

we got maui-ed

By Debbi K and William D Kickham



What's more romantic than getting married? Getting re-married!

Adding a marriage vow renewal to your travels can be your very own visa to more romance, and a spiritual endeavour that fosters deeper appreciation of your partner. It can also be a novel way to celebrate your wedding anniversary, or just re-capture your honeymoon.

Why re-commit to your wedding vows? Because a vow renewal ceremony not only reminds me of why I married my dear husband Bill in the first place, but inspires me to be the best person that I can be in our marriage - and not only on that special day. Re-marrying your partner can re-ignite your attraction, fan the flames of passion, and let you re-live your wedding day, one of the happiest and most romantic days of anyone's married life.

With divorce rates sky-high, anything couples can do to strengthen their bond is a wise decision. I believe that it's only after you're married that you can totally and truly appreciate your partner and the ways in which he or she challenges you to grow.

With that in mind, we decided to have a destination marriage vow renewal at one of the world's most beautiful places: the Fairmont Kea Lani Resort & Spa on Maui. Kea Lani means Heavenly

White. This beautiful tropical Hawaiian resort offers oceans of advantages for travellers, including all-suite accommodation with living room and a small kitchenette with sink, coffeemaker, microwave and refrigerator. There are villas with plunge pools that include complimentary luxury rental car. The resort is on stunning Polo Beach in Wailea, an upscale destination resort community and KO Restaurant is the best on Maui offering gourmet plantation fare you won't find elsewhere. And Fairmont's resort-wide Lifestyle Cuisine includes heart-healthy, sugar-balanced, vegan and gluten-free menu choices.

We were celebrating 12 years of marriage, 16 years together, and almost 20 years of knowing each other. Our special day started when Polly Xiong, the hotel's Catering and Convention Services Manager, visited our suite to give us a detailed overview of our vow renewal and drop off the bouquet - a magnificent arrangement of purple orchids of several varieties, proteas, roses in white and hot pink, and calla lilies. (The hot-pink roses perfectly matched Deb's nail polish.) At 4:30 sharp Polly escorted us down to the Pacific Terrace for a twilight Oceanside ceremony.

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The fun started a short while later at 5:00 PM when we walked down the finely-manicured lawn and a carpet of rose petals, the islands of Lanai and Molokai glimmering in the distance. Our non-denominational officiant, Reverend Alapaki "Al" Terry, greeted us at the top of the aisle and embarked on a beautiful journey of words describing our marriage and our sacred union, including a recitation of marriage vows in Hawaiian, which we repeated after him. Our 18-minute ceremony included a lei exchange.

Bill presented me with a lovely tuberose lei – followed by the traditional three kisses – and I gave him a lei of green maile leaves. Reverend Terry spoke of the beauty of our marriage, and how blessed we are to have found each other. We also recited our own personal vows to each other, which we had written and rehearsed privately, and separately, in order for them to be a surprise.

A few feet away a special table had been set up with sparkling cider for us to toast with, and a delicious strawberry cream cake that the hotel's pastry chef had baked for us. We toasted each other and our marriage, and posed for photos, which were shot by Mike Sidney. We were thrilled and delighted in the professional manner in which Mike posed us, told us how to place our hands, where to look – unforgettable memories! We ditched our shoes and followed Mike onto Polo Beach, where we walked in the surf, posed amongst the rocks, and drew our names in the sand. What fun!

But the best was yet to come. Upon re-entering our suite, the entire area was strewn with rose petals and plumeria flowers, their trail leading right to our bed. There we found a bucket holding a bottle of Sparkling Cider, our newly signed marriage certificate, a plate of chocolate-covered strawberries, and a gift of fragranced bath salts. What more could anyone ask for?

As if things couldn't be any more memorable or lovely, we enjoyed an indescribably delicious dinner in a private cabana at KO. This distinctive restaurant, inspired by the diverse ethnicities of Portuguese, Filipino and Chinese who live in Hawaii, is in a league of its own. Under the direction of Executive Chef Tylun Pang, you'll discover exciting entrees such as macadamia shrimp with local lavender-honey sauce, macadamia-nut butterfish (the best we've ever eaten), and mashed Molokai sweet potatoes.

At the end of our day, Bill and I read a meditation entry from a book we read every night: *The Couples Companion* written by Dr Harville Hendrix (who you probably have seen on the old Oprah TV show). We vowed, again, to each other, to stay together on the journey always, and to count every day - not just vow-renewal day - as blessed and special.

How lucky we are to have each other; not to mention the beautiful photographs! Thinking about the love we share, those photos are the ultimate romantic souvenirs of our Maui trip. Having a vow renewal and saying "I Do, I Do" at Maui's Fairmont Kea Lani Resort is your passport to more romance. ♥

