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From me to TYO

One visit to this fine Japanese restaurant deserves another

• By SHAWN RODGERS

TYO is anything but your average sushi joint. It is without a doubt on my list of top sushi places in Tel Aviv. I have been there numerous times and can say that each time, I have left happy and satisfied.

The restaurant really emanates that intimate flavor, with its Japanese minimalist setting and sushi chefs on display so diners can delight in watching their artistic skills. Seating is available at the bar, in the main dining room and in the outdoor area. The curved lit-from-beneath bar is designed so that no matter where you are sitting, you can see everyone else at the bar. The bar is stocked with a wide range of liquors, and the bartenders are practiced in the art of cocktail creation. This is a great place to go with a group of friends or have a perfect date night.

At TYO, sushi is so much more than food. It is an art, and the chefs are truly masters of their craft. The menu created by master sushi chef Yama Sun rises above and beyond the realm of simply sushi. It offers a large variety for sushi lovers and non-sushi lovers alike. It includes soups, tempuras, yakitori,

noodles, makis, hand rolls, sashimis and much more.

Our waitress was absolutely amazing. She seemed very busy rushing around but never once kept us waiting for anything.

Before the appetizers appeared, we had a couple of refreshing cocktails, including the Spicy Spirit and Lychee Break (both NIS 44).

Starters included the nagy maki (NIS 79), which consisted of asparagus and green onions wrapped in kobe beef and hot teriyaki. Each bite just melted in my mouth. The beef was sliced very thinly and was very tender. The Gunkan combination (NIS 89) consisted of spicy tuna-wrapped rice and foie gras; salmon-wrapped rice with salmon caviar; and unagi wrapped with foie gras chili and fresh herbs. All three pieces were fall-apart tender and super rich and flavorful. Clean and fatty and just fantastic fish.

The tataki beef (NIS 69) was made up of very tender thinly sliced beef with some grang ginger, green onions, chili and garlic chips on top. You could see the marbling on each beautiful slice of beef. The ponzo sauce made the meat even juicier. Really great flavor combo and texture.

The variety of sushi at TYO

appears endless, and we sampled some of the most interesting combinations. Most of the rolls are eight pieces, but for some you can order half. We began with four pieces each of the spicy tuna (NIS 36 for half) and spicy toro salmon (NIS 36 for half). Both rolls were super creative with bursts of flavor. The spicy tuna had quite a zing and was fresh. The orange tobiko added the crunch and texture, the avocado was the mild factor, while the cucumber was crisp and refreshing. The freshness of the salmon toro was unbelievable. The roll was plump and simply melted in the mouth. This was followed by four pieces each of the grouper roll (NIS 34 for half) and grouper wasabi (NIS 36 for half). Both were delicious.

After a bit of a breather, it was on to the mains. First up was the miso-glazed black cod (NIS 145), which was out of this world. The fish was perfectly cooked with crispy slightly burnt outer edges and juicy melt-in-your-mouth meat underneath. It came with flavorful mushrooms, green asparagus and crunchy rice fingers. Everything in that dish was delectable.

This was followed by the tori katsu curry (NIS 75). The curry had the right consistency and spice heat, the katsu was a light golden brown without being overly breaded or greasy, and the meat had almost no fat. Our plates also came with a large side of rice; and there were carrots and potatoes mixed in with the curry sauce as is typical with Japanese style curry plates.

Then came dessert. We were pleasantly surprised by the dark chocolate citrus mousse, as well as the chilled strawberry soup with strawberry sorbet (NIS 42). Both are new additions to the menu and were equally deliciously decadent.

Overall, the service was impeccable, the ambience elegant, and the food sensational. I will definitely go back to sample even more of the delicious dishes and revisit some of the wonderful flavors I can still savor.

The writer was a guest of the restaurant.

TYO
Not kosher
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