



The Poke House

Say aloha to The Poke House, a fast-casual eatery that'll be surfing through the rest of South Florida soon.

Parrot-patterned wallpaper, tropical postcard-style posters, neon signage and driftwood walls. Tiny green potted plants, a communal surfboard table and beachy tunes. The Poke House has some serious surfer vibes, taking its Hawaiian inspiration from owner Memphis Garrett's years of living and working on the West Coast.

He spent 10 years with Los Angeles-based SBE Hospitality concepts—most recently Hyde Beach Kitchen & Cocktails in Hallandale—before setting out to open his own elevated poké chain, doing fast-casual poké like it hasn't been done before. The result is The Poke House, a fast-casual eatery perfect for a quick in-and-out lunch but that's also inviting enough to encourage guests to chill and stay a while. The Fort Lauderdale restaurant opened in October, hopping on one of the hottest food trends of 2016: poké, the popular Hawaiian dish of diced raw tuna.

Executive chef Jeremy Powell, who helped open Katsuya sushi bar locations around the world, has developed a Hawaiian-influenced, raw seafood menu that feels as clean and fresh as it is fast and affordable. The sushi-grade fish is flown in daily, and the fresh produce toppings—kale, avocado, mango, radishes and more—are diced every morning.

First-timers are encouraged to try one of two favorites—the Sunset Beach Hawaii bowl (diced tuna with red radish, avocado, scallions, sesame seeds, seaweed nori and more), or the Venice Beach Cali bowl (diced salmon with salsa verde, avocado, pickled ginger, seaweed salad, crispy lotus, masago and more)—before embarking on building their own. As a twist on the traditional poké, The Poke House even serves hamachi (yellowtail fish) as a topping. If you plan to dine at the restaurant, rather than run off with a blissful bowl, start off with the Pipeline Nachos—wonton chips topped with tuna or salmon poké, baby kale and avocado cream.

Those who do choose to "kick back and relax"—Garrett's primary hope for all his customers—can try Japanese saké on draft, house-infused sakés with flavors like charred pineapple, and even saké cocktails. The Poke House also serves beer (exclusively Kona from Hawaii) and wine, plus Harmless Harvest coconut water and all-natural Aloha Maid or Hawaiian Sun Nectar juices for the health-conscious.

With partners including restaurateur David Cardaci of Fort Lauderdale's Rhythm & Vine and Whole Enchilada, "CSI: NY" actor A.J. Buckley and several others, The Poke House is looking to expand to 10 locations. The plan is to open in Boca Raton and South Beach next, and as it does, we're eager to watch The Poke House ride its wave of success.

- Lyssa Goldberg

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