

TUCC celebrate their fifth birthday at Sumosan Japanese Eatery

BY DAVID PELUCHETTE
AND LARISSA BABIJ

Sumosan restaurant, which was chosen by The Ukrainian Connoisseurs Club for its next meeting, is located at the prestigious Premier Palace Hotel, but relatively unknown around Kyiv partly because of a lack of advertisement. Sumosan restaurants, which have locations in London and Moscow, are acclaimed for their superb cuisine and elegant interiors, having received accolades from restaurant critics and guides since their debut in 2002. Their London restaurant can count among its regular patrons such celebrities as Andy McDowell, Christina Aguilera, Keanu Reeves and Will Smith along with top racecar drivers, models and tennis stars. As for Kyiv Sumosan, it certainly become an attraction for local celebrities. Its interior is modern yet decidedly swish with high ceilings and good ventilation, pine parquet flooring, a sushi bar, a cocktail bar along with two private rooms complete with modern Japanese grills and seating for 6, for a more personal dining experience.

This being my first UCC event I was welcomed with a complimentary aperitif and had time to observe the scene. The members of the club were an interesting mix of Ukrainians and Expats from the local business community. The ladies were elegantly dressed and looked ravishing, which partly explained the jovial mood among the male connoisseurs. On the whole the atmosphere, considering the venue, was pleasantly casual and social.

As with all events of TUCC the evening began with a few words from the president, Terry Pickard, about the restaurant and the rating system. The chef, Spartak Hairetdinov, and the restaurant's Sommelier then followed to introduce each dish along with the wines accompanying each of the five courses.

The first course was an assortment of sushi which included a California roll, Tuna roll with a spicy sauce, Sushi sake with salmon, Sushi unagi with grilled eel and Sushi hotategai with scallop. To complement the sushi a tangy ginger over a mint leaf was served and of course the wine – Frans Hass Manna 2002, a light yet fruity

white wine. Having Sushi could be an intimidating task, leading one, like myself to always opt for the Chicken Teriyaki in a desperate attempt to avoid having to decipher the sushi list. So at Sumosan I experienced a Sushi reawakening!

The second course was the Lobster salad with a spicy sauce. As the chef pointed out that all their ingredients are fresh and the Lobster salad – morsels of juicy lobster imbedded in a fresh crisp lettuce served with a spicy sauce was no exception. The wine served with salad was a Pouilly-Fume de Ladoucette 2004, intense and complex with impressive length, its citrus and mineral characters complemented by hints of vanilla and spice. It was certainly one of the world's great Sauvignon Blancs!

Next we were received the Black Cod with miso sauce. The Black Cod which is actually a white fish, marinated in and served with a thick mouth watering honey sauce. The Cod was succulent with thick tender pieces, perfect for a little extra dipping in the honey marinade left on the side. It was complemented with Parnard I le de Vergeleses 1-Cru Domaine Chandon de Briailles 2001. Its flowery fragrance left a freshness on the palate. In fact white wines dominated the evening as most of the courses were light, this naturally being Japanese cuisine. As with most whites these were served chilled, what could have been better on a hot summer's evening?

The Spare ribs with Castel sauce were served for the fourth course. The pork ribs were grilled to perfection and presented with a honey mustard sauce. The meat was tender and light, ideal considering the hot weather we've had this past week. The wine, a Quintarelli Valpolicello 1997, was a deep Italian red, but a tad on the rough side as more than one guest had noted.

The fifth course was naturally a dessert – a Marzipane cake. The dish was made with a sweet, almond tasting nougat layered with unbelievably thick Japanese ice cream and topped with redcurrant. The ice cream was so thick in fact, that one could not tell that it was ice cream. The wine to go with it was a Vidal-Fleury Muscat de Beaume de Venise 2003 which is from the southern Rhone village of Beaumes



The Ukrainian Connoisseurs Club gathered this time at Sumosan eatery, situated at the high-end Premier Palace hotel to appraise its atmosphere, service, and most of all, its Japanese food. (Pavel Terekhov)

de Venise in France. This sweet, golden-colored Muscat went well with the almond flavored cake. To complete the meal I opted for an espresso.

Sushi and Japanese cuisine in general as I learned, can be the most compelling and pleasurable culinary experience you can have – granted you do it right. Think of the night as a journey with unique stops along the way. Get acquainted with each one until you reach the ultimate destination: pure bliss. At the end, I did not feel overly stuffed nor did I feel hungry, in fact, I felt quite satisfied and all that remained were fond memories of the pleasures of eating.

SUMOSAN
5-7/29 Tarasa Shevchenka
Bulvar, Premier Palace Hotel,
537-4537
English menu: Yes
English-speaking staff: Yes

Dining in the golden shadow of
the Golden Gates

Refreshing dining at Fontan

Exiting the Metro station Zoloti Vorota, you can't miss the yellow canopies casting their radiant glow on the Golden Gates. They encircle one of Kyiv's six historic fountains built in 1899, based on Parisian designs and protect patrons from the scorching midday sun or the occasional sun shower. Aptly named Fontan, this summer cafe is an extension of Pantagruel Tavern, which shares its kitchen. (on the other side of Yaroslav the Wise's 11th-century fortifications) and sponsored the fountain's 1997 restoration.

One recent warm summer evening, our party landed at the only empty table, right next to the fountain. True to the nature of a summer cafe, the tables are green aluminum, yet the cushioned chairs are quite comfortable. We immediately noticed that side of the restaurant opposite us was much cozier, enclosed by leafy green shrubs rather than our cordon of park benches where people sitting directly behind us formed a smoking, chattering wall.

The gold-shaded space was full of couples, groups of friends, business colleagues – both local and international – even a table of street musicians fresh from their gig. One party even brought their dog, who kept trotting around the fountain as if contemplating whether or not to jump in, and a small enclosed playground in the corner provides a diversion for the kids. Though intimate conversation can be difficult over the gurgling fountain, constant buzz of street noise, and perpetual motion of tables changing patrons, most people were here for the fresh air and atmosphere. Beer, wine, and coffee – not dinner – graced most of the tables, so as we waited for our dishes to arrive, we wondered what was in store.

The menu is easy to get through, with a limited selection of standard European dishes in each category of salads, appetizers, fish, meat, omelets, and dessert. The wine list is equally

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