

Sushi Tokami

Tokyo's Michelin-starred omakase restaurant brings a world-class tuna experience to Hong Kong.

Text by Mandy Li

Sushi Tokami in Tokyo is a destination for gourmet travellers. Opened in Ginza by Yukitaka Yamaguchi in 2013, the boutique sushi joint won a Michelin star in 2014 and kept the honour in 2015. A fast climber in Tokyo's competitive culinary scene, it serves only an omakase menu and is widely acknowledged for the unrivalled quality of its tuna.

"My family has been running a tuna speciality shop, Yamasachi in Tsukiji Market, for three generations, supplying excellent tuna to sushi shops in Japan, including three-Michelin-starred Sushi Saito," Yamaguchi says. "After I inherited the shop, I had always been thinking it's a shame that I wasn't able to see eaters' smiling faces after having our tuna. So I started my own sushi joint, and I am happy to be in touch with my customers directly now."

In the interest of promoting tuna culture, Yamaguchi swiftly agreed when a loyal customer suggested starting a Hong Kong branch. Located in a quiet corner of bustling Harbour City, it aims to provide a serene experience for serious diners. It was a good decision. Once the door closes, the restaurant is calm, hushed, with a fresh scent of hinoki wood and minimal decoration to create a clean, peaceful space.

Like its Tokyo shop, it serves only omakase and tuna, naturally, is the star. We started the journey with a tuna tossaki roll made with an unusual cut from near the head of the fish and made flavoursome from constant movement. Combined with warm sushi rice prepared in Edomae style with red vinegar, the roll was sweet and deliciously oily. We were also impressed by the maguro, chutoro and otoro sushi, and ended the remarkable meal with tuna bone collagen soup.

"Our tuna is all caught by pole and line as opposed to large-scale industrial fishing. It avoids overfishing and gives time for baby fish to grow. They are wild fish with a richer flavour and none of the unwelcome taste of fish feed that's common in farmed fish," Yamaguchi says. "We only use Japanese spring water, with a pH value of 9.9, to brew tea and cook rice for a sweeter taste and better texture. We have a rigorous standard when it comes to our food, and we hope to see satisfied smiles on our customers' faces – that has always been our reason for opening Sushi Tokami." ■



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SUSHI TOKAMI



1 Tuna Tossaki Roll

Yamaguchi decided to start the omakase with this quickly assembled roll to ensure hungry diners could have something to eat as soon as they were seated. It turned out to be more than just a quick fix for hunger pangs. We were deeply impressed by the sweet and oily flavour of the tossaki, cut from near the tuna's head and available only in small quantities. The sweetness was enhanced by warm rice prepared with red vinegar and crispy seaweed.



2 Seasonal Snack

The snacks change regularly according to what's in season. We tried three, starting with abalone cooked in sake, kombu and water. The flesh was delightfully chewy and packed with umami. Smoked mackerel came next and we loved how the subtle aroma of sakura wood enhanced the fatty meat without overpowering it. But our favourite was kawahagi fish in liver sauce. Pleasantly al dente, the liver delivered a unique flavour without a hint of fishy taste.



3 Tuna Sushi

The tuna arrived in the wake of a few pieces of white fish sushi in carefully planned progression. Shiny red maguro was cut with the fibre and, with a touch of soy sauce, it was soft, flavoursome and tender. Chutoro had clear lines of delectable fat running across the meat, but no sinew. More white than pink, the otoro was creamy and melt-in-the-mouth tender. This is top-standard tuna.



4 Kuruma Ebi Sushi

These imperial prawns were huge, about the size of a finger. This was our second time trying this sushi and in our last experience the prawn was fully cooked and a little dry and chewy; this time the quality had significantly improved. Cooked medium, it was tender with a far more obvious umami flavour. We loved the natural sweetness from the red vinegar rice.



5 Tuna Bone Collagen Soup

Instead of dessert, we ended the meal on a high with a bowl of clear soup with a visible piece of tuna sitting at the bottom of the graceful bowl. It was very hot, which made it unexpectedly soothing to drink. The taste was pure and sophisticated, with just a few chives to enliven the flavour. After the large meal, we loved the petite portion and the way it comforted our full stomachs.

BILL

(Dinner for one)

1) Omakase
(includes tuna roll,
appetiser, sashimi, snacks,
grilled fish, 14 pieces of
sushi and soup) \$2,000

Total: \$2,000

* Prices and menus subject to change without notice.