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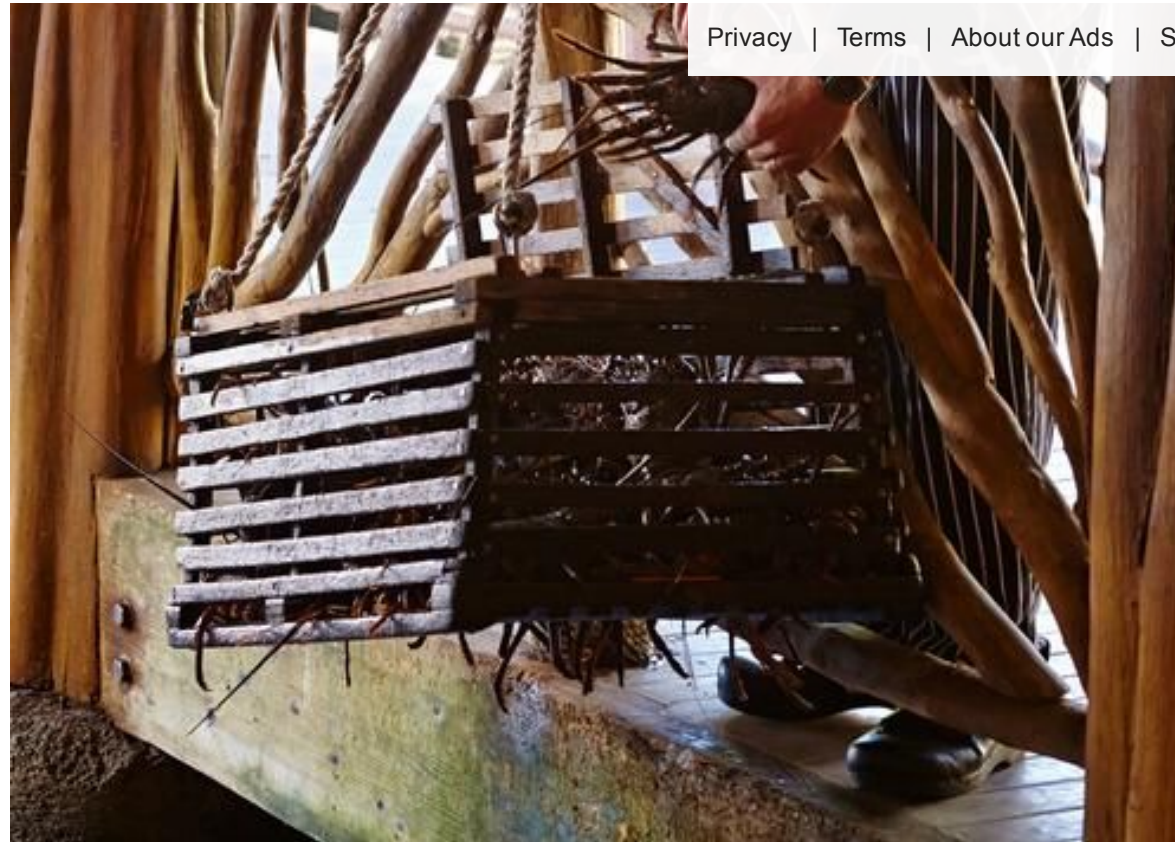
RESTAURANTS

# It Costs What? The \$116 Spiny Lobster

Lizbeth Scordo  
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*Welcome to **It Costs What?** We get the details on one luxurious, over-the-top, super-expensive dish to find out how it was dreamed up, what's in it, and whether it might just be worth it.*





*Chef Michael Lofaro and some of those hard-to-get Hawaiian spiny lobsters. Photo: Courtesy Grand Wailea*

**The Dish:** Hand-Caught Spiny Lobster

**The Price:** \$116 and up

**The Restaurant:** [Humuhumunukunukuapua'a](#) at the Grand Wailea resort in Maui. (And yes, there's a story behind that wild name.)

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**What's in it?** A wild Hawaiian spiny lobster, which has a large tail and no claws. Humuhumunukunukuapua'a charges \$58 a pound and only offers lobsters that weigh two pounds or more. They're prepared steamed or grilled and come with fried rice or a substitute side dish.

**How'd it get on the menu?** "There's no other restaurant in the state where you can have a lobster that's hours out of the water like this," Humuhumunukunukuapua'a executive chef Michael Lofaro tells Yahoo Food. "Guests get the experience of going down to the lagoon, choosing whichever one they want, and getting it hoisted up to order and sent to the kitchen."

**Why do they think it's worth it?** Catching a spiny is not easy, Lofaro explains, since their shells are super sharp and they often hide. "We have divers that go out just for us, bring the spinys in, and they're out of the water for just a couple of hours before they're in our lagoon," says Lofaro, who chills the section of the lagoon where he keeps the lobsters in order to mimic their natural environment. That's important, he adds, because when lobsters get stressed (which happens the longer they're out of the water or kept in a confined tank), they release an enzyme that breaks down their meat. "Here, you're getting happy lobsters that, as far as they know, are living the good life, which means you're getting the meat as good as it's going to get."

Endive & Radicchio Salad with Fried Oysters & Hazelnuts from 'Oysters'

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**Do we think it's worth it?** You can find a spiny lobster from another part of the world for less, but if you're looking for the upper echelon of freshness in a lobster that's wild *and* local to Hawaii, then yes. Nearby high-end restaurant [Nick's Fish Market](#) offers a six-ounce grilled spiny tail for \$55, but it's flown in from South America.

**What's the cost breakdown?** We reached out to five fish markets on three Hawaiian islands, none of which sells local spiny lobsters. [Tamashiro Market](#) in Honolulu sells spinys from Christmas Island, an Australian territory that sits in the Indian Ocean. "Locally they're very rare," says co-owner Sean Tamashiro. "We were getting ones from Hawaii for 15 or 20 years, but not anymore."

Tamashiro sells the Australian spinys for \$17.95 a pound plus a \$6 charge to cook and clean them, which comes out to \$42 for a two-pounder. That price, he says, is average for a Hawaiian fish market and is usually doubled on restaurant menus.

**Who's ordering it?** The restaurant sells 10 to 30 spinys a night, according to Lofaro. Some guests, usually from Japan, request theirs served sashimi style. Many diners ask for the largest lobster available, which is usually five or six pounds and costs upwards of \$300. "People want to go for the ultimate spiny experience," says Lofaro, "because if you miss it, you're not going to be able to be able to get it anywhere else."

Lemon-Rosemary Mignonette  
from 'Oysters'

Yahoo Food

Kimchi-Cucumber Relish from  
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