



TO HAWAII WITH LOVE

MIKI NGUYEN *to* JOEL KUWAHARA
OCTOBER 17, 2008, LANIKUHONUA, OAHU

PHOTOGRAPHY BY APERTURA | TEXT BY SHALINNA KEOUGH

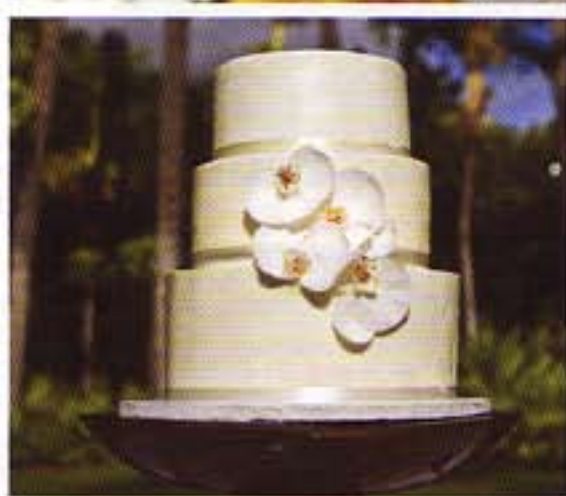
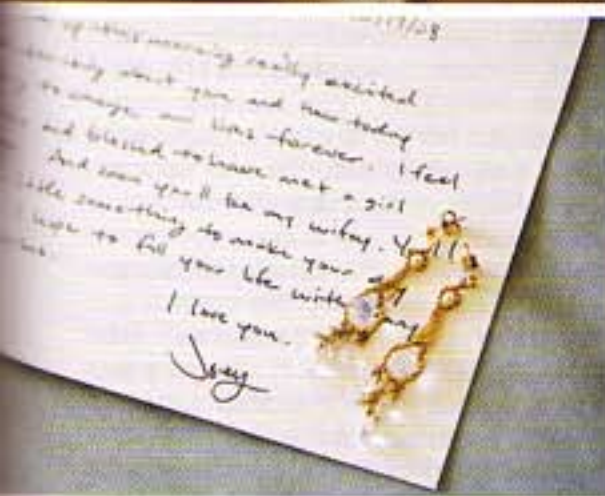
For Miki Nguyen, nothing is more emblematic of the warmth and love she feels for her husband Joel Kuwahara than a golden sunset. "I've always felt that there is something so romantic and passionate about that moment when the day is ending and the night is just beginning," she says. "I have a lot of emotional attachment to that vision." It was fitting then that Joel chose to propose to his sweetheart at dusk on a particularly gorgeous summer day in Hawaii. They savored their engagement on the North Shore of Oahu, then set out to plan a lighthearted celebration, one that would reflect their down-to-earth sensibilities.

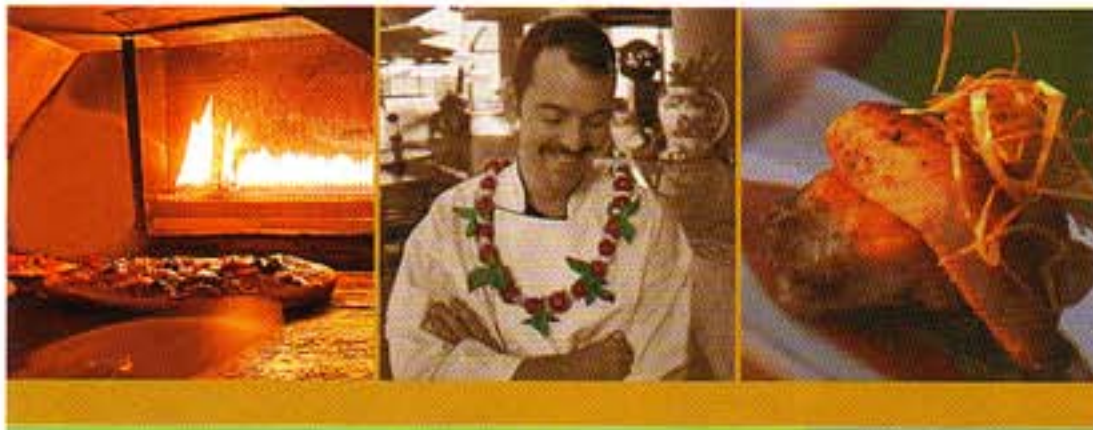




The pair's beginning was decidedly untraditional. A mutual friend insisted that Miki was "the perfect girl" for Joel, an animation producer in Los Angeles, and persuaded him to send Miki an email to introduce himself. At the time, Miki was consumed with her studies at graduate school and simply dismissed his message. Joel tried again and this time, he made an impact. Within days of their correspondence, Miki had developed an affinity for his magnetic candor, wit and subtle way with words. They decided to finally meet. Nestled in the back of a café in Hollywood, the couple shared stories and laughter for hours on end. "I'm a talker and he indulged me, I suppose!" she says. "There was something about the way he spoke—he was very approachable and genuine. I felt like I could open up to him, and I still appreciate his honesty to this day."







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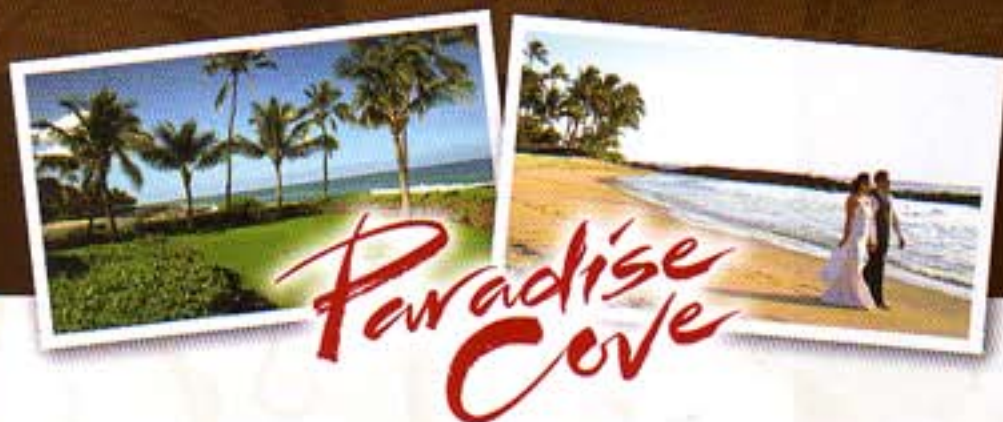


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Although the couple realized that their relationship was something special, it wasn't until Miki left the country to grieve her grandmother's death in Vietnam that they both felt a sense of real attachment. "I was having a difficult time dealing with that heavy loss and even though Joel couldn't be there, he was on the phone with me every night," she recalls. "I realized that he is the one person who brings me the most happiness and that is more than enough for me." Within a month of Miki's return, the couple was engaged and plans for a destination wedding in Hawaii were in full swing.

It was never a question of where. "We always knew that we would be married in Hawaii," Miki says. "The aloha spirit is so warm and welcoming, and as a couple, we have shared many special moments in the Islands." After attending their fair share of elaborate hometown weddings, the couple longed to create a more intimate celebration in a private, tropical paradise. "We wanted our wedding to honor the union of two people and the community that raised us—our family and closest friends."

To begin plans for the event, the bride flew to Oahu to meet her wedding coordinator, Sandra Williams of Finishing Touch, in person. "Sandra is the opposite of me in that she is really calm and nothing seems to rile her," Miki says. "I knew that's exactly what I needed in a coordinator." Sandra introduced the couple to Lanikuhonua, one of just a few private wedding sites fronting a secluded sandy beach on Oahu's southwest shore. They instantly fell in love with the picturesque location. "Sandra helped to convey my sense of style and bring my vision to life," the bride says. "I wanted the look to be fresh and modern with natural elements running throughout." The wedding invitation and itinerary for the week-long celebration arrived in a burlap fabric bag, carefully hand-sewn and assembled by the bride and her best friend. Since Joel has access to some of the best animators in the industry, their stationery featured playful renderings of the couple and scenes from the ocean to echo the island setting.

