

PROMISCUOUS PALATE

Sushi selections for every taste, budget

There are three types of sushi lovers: sashimi snobs who have a didactic approach toward their love for raw fish (California rollers, be



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damned); the "McSushis," sushi fans who like everything tempura and doused in Japanese mayonnaise and eel sauce; and those who

fall in between.

This category of sushi lover can respect the sushi chef's work of art — meticulously sliced pieces of toro plated like edible figurines. These folks also get down and dirty with the drive-through, indiscriminate sushi lovers who only require flavor, not art. The following list celebrates Miami's more avant-garde sushi adventurer.

There's something unadulteratedly metropolitan about being able to purchase spicy tuna and Boston rolls from a drive-through window, especially at \$3.90 a pop.

At the love-it-or-leave-it Tokyo Bowl on Biscayne Boulevard near the 79th Causeway, these are the perks of the joint. For those who have a little more time on their hands, the all-you-can-eat sushi for \$14 includes everything from California and J & B rolls to a dish of chicken teriyaki.

Flavor rules in specials like the American Dream roll, (\$7.95), a lush ensemble of shrimp tempura, eel and cream cheese lathered in avocado and masago — the roe from smelt fish.

There's no greater aphrodisiac than the aroma of ocean breezes while cobia sashimi almost wiggles on the palate. At the outdoor



DINKINISH O'CONNOR/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

TASTE SENSATIONS: After finishing his usual dish of baby octopus, Benjamin Horn, 7, digs into ice cream and edamame.

Lapidus Lounge Bar at The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach, Master Sushi Chef Iwao Arai serves patrons poolside sushi from 2 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

In a scene of tables, plastic wicker chairs and full bar, sarong-clad patrons are serenaded by live music while they feast on more upscale spicy tuna cilantro roll, (\$8) and fresh sashimi platters of cobia (\$3.50), salmon (\$7) and tuna (\$3.50).

The tuna tataki (\$16) is seared tuna with capers in a truffle ponzu sauce served with wakami, a savory sesame cured seaweed. California rolls get an upgrade in Arai's rendition of jumbo lump crab, avocado and flying fish roe (\$10).

Hamachi (\$8), sea urchin (\$6) and blue crab (\$4) platters boast a tropical island

theme — the slices of raw fish and seaweed look like tropical fruits and freshly cut grass. This sushi cabana is no Nobu, but it's comfort sushi, for those who definitely don't do Tokyo Bowl. Humidity is deadly on champagne, so stick to the Pearl or Ruby sake (\$9) or Sapporo beer (\$7, late night).

Weekend sushi attacks can be adequately satisfied at Sushi Republic. This neighborhood staple feels like an old Tuscan restaurant with its brick flooring, small open kitchen, burnt orange walls and warm, friendly atmosphere.

Set on Bal Harbour's Harding Avenue strip, the Republic offers everything from thinly sliced pieces of yellowtail (\$12.95), snapper (\$9.50) and flounder (\$11.95) — all served with ponzu

sauce — to the more jazzy dynamite roll, an ensemble of scallop, crab, masago and Japanese mayo (\$6.50).

Add barbecue whole squid (\$7.95), edamame (\$3.95) and baby octopus (\$6.50), and even the sushi snobs might have a good time.

Wash down with plum wine (\$4.25 by the glass, \$16 by the bottle) and a little litchi sorbet (\$2.95).

From the deep-fried chicken roll called katsu (\$7.50), to the sushi and sashimi combinations that include steak teriyaki (\$18.95), the sushi possibilities are endless at Sushi & Thai Kitchen in North Miami's West Dixie Plaza.

Hidden between a Metro PCS store and a Family Dollar outlet, this Asian diner-style menu boasts more than 140 items just like Eddie Hills and

THIS WEEK'S ESTABLISHMENTS

Here are the establishments noted in this week's column:

- Tokyo Bowl
12290 Biscayne Blvd., North Miami
Call: 305-892-9400
- Lapidus Lounge Bar at The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach
1 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
Call: 786-276-4000, ext. 4333
- Sushi & Thai Kitchen
14530 W. Dixie Hwy., North Miami
Call: 305-940-1000
- Sushi Republic
9583 Harding Ave., Surfside
Call: 305-867-8036

Sushi Thai in Hallandale Beach, the elder sibling restaurant. The sushi menu includes the usual McSushi suspects — California, Alaska, dynamite and dragon rolls.

More interesting rolls include the *caliente* roll — fried white fish, avocado, asparagus, cucumber, spicy mayo and masago (\$3.25 for hand roll, \$6.50 for roll) and kimchee roll — conch, spinach, asparagus, cucumber and masago served with kimchee sauce (\$3.50 for hand roll, \$5.50 for roll). I am not sure if this is the Korean spice, and neither is the manager.

While the seating area is quaintly Japanese, its alter ego mirrors a Chinese takeout motif and this speaks to the kitchen's primary strength — basil fried rice and the fried chicken wing special.

The Promiscuous Palate is a biweekly feature capturing the adventures of local cuisine. Feedback and suggestions are welcome at promiscuouspalate@yahoo.com.