

From top: The roasted beet salad at Andrea at The Resort at Pelican Hill dishes out watercress, goat cheese mousse and marconas; new executive chef Troy Mendoza.



CHEF CHAT

Splashing Out

Hawaiian and Italian food have more in common than you think. It's something **Troy Mendoza**, the new executive chef of Andrea (andreaanb.com), has long known. The Oahu native, who previously held posts at Alan Wong's Honolulu and Scarpetta in Beverly Hills, first came to the restaurant as sous-chef in 2016 and recently rode the wave to the top. Here, his good vibes. —KS

Congrats on the gig. It must be a thrill! I'm honored to be leading our kitchen. Whether I'm rolling pastas, simmering scratchmade sauces or sourcing ingredients, every day is an opportunity to create Italian dishes with a fresh point of view. **You got your own change of pace when you moved to SoCal with a surfboard in tow. Why was this right for you?** Hawaiian cuisine features a lot of Pacific Rim and Asian fusion, but I've always gravitated toward Italian. Moving... was the next step for diversifying my skills. **And you first cooked pasta at Scarpetta.** It was spaghetti pomodoro. I've cooked a lot of pasta since then, but that was the dish that started it all. **Any similarities between Hawaiian and Italian fare?** Both emphasize fresh ingredients and seasonal produce. They celebrate every component of a dish with simplicity and artistry. **How does that apply to your cuisine?** I'm fascinated by how you can coax so many flavors out of one ingredient by using different preparations. It sounds



counterintuitive, but sometimes adding more steps... refines an ingredient in a way you couldn't achieve with one method. **So this season...** Even in sunny O.C., winter dishes are all about warmth. I prepare apples soaked in spiced simple syrup, sous-vide, then roasted. I also enjoy elevating humble vegetables like celery root [so they] stand out on your plate. **Anything else?** In February, we launch an a la carte menu featuring imported *tartufo nero* [black truffles]. We'll be highlighting traditions from... Tuscany with original antipasti, rustic pastas and hearty meat entrees. **It's an iconic menu for Andrea—like poi is for Hawaiian fare.** [It] was a staple of my childhood! **Do you miss Oahu?** Every day! I haven't been back in three years, but my trip isn't complete without stopping by Zippy's to pick up a Hawaiian plate lunch to take to the beach. **Finally, what kind of surfboard do you ride?** A 9-foot longboard.