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Starters: Sushi Lounge in Totowa

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The Record

Friday, July 27, 2007

By ROBERT BIESELIN
STAFF WRITER

Starters is a first look at recently opened restaurants. It is meant to be a descriptive glimpse, not a critical review, of interesting new venues.

First came Sushi Lounge in Hoboken. Three years later came Sushi Lounge in Morristown. Three years later, Joe McCafferty has unveiled his third restaurant, Sushi Lounge in Totowa.

Like its sister establishments, Totowa's newest sushi shop blends old and new. Black hardware fills the 100-seat restaurant, contrasted by white plates and napkins, silverware and ornamentations of copper. A large two-pane glass partition separates the two dimly lit dining rooms, while a communal table separates the restaurant's full bar from surrounding tables. Seats also are available in front of the sushi bar.

"We redid things and put together some upscale designs to make this place a little different from a traditional sushi place," McCafferty said of the building, which used to house Calico Kitchen. "The real priority, though, is the food. We have some dishes we just can't make fast enough." Familiar Japanese dishes pepper the menu,



THOMAS E. FRANKLIN / THE RECORD
▲ Waitress Krista Wolford with a maki combination dish.

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including tempura, teriyaki and toro, but the big catches, McCafferty said, are a pair of rolls unlikely to be found elsewhere. The "optimistic roll" features tuna, salmon, avocado, tempura flakes and masago, a caviar from Iceland, wrapped in soy paper and served with three house sauces. Chilean sea bass highlights another roll, marinated in a yuzu and soy glaze and wrapped in soy paper with avocado.

Other notable wraps include a spicy banana roll and a gourmet bite sporting Kobe beef (which is also available in a 12-ounce strip loin). The restaurant also moves a large amount of Thai basil chicken, McCafferty said.

"We pride ourselves on sushi, but we also offer some inventive fusion cuisine," he said, touting the jasmine tea steamed halibut, which is served over Okinawa potatoes. "We also have daily specials ... a daily ceviche and daily dessert special, too."

DJs spin music until 2 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and live jazz is played from 6 to 10 p.m. Sundays.

Sushi Lounge is at 235 Route 46 west, Totowa; 973-890-0007. Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Tuesday, 11:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Credit cards: AE, MC, V.

If you know of a new restaurant that should be featured in Starters, e-mail pitcher@northjersey.com or call 201-646-4351.

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