

LIFE & TIMES **FOOD**

Fine serving of Japanese

It's more than just the food.

Japanese cuisine involves all the five senses, writes **Tan Bee Hong**

YOU no longer have to drive all the way to Kuala Lumpur to dine at Kampachi as it has opened an outlet at Plaza@Jaya33, Petaling Jaya. The two other outlets are at Pavilion KL and Troika.

The Kampachi brand is obvious the minute we step into the restaurant. Classy chic is reflected in every piece of furniture and even on the walls and ceiling.

Budget is definitely not on the designer's mind here. I love the textured wallpaper with patterns highlighted with lighting. Smaller rectangles of the same Japanese paper hang in regimented layers over the sushi counter for a zen feel.

Strange pod-like wooden structures catch our eye. These turn out to be circular seating that revolves on an axis to offer greater privacy.

On one side, floor to ceiling clear glass show the after-work traffic on a Wednesday evening. Hmm... I'm glad to be sipping green tea and poring over the menu instead.

THE MENU

Chef Looi Weng Leong was formerly at the Pavilion outlet, so his food is not totally alien though I can see interesting additions to the menu.

We start with kanpachi carpaccio (RM150 for 15 pcs). Each slice of yellowtail is topped with salmon roe, uni (sea urchin) and chopped scallops and a light soya dressing. Just fold the kanpachi over the topping and pop into the mouth to allow the flavours to create a riot on the palate. Feel the globules of roe popping under slight pressure and the

delicate nuance of the ocean in the creamy uni.

We move on to shake kawa salad (RM28) or salmon skin with roe and flakes. I really didn't think anything could be as good as the carpaccio. But Looi proves me wrong. The slices of deep fried salmon skin totally disintegrate in the mouth and the crisp salad leaves make a great accompaniment. Unfortunately, this popular salad is not always available as there is limited supply of salmon skin. So do ask for it when you make reservations.

Hotate butter fumi (RM42) is a whole Hokkaido scallop pan-fried in butter to bring out its most endearing side. The scallops are so fresh and sweet that I lose myself in the pleasure of the moment, allowing table conversation to fade to inaudible levels.

There are three types of mushrooms — shimeji, shitake and enoki — under the scallops, each equally delightful.

Under makimono, we spot shake aburi maki (RM65) among a list of



Crispy salmon skin is added to the shake kawa salad.

PICTURES BY KHOO SU TING

Kampachi

Where

1st Floor, Plaza@Jaya33
Tel: 03-7931 6938

Opening Hours

Lunch: Monday to Saturday, noon to 3pm

Dinner: Daily 6pm to 11pm

Getting There

Opposite the old Jaya building.

What's Cooking

Japanese fine cuisine

Must Try

Hotate butter fumi

You'll Pay

A la carte: RM100-RM200.

Sundays and public holidays: Kampachi buffet from noon to 2.30pm. Adult: RM118++. Child 5-10 years: RM68++.

Atmosphere

Contemporary

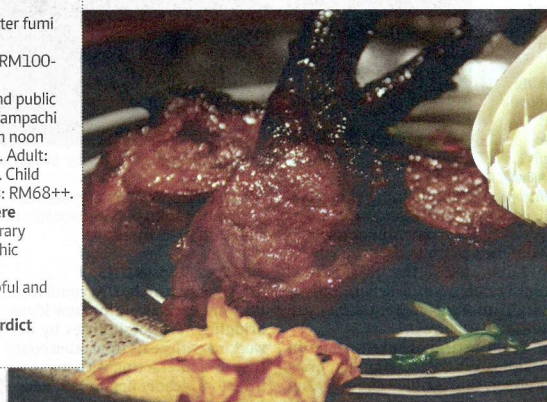
Japanese chic

Service

Polite, helpful and attentive

Overall Verdict

Must try



Grilled lamb rack marinated with miso bean paste.

seven maki varieties. The seared salmon roll topped with grilled eel is a big serving with vinegared rice stuffed with cucumber, avocado and crab stick and wrapped with salmon. This is lightly seared and then topped with a thick slab of unagi kabayaki. Absolutely delicious.

There are only a handful of restaurants where kinki (rockfish) is served as the fish doesn't keep well even under the most exacting conditions.

Looi has deboned the fish and grilled the fillet with just a dash of salt to bring out its sweetness. Just add a squeeze of sudachi lime (from Tokushima prefecture) and perhaps a dab of grated radish and soya sauce. The Japanese are pretty enamoured of this fish with succulent white flesh and a pink skin but it's not really my favourite, especially considering its price at RM120 per 100g. Each fish weighs about 400g.

Though seafood reigns in Japanese restaurants, the lamb saikuyoyaki (RM60) will satisfy any meat lover.

The grilled rack of lamb is marinated with miso bean paste and served with boiled green sprouts and mushrooms in a citrusy yuzu dressing. The lamb is so delicious we happily lick the bone clean.

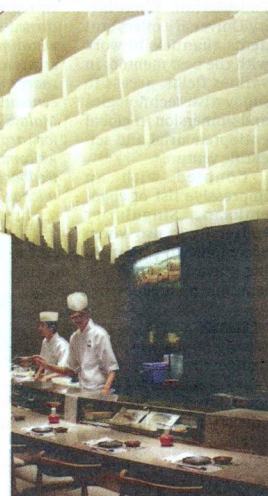
I love cold noodles. It's hard to decide between inaniwa and himi udon. The latter wins. The gourmet udon is not offered in many places and definitely worth paying a little extra for. The firm texture is a joy to bite into.

Another item that piques my interest is kamo seiro soba (RM36). I'm not aware that duck features much in Japanese cuisine but the duck soup and meat go extremely well with the soba.

SET SATISFACTION

At lunchtime, bento sets are a favourite and there are quite a variety, including hime gozen, designed for light eaters and weight watchers.

I'm not, so I ask for soba & chirashidon (RM45) which has both noodles with tempura prawns and vinegared



Sense of zen in the small rectangles of Japanese paper hanging in regimented layers over the sushi counter.

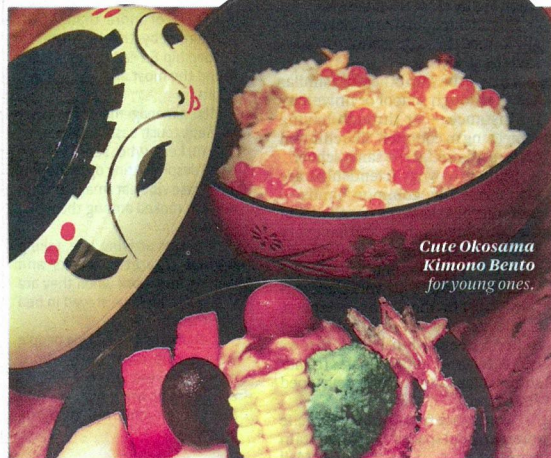
rice topped with raw fish, salmon roe and seaweed. A small portion of fresh fruit and miso soup complete the meal.

Children are not forgotten here. They get their own bento sets in triple-layer lacquer boxes with cute designs of bears and dolls to excite their appetite.

The Okosama Kimono Bento (RM28) has a layer of rice at the bottom with an assortment of eats in the middle comprising tempura prawn, fish ball, mashed potato, salad and fresh fruit.

For dessert, Looi recommends ameera tomato and yuzu sorbet. A tomato for dessert? I don't even like it in salad.

But this one is a winner. Skinned and almost frozen, the juicy tomato is so sweet it will be more comfortable in the fruit category (which it is, actually). And the yuzu sorbet does a great job of refreshing the palate before we head off into the late-evening traffic.



Cute Okosama Kimono Bento for young ones.