

*Town of Oak Island
Business Bulletin's*

MEET THE OWNERS

Koko Cabana

Meet Austin Alfonso and Alexis Oxendine! Owners of Koko Cabana and other popular establishments Kai Joe's, Ruby's Coffeehouse and Eatery, Fizzy Jane's, and Café Koa, this couple's journey is a testament to passion, resilience, and community spirit.

Austin, originally from Boiling Spring Lakes, and Alexis, hailing from Pinehurst, have always been drawn to the kitchen. Their culinary adventure took a significant turn in their early 20s when they moved to Hawaii. It was there that they fell in love with the unique flavors and techniques of Hawaiian cuisine, an experience that would later shape their entrepreneurial vision.

Returning to the Oak Island area in 2016, they seized an opportunity to rent a space soon to be known as Kai Joe's. Their concept and experience quickly set them apart, leading them to be chosen from numerous applicants for the unique restaurant space in Oak Island. Starting on a shoestring budget financed through credit cards, the duo ran the restaurant with no other employees for the first four months, a true testament to their dedication and hard work.

In 2019, tragedy struck with a kitchen fire at Kai Joe's, but the adversity only brought the team and the community closer. With overwhelming support from the community, Austin and Alexis were able to open Koko Cabana, a concept modeled after their time in Hawaii. At Koko Cabana, almost everything is made fresh from scratch, reflecting their commitment to quality and authenticity.



What's truly rewarding for Austin and Alexis is the palpable desire from both customers and staff for their success. This mutual support extends beyond the confines of their eateries, as they actively give back to the community – supporting families in need, schools, and local charities.

*Koko Cabana opens for the
season on Friday, March 1*



Their journey hasn't been without challenges, most recently dealing with the new beach parking policies for their oceanfront restaurant. Austin remarked on overcoming challenges: "Don't let it stop you in your tracks, keep working towards a solution." This mindset has helped them not only overcome obstacles but also stay relevant, continuously evolving their food, systems, and overall approach.

Reflecting on their journey, Austin notes the loyalty and dedication of their staff, some of whom have been with them for six years, a testament to the loyalty from their employees. This sense of family and community extends to their customers, whose names they and all employees make a point to remember.

Austin and Alexis's story is more than just a tale of culinary success; it's about building a community, adapting to change, and never losing sight of the dream, no matter the odds. As they continue to innovate and serve the Town of Oak Island community, they stand as shining examples of what passion, hard work, and a bit of island flavor can achieve.



This series is an initiative of the Town of Oak Island Business Advisory Board. Please visit OakIslandNC.gov/BAB to learn more.

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