



Photos by Giselle Thompson

# Magic in Napo'opo'o

*Home's heritage as a gathering place is nurtured by owners Michael Martinage and Greg Nunn*

Situated above Kealahou Bay, Ka'awa Loa Plantation showcases sweeping views of the South Kona coastline. The home is trimmed with 2,600 feet of mango milled from a tree that once stood on the footprint of the house.



The stately porte-cochere creates a dramatic entrance. The "shipwright door" was designed to look like the back of a clipper ship.

**By Kristina Anderson**

“For the first couple of months we were here, people kept driving up to introduce themselves and talk story about this place,” says Michael Martinage of the spacious guest estate named “Ka’awa Loa Plantation” that he purchased with partner Greg Nunn in 2006. “We knew we had something special and called upon neighbors and kama’aina to give us more background and history.”

Located on 5.6 acres in upper Napo’opo’o, the 7000-square-foot, plantation-style home, built in 1995, had always been a gathering place and way station for friends, residents, visitors and folks passing through. It seemed to Michael and Greg that just about “everyone” in the area was familiar with the house and its ohana cottages. Somehow very appropriately, the house and grounds, which had always had a communal feeling, would now be renovated for a B&B, and the tradition of welcoming visitors from



A working plantation and coffee farm, the five-acre estate is located in the heart of the Kona coffee belt.



Michael grew up working at a family-owned grocery store in Cape Cod, where each of the seven siblings were assigned an aisle marked with a sign. Michael's sign now hangs in the kitchen.

faraway lands would continue.

Although the property needed a lot of work when they bought it, Greg and Michael took it on because they believed the project would bring them all they desired — to have a plantation guest-house that could also be a self-sustaining farm.

Stylistically reminiscent of the Manoa-era pineapple plantations of old Hawaii, the stately, two-story home features several themed guest rooms, connected by long hallways and decorated by Greg, who says the natural elements themselves (and sometimes, “Ross Dress for Less”) provide some of the best accessories. There’s also a hot tub, a traditional Hawaiian cedar steam room, outdoor lava-rock garden showers and even a wood-burning fireplace. ▶

HWN SOLAR SV; 57p11.02; 5.5 in; Black plus one; 376603



Greg's mother Kathy made all the bed throws, curtains and needlework.



The writing desk beneath a plantation-style window is a quaint retreat for guests.



This unusual “pineapple ball,” on display in the kitchen, grows naturally, each bud the start of a new pineapple.



A view from the makai side of the house. The enormous wrap-around lanai totals 2,000 square feet.

On the 2000-square-foot lanai, guests enjoy panoramic coastline views of South Kona from several rocking chairs and a Hawaiian pune'e (daybed). Anchored by enormous mango trees on either side, the house is trimmed with 2,600 feet of mango, milled from a tree that once stood where the house now does.

"We're always amazed at how beautiful mango is," says Greg.

When they bought it, the home was "well lived in." Everything needed to be repainted and refinished. The land had been untended for a decade. Greg took the reins for the home renovations and tends to the inside, while Michael, a 20-year resident of the Islands, is responsible for the landscaping and farming.

One of Michael and Greg's long-term visions is to make the plantation completely sustainable with its own farm products, thereby supporting the ideal agritourism model. The plantation is a working coffee farm and orchard with crops that include avocado, banana, mango, papaya, coconut, passion fruit, white pineapple, and of course, Kona coffee. ►



An outdoor lava-rock shower is just steps away from an ocean-view spa and a traditional Hawaiian cedar steam.



In their new orchard, Greg and Michael are growing oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons, limes, star fruit, lychee, breadfruit, Hawaiian noni, and jaboticaba. In the future, they plan to explore growing vanilla, cocoa and several varieties of bamboo.

“The plantation creates our own market,” explains Michael. “We feed our guests with the products. Every day, products can show revenue for the farm, so it’s a completely self-sustaining cycle. Everything supports and sustains itself.”

Both men have professional backgrounds in the hospitality industry that are complementary to running a B&B. Michael’s family owned a grocery store in Cape Cod where he worked growing up, and more recently, he owned a successful destination management company. Greg spent several years heading the housekeeping division for The Westin ►



The Mermaid Room is one of five themed guest bedrooms at Ka’awa Loa Plantation.

Maui on Kaanapali Beach, supervising a staff of 170. He's also a chef who enjoys cooking and can whip up a quick and delicious lunch or dinner for friends. Guests are free to use the home's large kitchen if they want to prepare a meal. Sometimes guests even make dinner for the hosts, and everyone eats together.

Michael admits they took a leap of faith when purchasing the property. The day they made the offer on the house, they were still on Maui, perhaps feeling a bit of buyer's remorse. Then they saw posters everywhere (part of a marketing campaign) that read, "Believe." They took it as good sign.

Michael also tells the story of when he first came to the house after the escrow closed and did some weed eating on the overgrown jungle around the property. Suddenly, a dollar bill floated out of nowhere and landed in front of him. A few months later, the same thing happened, except it was a five-dollar bill. And just last month, Michael was out gardening and came across a "play" million-dollar bill, as if to confirm the magic and mana of their Napo'opo'o property.

For both men, Ka'awa Loa Plantation fulfills a lifelong dream, and with the proper spirit and respect, all the details just seemed to fall into place.

"There's definitely magic here," says Michael. "There's magic on the island and there's magic in our lives." **AH**



The home is filled with personal treasures. The kapa cloth is a memento from Michael's father's service during World War II in American Samoa and Tonga.

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TEAK GARDEN ; 57p11.02; 5.5 in; Black plus one; 376011