

# Genki

by Richard Langley



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I will admit that my experience with Japanese cuisine is limited. But recently, craving an alternative to the myriad of standard seafood, steak, Southern, and international fare in Buckhead, I ventured to Genki.

En route, I was thinking more about the parking situation than the food. I'm not into adjusting my dining schedule because of limited parking. Fear not, Genki provides adequate parking and entrances at both the front and the rear.

Entering at the front, I checked out the roomy deck that makes one privy to the sights and sounds of Buckhead. Once inside, I took inventory of the surroundings. I was relieved to see both the waitstaff and the patrons dressed as casually as myself. The former were young, lively, and unpretentious; the latter urbanites and artistic city dwellers. The highlight

of the interior, however, was the 60-foot open kitchen and sushi bar, which gives Genki a coffeehouse/warehouse feel unique to Japanese eateries. The enticing aroma was as inescapable as the vibrant Japanese artifacts and artwork and the soothing tunes that wafted throughout.

The hostess informed me that I could sit anywhere I liked. Wanting a secluded locale to struggle with the chopsticks, I chose a four-person table in the back. Her informal, yet receptive manner was indicative of all the staff and made for a comfortable experience.

The menu, along with the list of international and domestic spirits, and the dreaded chopsticks, were already on the table. I definitely wanted to deviate from my usual selection at a Japanese eatery: sauteed scallops or steak. No problem! Genki's menu is rife with

intriguing (and reasonably priced) entrees, soups, salads, and of course, sushi and noodles. I am not a sushi connoisseur, but with the sushi bar nearby and the couple in front of me devouring a large tray of tempting sushi, a small sampling was inevitable. My server recommended one piece each of salmon and tuna sushi (\$1 for each piece). Even a finicky eater like myself found the sushi fresh and tasty. More varied sushi is available in rolls of 6 to 8 pieces per order (\$3.95 to \$6.95) or in special rolls (\$5.95 to \$24.95).

Saving myself for the entree, I missed out on such salad and soup treats as soybean-based broth with tofu, scallions, wakame seaweed, and mushrooms (\$1.95) and chicken katsu salad (\$8.95). My entree, the savory and not-too-salty Japanese chicken curry, was worth the sacrifice. All of Genki's entrees are served in a large bowl, along with a medley of fresh vegetables. Other tantalizing entrees include grilled eel with a teriyaki glaze (\$10.95) and grilled or tempura batter fried shrimp (\$8.95).

Although pleasantly full, I didn't want to miss dessert...especially with ice cream available. I indulged in the tempura-fried ice cream with mandarin sauce. A bit overpriced at \$6.50 for the portion provided, the combination of rich ice cream and lightly crisped mandarin sauce was divine. Other confections include chocolate crepes with vanilla ice cream (\$7.95) and green tea ice cream (\$4.75). There's live music on Sunday and Monday nights and a DJ on Tuesday night.

Without a doubt, Genki's quality fare, setting, and service will expand your dining horizons and appreciation for Japanese cuisine. **N**

