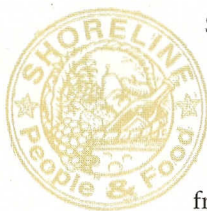


Leap of Faith



SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT Hawaii's Alenuihaha Channel gets its name from the laughter of the wind god as he pounds sailboats on the crossing from the Big Island over to Maui: Slap!—"Ha-ha!" Slam!—"Ha-ha!"

As my wife, Tiffany, and I cruised the Big Island's Kona coast on *Vixen*, our 34-foot gaff-rigged cutter, everyone we met warned us of the dangers of the channel,

schedule rewarded us with secluded anchorages, great snorkeling, and days eating coconuts and papayas. By the time we made it to the exposed anchorage Nishimura, on the northern point of Hawaii, it was time to make the jump across the channel.

Fearing how bad it might actually get, we set off at dawn, hoping to be across before the afternoon winds built. But the winds never came. In the early morning an already hot sun illuminated the desolate south slopes of Maui's Haleakala

Crater and shone over for hours. Four hours of motorizing later, the channel was still flat and calm. I held my breath, waiting for the wrath I was sure the wind god would eventually deal out. Was this the calm before the storm?

Around noon, a breeze picked up, and we sailed on to reach toward La Perouse Bay on the south side of Maui. This was beautiful sailing and then it got even better. We snagged a small tuna on our trailing lure! Moments later, we had him chilling on ice.

That evening, channel crossing completed and boat safely anchored, we dug into our abundant supply of papayas, harvested during hikes on the Big Island. Tiffany made a savory papaya chutney in which we baked our fish. As we went down for dinner, I thought about the pleasant sail across the infamous Alenuihaha. We'd been spared the wind god's wrath. I couldn't help but laugh.

Bruce Halabis



The best way to fully savor a fresh catch of fish is to complement it with the tangy flavor of chutney.

a 30-mile slot between the volcanic mountains of Maui and the Big Island. Time after time, we were told about how the funneling of the trade winds, the strong currents, and standing waves could combine to make a rough crossing of epic proportions.

In no hurry to tackle the channel, we took our time working our way along the western coast of the Big Island. Our lazy

Baked Tuna with Papaya Chutney

- 1 medium onion
- 1 serrano pepper (or other hot pepper)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups papaya, diced (or substitute mango)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 limes, juiced
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tuna steaks
- Fresh cilantro, for garnish

Sauté onion and pepper in olive oil. Remove from heat and combine well with next four ingredients. Place tuna steaks in an oiled baking dish and ladle the chutney over the steaks. Cover dish and bake for 15 to 20 minutes at 350 F or until tuna is tender but flakes easily when probed with a fork. Garnish with fresh cilantro. Serve with rice.