

Azuma

Level 1, Chifley Plaza
Sydney NSW 2000

Review Date: 2 December 2009

Total Cost: ~ \$110 per person

Attendants: Michael Zheng, Michael Lip & Jeffrey Chen

Official Rating: 1 Chef's hat in Sydney Morning Herald's *Good Food Guide 2010*

Review:

The first Japanese "hatted" restaurant we tried offered some surprises, but lacked the variety in ingredients. There was an overemphasis on tuna dishes. Not that that's a bad thing, but it did hint at a lack of variety.

Seasonal Appetiser: White sesame tofu

Quite unique and definitely made in-house. The sesame seeds are mixed into the tofu. The texture is different to normal tofu. It was more abrasive and less brittle. A nice way to start the dinner.

Amuse Bouche: Prawn, Cod fillet, Spinach and Oyster

Every piece in this amuse bouche was good. The oyster was fresh, as was the prawn. The spinach was good, but would have preferred Japanese seaweed to go with the rest of the dish. My favourite out of the lot was the cod fillet. It was firm, like a piece of chicken, but had a slightly salty flavour.

Entree: Assorted Sashimi

We got two pieces of salmon and three pieces of tuna. The salmon was very good. But the tuna was a bit stringy. Not the standard that we expected from this restaurant.

Entree: Azuma's Unique Sushi

There was one each of salmon and tuna sushi. I personally preferred the salmon sushi. It was more flavoursome. However, I don't consider either of them unique, as they can be found in other sushi parlours.

Soup: Chawan-mushi (egg custard)

The egg custard is the most surprising and best dish of the night. It contained a mushroom, a scallop and a prawn. It would have taken a lot of mixing and matching for the chef to figure out the perfect combination to put into the custard. In the end, he got it absolutely spot on. The result is a perfect egg custard, with a perfect texture. The flavour of the custard was alive with the perfect combination of

seafood, mushroom and egg. If you take your time to enjoy this dish, each flavour hits your taste buds at distinct stages. Without a doubt the best dish of the night.

Main: Assorted Tempura

The tempura was good, without capturing the imagination. Most other restaurants would be able to serve something similar.

Main: Premium Wagyu Sirloin Steak

This wagyu steak was better than the one I had at Rockpool Bar & Grill. However, it was still a little bit too chewy. I am yet to taste that perfect piece of wagyu steak. Perhaps my expectations are too high?

Main: Seared Tuna

The third tuna dish of the night and probably the most unique one. The searing helps bring out the taste and texture of the tuna. The citrus soy sauce also adds a lot of flavour.

Main: Udon Noodle

This dish is a last ditch effort to fill the diner's stomach. Nothing special about it and it reeks of desperation. Needs to be more creative with this dish.

Dessert: Crème Brulee, Chocolate Mousse cake and Raspberry Sorbet

The crème brulee was perfect. Not too sweet and just a little bit crusty on top. The chocolate mousse cake was good. The raspberry sorbet was not my favourite, but that's because I don't like raspberry.

Summary

There were some excellent dishes in this degustation menu (see amuse-bouche and chawan-mush), but there were some that lacked imagination (see udon noodle). There was an overemphasis on tuna. Overall, an enjoyable dinner, at a reasonable price compared to other places.

Scores:

Quality of food	=	7
Value	=	5
Service	=	9
Ambience	=	9
Cleanliness	=	10