

**TROPICA CHEF DE CUISINE RICH HINOJOSA
AT THE WESTIN MAUI RESORT & SPA, KA'ANAPALI**

KA'ANAPALI BEACH, MAUI, HAWAI'I – Rich Hinojosa is the newly appointed chef de cuisine at Tropica, signature oceanfront restaurant at The Westin Maui Resort & Spa. In his present role, Rich is inspired to heighten the senses and tease the palate with a winning combination of Maui's famed local ingredients and Westin's branded cuisine that promotes a complete sense of renewal.

Prior to his appointment at the AAA four diamond resort, Rich was the executive chef and owner of CRAVE, a private catering company specializing in creating and presenting intimate, fine dining multi-course wine dinners in client homes. His list of past accomplishments include helping attain the highly-acclaimed Mobil and AAA restaurant rating. Rich was also a recent finalist of Hawaii Hospitality magazine's "Top Young Chefs To Watch" annual nomination of rising stars in their field.

Rich graduated from the Texas Tech University in 1994, specializing in Engineering, Business and English studies. His passion for food and wine influenced his decision to continue his studies at the Scottsdale Culinary Institute in Arizona where he graduated in mid-1998 with an Associate of Occupational Studies Degree in Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management.

Immediately after, Rich pursued a rewarding career in the culinary industry as a chef de partie at Azzura Point in Lowes Coronado Bay Resort, California. His responsibilities included supervising the garde manger, sauté entremetier, poissonier and grillardan. He was also responsible for daily inventory, ordering produce and seafood for the restaurant; assisting in creating new menus, amuse bouche and more.

In April 1999, Rich was appointed as the sous chef / praying monk chef / tournant at the Mary Elaine's in The Phoenician Scottsdale. During his three-year tenure, the fine dining restaurant was recognized with the Mobil Five Star and AAA Five Diamond ratings as well as the Wine Spectator award. Rich played an instrumental role through maintaining a high standard of excellence in his daily responsibilities that included keeping a good inventory of fresh fish, meat and other produce; forecasting, scheduling and controlling labor cost; and most importantly assisting the restaurant's executive chef James Boyce in menu preparation, creating new menu items, amuse bouche and distinctive daily features.

In his ten years of culinary expertise, Rich has demonstrated a positive and dynamic attitude, always willing to explore and branch into new and challenging aspects of the culinary industry. His boundless energy and creativity has spurred him towards achieving successes in all of his endeavors including owning and managing his very own catering company (CRAVE).

One of Rich's forte is in creating multi-course wine dinners that are not only a treat to the palate but visually exciting. He is personally involved in the various steps ranging from preparation and selection of menu items to presentation, service and wine pairing. His is a truly unique skill rarely seen in many up and coming chefs!

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Rich is married and has two daughters Addison and Madelynn. His favorite pastime includes spending quality time with his family, running and golfing. He completed his first marathon in June 2008. Rich is a fan of the San Antonio Spurs and enjoys listening to his favorite music by the Dave Matthews Band.

Situated on a spectacular stretch of the famed Ka'anapali Beach, the AAA four diamond Westin Maui Resort & Spa blends an endless array of activities and amenities with gracious aloha spirit, perfect for any Hawaiian vacation. This beachfront resort commands stunning views of the Pacific Ocean and West Maui mountains. Its newly renovated guestrooms and suites take advantage of the splendid views, as does the ocean-view relaxation lounge in the award-winning Heavenly Spa by Westin. Within this magnificent resort lies an 87,000 sq. ft. aquatic playground with five swimming pools and two slides. Steps away are two 18-hole championship golf courses, a shopping village and the soft sands of Ka'anapali Beach with snorkeling, scuba diving, beach volleyball, and chartered catamaran adventures. Surrounded by lush gardens, meandering streams and waterfalls, a plethora of fun awaits all hotel guests including activities such as stargazing, movie nights by the poolside, hula dancing, lei-making and koi fish feeding. Diverse flavors are served in dramatic venues such as the oceanfront Tropicana, perfect for catching a brilliant Maui sunset. The resort also offers the Westin Kids Club, Waialele Polynesian Luau, fitness center and bridal arrangements in picturesque settings. It's the place "*Where Heaven and Aloha Meet*[™]". Visit www.westinmaui.com.

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