

# Itadakimasu!

“A New Taste Adventure at the Sushi Counter”



寿司カウンターに座るのは、どうも気が引ける。でも日本人倶楽部の寿司チーフシェフ、三谷富彦さんは、そんな初心者にやさしい。香港での経験が長く、倶楽部に来て6年。カウンター越しの会話もはずむ。先付をいただいた後、三谷さんと相談しながら、鰻のたたき、水茄子、白海老の軍艦巻き。そして、握ってもらった鰯のえんがわに、「ふふふ」と顔がほころんだ。



写真上から

- ① 先付
- ② 「今日はキンキとウニがお勧めです」と三谷さん
- ③ 鰯のえんがわ握り
- ④ 鰻のたたき



Sitting at the sushi counter in a Japanese restaurant can seem like a daunting prospect. Being a relative latecomer to Japanese cuisine and not speaking a word of Japanese, the idea of sitting across from an expert sushi chef was always terrifying. How would I know what to order?

Fortunately, you need have no such fears at the Japanese Club. Experienced sushi master, or *itamae san*, Tomihiko Mitani, has been manning the Club's sushi counter since 2010, and sees it as his mission to make customers feel welcome and relaxed.

On this occasion, we began our meal with a beautifully presented selection of cold appetizers, including tender squid (*ika*) rolled in cod roe and served with cucumber jelly, seasonal pike (*hamo*) – a Kyoto summer favorite, fragrant cubes of bonito-jellied crab, and crispy sea eel (*anago*) spine. This was followed by chopped horse mackerel (*aji*) with ginger and scallions, and fluke fin (*engawa*) sushi, a cut from the very edge of the wing of the fish, which has a fattier and firmer texture than its flesh.

At Mitani-san's recommendation, we ordered a delicate white shrimp (*shiro ebi*) *gunkan maki*, or battleship sushi, and a dish of *mizunasu*, a unique type of Japanese eggplant that can be eaten raw, in this case with *tosa* soy sauce and bonito shavings.

There are plenty of tempting sushi and sashimi choices on the menu and the majority of the seafood is sourced fresh from Japan. You can also order items from the *Sakura* menu – the only two dishes that cannot be served at the sushi counter are ramen and curry.

Chatting with Mitani-san and his team only adds to the enjoyment of the meal. Sitting at the sushi counter has certainly expanded my Japanese food horizons. Why don't you give it a try?

By Georgina Challen