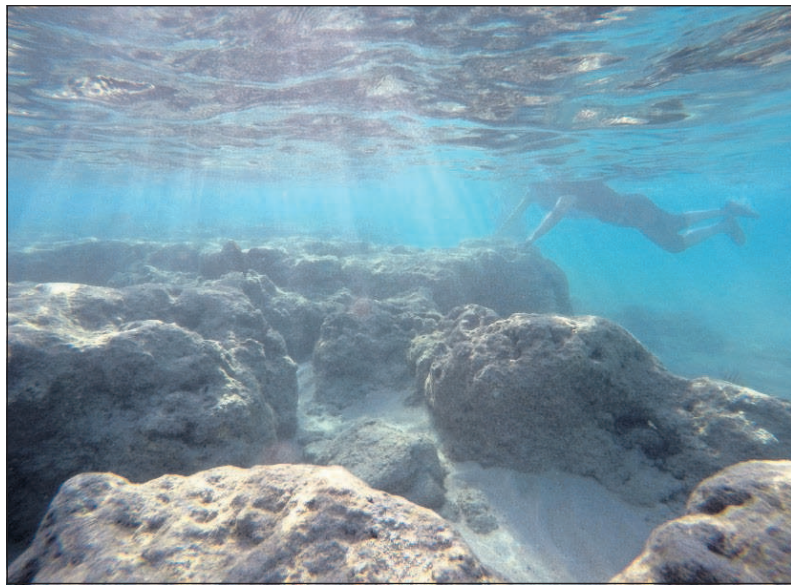
Hanauma Bay became a marine life conservation area and underwater park in 1967. In 1990, local officials formulated a plan to better protect the area. All first-time visitors who come to the popular snorkeling spot are required to watch an informational video that teaches them about preservation and conservation, as well as the safety rules for the bay. It’s against the law to mistreat any marine life in the bay, and visitors are not allowed to touch or walk on the coral reefs.

Leatherman says Hanauma Bay was the first beach in the state to ban smoking because they found that fish were eating cigarette butts.

“We don’t really want these cigarette butts on the beaches anyway, because kids eat them, too,” Leatherman said. “They’re disgusting.”



In this May 11 photo, the sun rises over Oahu’s Hanauma Bay near Honolulu. Hanauma Bay is No. 1 on the list of best beaches for the summer of 2016 compiled by Stephen Leatherman, also known as Dr. Beach, a professor at Florida International University.



In this May 6 photo, a man snorkels in Oahu’s Hanauma Bay.

Now all public beaches in Hawaii prohibit smoking, which helped give the edge to last year’s winner, Waimanalo Bay Beach Park on Oahu.

Now in his 25th year of ranking beaches, Leatherman has reset the list and allowed all beaches to be eligible for the top spot in 2016. Until now, any beach that was previously had been disqualified for another win, and Hanauma Bay

won the honor about a decade ago, Leatherman said.

“It’s one of the most unique beaches in the world, there’s no doubt about that,” he said.

Safety is an important factor in Leatherman’s decision, noting that the water in Hanauma Bay is relatively shallow and calm and that you don’t have to go very far offshore to see the marine life. The park also has lifeguards posted across the beach

and many signs warning visitors of the dangers that do exist.

The area is not without hazards, however. There have been 51 drowning deaths at Hanauma Bay since 1995.

Honolulu Emergency Services Department spokeswoman Shayne Enright told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Tuesday that inexperienced snorkelers often underestimate the dangers of swimming in the bay.

“It’s the lifeguard’s job to survey all these people who are face-down in the water and figure out who is in trouble and who is OK,” Enright said.

She said that there are some misconceptions that visitors have about snorkeling, especially that the activity is easy.

“If you don’t practice snorkeling, you will swallow water,” she said. “If you swallow a lot of water, you can actually paralyze your vocal cords and you’re unable to make any noise and panic sets in.”

Enright noted that while the waves rarely get very big in the bay, certain areas have very strong currents that can suck you out to sea. Areas known as “Witch’s Brew” and “Toilet Bowl” are both off limits because of the strong currents, she

Dr. Beach’s 10 best beaches for 2016

1. Hanauma Bay, Oahu, Hawaii
2. Siesta Beach, Sarasota, Florida
3. Kapalua Bay Beach, Maui, Hawaii
4. Ocracoke Lifeguarded Beach, Outer Banks of North Carolina
5. Coast Guard Beach, Cape Cod, Massachusetts
6. Grayton Beach State Park, Florida Panhandle
7. Coronado Beach, San Diego, California
8. Coopers Beach, Southampton, New York
9. Caladesi Island State Park, Dunedin/Clearwater, Florida
10. Beachwalker Park, Kiawah Island, South Carolina

said. There were about 650 rescues in 2015, ranging from people who were unresponsive in the water to those who simply needed some help getting back to shore.

Only four of the 51 drowning victims at Hanauma Bay since 1995 were Hawaii residents, 28 were from other countries and the remaining 19 were from out of state, according to the Hawaii Department of Health.

Yichuan Chiang, who has lived in Honolulu for about 45 years and comes to the park three times a week to swim laps in the “Keyhole” section of the bay, says the fish, scenery and warm water are the reasons he loves the beach so much.

“I don’t think there’s any other place like this in the state,” he said as the sun rose above the horizon on an early May morning. “There are probably 200 varieties of fish in the bay, so you’re bound to run into some of them every time you’re out there.”

Hanauma Bay is closed to visitors on Tuesdays, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day to allow the fish to feed without the stress of swimmers nearby. President Barack Obama spent New Year’s Day in 2015 snorkeling with his wife and daughters in the bay. They spent more than four hours at the site, which was closed to the public during their visit. The Obamas visit nearly every year.

There are only about 300 parking spaces available so guests should plan to arrive early if they want to drive to the bay. There are also tourist shuttle buses from Waikiki that operate daily.



The layover is a refreshing and fresh reinterpretation of the classic gin and maraschino cocktail.

Your aviation cocktail can't take flight? Try a layover

By J.M. HIRSCH
Associated Press

Can't get airborne with an aviation cocktail? You need a layover.

A friend recently mentioned that his favorite cocktail was the aviation, a sweet-and-sour gin and maraschino cocktail he'd had once — apparently expertly made — at a bar. In fact, he was so smitten with this drink, he'd asked the bartender for the recipe. He then dutifully hunted down the ingredients — or rather his close approximations of them — and tried his hand at the mixology. He's been disappointed every time he's tried.

How hard could it be? Apparently, quite. Though not due to the need of any complex cocktail skills. Like my friend, I was unable to source one of the key ingredients — creme de violette. It's pretty much what it sounds like, a purple liqueur that tastes and smells of violets. It lends a floral aroma and sweetness to the aviation, as well as a distinctive blue hue.

So I decided to improvise, aiming to retain the floral tones, as well as

THE LAYOVER

Start to finish: 5 minutes
Servings: 1

- 2 ounces gin
- 1/4 ounce maraschino liqueur
- 1/4 ounce elderflower liqueur
- 1/4 ounce ginger liqueur
- 1/4 ounce lemon juice
- Fresh mint, to garnish

Combine all ingredients in an ice-filled cocktail shaker. Shake for 20 seconds, then strain into a tumbler with ice. Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint.

the lemony sweet-and-sour notes. For that, I substituted a combination of elderflower liqueur and ginger liqueur (which gave my cocktail a refreshing snap). I ditched the notion of trying to replicate the blue haze that colors the real deal.

The resulting cocktail — which I dubbed “the layover” — was just as refreshing as the original, minus the fussy ingredient.

A leg of lamb that'll have guests reaching for seconds

By KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

A showstopper on the table, this was one of the lushest and best-received roasts I have made in ages, with the layers of flavor and texture bringing everyone back for seconds.

The meat is seasoned with garlic, orange zest and herbs and marinated overnight. Then the roast is covered in a thick layer of mustardy panko breadcrumbs speckled with fresh parsley which forms a fabulous crust. The crust falls apart a bit as you slice the lamb, but just scoop up the crumbles and serve them up with slices of tender, pink lamb.

If you don't have a big crowd, you can definitely make this with a smaller roast. Just adjust the ingredients down proportionately. Don't make yourself too crazy with the math — the amounts are really guidelines. You'll want to reduce the cooking time, too, aiming for an internal temperature of about 130 F for medium rare.

Or you can go for the better option: leftovers. We got lamb crostini, a Shepherd's pie, and a lamb soup out of our big gorgeous roast. Not a bit was wasted. Just ask my dog.

Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking.



Herbed leg of lamb.

HERBED LEG OF LAMB

Start to finish: Two hours and 45 minutes, plus overnight chilling
Servings: 12-14

Lamb:

- 1 (6-pound) boneless leg of lamb, rolled, tied
- 6 peeled garlic cloves
- Zest from 1 orange
- 1/4 cup fresh thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

Crust:

- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard, coarse or smooth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups panko breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

In a food processor, combine the garlic, orange zest, thyme and rosemary. Puree, then add the olive oil and blend to make a paste. Smear the paste all over the lamb, place it in a container or

deep bowl, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Meanwhile, let the lamb sit at room temperature for 30 to 45 minutes. Season the lamb with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, mix together 2 tablespoons olive oil, mustard and parsley, add the breadcrumbs and use a spoon or your hands to thoroughly blend. Press the mixture all over the top and sides of the leg of lamb, and place it in a roasting pan. Some of the panko mixture will fall off the sides; tuck it in underneath the sides of the lamb.

Roast the lamb for 15 minutes, then turn the oven down to 400 F and roast for another hour to an hour and 15 minutes, or until an instant read thermometer inserted into the middle of the roast reads 130 F to 135 F for medium-rare. Let the lamb sit for 20 minutes before slicing and serving warm.

Nutrition information per serving: 371 calories; 134 calories from fat; 15 g fat (4 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 145 mg cholesterol; 754 mg sodium; 10 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 0 g sugar; 49 g protein.