

# Dining Out

October 2007

With Gloria Sheldon

## SUSHI LOUNGE

TOTOWA 235 Route 46 West 973.890.0007

MORRISTOWN 12 Schuler Place 973.539.1135

HOBOKEN 200 Hudson Street 201.386.1117

Discovered: a place that appeals to the senses, a trendy, glitzy, gleaming paen to pleasure that will knock you out.

So good that AOL's on-line City Reviews voted it "the best sushi in New Jersey," and "the best place to bring a first date" and "the best place for late-night conversations."

The place is the Sushi Lounge, so good and so startlingly beautiful that it has opened in three high-power locations in just a few years -- in Morristown, in Hoboken, and now, as of June in Totowa.

Designed by a prominent architect, all three locations are very trendy, Totowa boasting black slate floors, a lounge with an ever-hopping, fully stocked bar, centered on an eye-catching fireplace filled with fireglass beads that capture and enhance the flames.

The lounge bar and sushi bar offer flat screen TV's for your viewing pleasure, a full wine and Saki (hot and cold) list, and an extensive, inventive Martini and cocktail menu. Wine and Saki can be had by the bottle and by the glass.

Add to this, a communal table, where friends can gather and talk, drink and dine, and a wall of suspended glass filled, at the moment with 500 bottles of Japanese vodka, forming a divider between the lounge and the comfortable dining room. The bottles change; the effect remains dramatic.

The food commands our attention. We started with a Lounge Mojito, one of an inventive selection. Martinis are half price on Wednesday, all day, and during happy hour Monday through Friday 4 pm to 6 pm. Lucky us.

Presentation is important here. Our appetizer choice, boneless barbecue spare ribs, arrives centered in blossoms of Bibb lettuce, with a divine sauce.

Next a watermelon salad, full of exotic fruits, and then a sampling of their famous rolls. We tried spicy tuna, mouth watering freshness in a thin crust of sticky rice.

The special rolls include the much-praised Optimistic roll, with tuna, salmon, avocado, masago and crisp tempura flakes rolled in a soy wrap and served with three special sauces -- sesame, jalapeno and sweet wasabi



*"Trendiest Restaurant In New Jersey"*

mayonnaise.

Another favorite, according to our attentive waiter (an aspiring actor, of course) is the Chilean Sea bass, sauteed, marinated in an yuzu and soy glaze, and wrapped in soy paper with avocado.

For those whose tastes lean toward the West, there are American and Continental dishes, fused with Asian flair. Examples are roast duck, braised red snapper, salads like chicken and lobster, grilled flank steak and Kobe beef hamburgers (lunch menu.)

Other choices run the gamut of imagination. Their sushi chef (from TAO in Manhattan) and their Continental chef (formerly of the Ritz Carlton) work together to satisfy even the most esoteric appetite. Sushi and sashimi, a la carte, include sea urchin, Stripe Jack, Arctic Char, and even Amberjack, a sort of baby yellow tail, imported from Japan.

If you would enjoy seeing your sushi sliced and prepared, sit at the sushi bar, tell your waiter what you want, and enjoy the show.

Desserts, all made on the premises, boast their own menu. We devoured the delicious Maui Nachos (cinnamon and sugar dusted wontons topped with tropical fruits, raspberry coulis and caramel sauce, topped with white shaved chocolate. You may feel impelled to kiss the chef.

Other desserts include Mocha Creme Brulee, Fusion Truffles and Mocchi, wonderful ice cream flavors like green tea and red bean, wrapped in sweet rice paper.

Catering is done on the premises, for up to 50 guests, in a private room or you may indulge at home, with a sushi chef and all that good food sent to you by the Sushi Lounge, making your invitations the most sought-after in your crowd.

The cool lounge ambience makes it the place of choice for the in-crowd. A D.J. is on hand five days a week, and there is live jazz every Sunday night. The candle-lit wall, the music, the infused saki, the freshest of sushi, all add up to making the Sushi Lounge a trendy, hot new find.