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The Washington, DC metro area's magazine for music, entertainment, nightlife and culture.

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Food & Drink

Sushi Four Ways

Sushi Four Ways

Don't you hate when you follow a friend's restaurant recommendation, and the "amazing" burger they told you about tastes like cardboard to you? We hate it, too. People's tastes are different. And forget about restaurant reviews. Half the time, we frankly have no idea what they're talking about (we've yet to discover how "sophisticated" can legitimately be used as an adjective to describe how something tastes). So, we've decided to try something different. Four reviewers, one food. Real people. Like you. Sharing the places they go to in language that makes sense. One of them is bound to be your taste bud soul mate.



Photo credit: Marisa Gaspierg

The Sensualist
Carlos, 26
Writer

Zengo
A blushing Geisha arrives, sits atop my sleek wood table at Zengo, and coaxes me into the right state of mind to appreciate the Latin-Asian fusion fizzing around me. The vodka, sake and cherries of this specialty cocktail allow me to almost taste the ambience. A trendy mobile dangles above the concrete staircase that connects the swanky first floor lounge to the more dining-focused second level. Textures, colors and lighting create a harmonious space that begs to be touched and admired. The Girl from Ipanema playing over the speakers inspires my friend to order a Caipirinha—a Brazilian drink made with cachaca, lime and brown sugar. Although there is a dish to satisfy just about any Latin-Asian food craving, we order the four types of sushi rolls. We circle our way around the aesthetically pleasing sushi; each roll's flavor trumping its neighbor. My friend, a writer, bites into the Angry Zengo—yellowfin tuna, avocado, cucumber, and sesame chile chipotle rouille—and licking his lips says, "It's going to be difficult not to use the word orgasmic in your review." I place a bit of ginger over the salmon, blue crab, tobiko, and smoked chile jalapeño aioli that are fusing together inside the Volcano roll; it erupts on my tongue and my toes curl: Simply orgasmic.
Zengo, 781 7th St., NW, 202-393-2929, www.zengorestaurant.com.

The Trendsetter
Lisa, 25
Legal Assistant

New Reader Posts

- 12/21 John Creamer & Stephane K @ Five
- "Barack The Caucus" Watching & VA/DC/MD Primary Kickoff Party
- Bluegrass-Sat night (12/22) @ Tiffany Tavern!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- "BEST of BOTH WORLDS" NEW YEAR'S EVE at RNR Bar!
- Buy 2/9-2/10 On Tap Ski Trip to WISP b4 fri for early bird discount!
- On Tap's CD Release Party at Continental on Jan 12th at 8pm! No cover!
- IOLE! ! live rumba and flamenco
- Icon California vs Icon Italian Wine Dinner - January 29 2008
- Winter Austrian Wines at the Austrian Embassy - January 24
- 12/14 HECTOR ROMERO (Saw Recordings) @ FIVE
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LeftBank

Sushi is a meal I like to enjoy with a group of friends, sampling from as many different rolls as possible and trying new combinations. Leftbank, in the heart of Adams Morgan, is a perfect venue for such sampling and for a stylish crowd of sushi eaters. The interior has a retro-chic cafeteria feel. Communal tables line the front of the large dining room; orange pleather booths and yellow water glasses brighten the white walls and floor. On the weekends, the restaurant converts into a lively lounge. The sushi menu at Leftbank has traditional rolls and nigiri as well as a few eclectic choices, which immediately piqued the interest of my party. Our favorites were from the special maki menu, with both the dragon and tiger rolls earning rave reviews. The seafood was fresh, the avocado ripe, and each roll skillfully crafted. The presentation of each dish at Leftbank shows a commitment to the artisan side of food: the dragon roll looked as though it might slither right off the plate. Sushi, while a highlight at Leftbank, is not all the restaurant has to offer. The menu includes an array of small plates and entrees ensuring the satisfaction of all tastes in a large group. Leftbank, 2424 18th St., NW., 202-464-2100, www.leftbankdc.com.

The Vegetarian

Monica, 24
Editor

Sakana

When you're a vegetarian, there are just two crucial words involved in rating a sushi restaurant: Avocado. Roll. A good avocado roll has gotten me through more carnivorous meals than I can count, and they're pretty hard to screw up. But if I feel like having a meal with more than three ingredients, then I head to Sakana in Dupont, which has fabulous avocado rolls along with a surprisingly wide vegetarian menu. Highlights? A veggie tempura that's crispy but not greasy; delicately fried agetofu (it's not on the menu, but they'll make it if you ask); and my favorite, a vegetable udon soup with shitake mushroom broth, squash, and yams, along with the usual greens. Plus, the menu is extensive enough that your omnivorous friends will be happy (my friends rave about the eel roll), and inexpensive enough to eat your fill without breaking the bank—a recent meal rang in at less than \$20, including sake and dessert. Sakana is consistently packed around dinner time, and the lighting inside is far from ambient. Rather than deal with crowds and fluorescence, I recommend picking up your meal to go and enjoying it at home, or staging an impromptu picnic in the circle. Sakana, 2020 P St., NW, 202-887-0900.

The Classic

Joy, 31
Non-profit worker

Café Asia

Café Asia is one of the bigger names in sushi in DC, and for good reason; They offer a fantastic selection of noodles, entrees and appetizers from Asian countries from Thailand to Vietnam. But I was there for the sushi. I had an array of maki, nigiri and sashimi, including Spicy Tuna Roll, Crunchy Roll and Rainbow Roll. In each case, the fish was fresh and firm, the rice was sturdy enough to stand up to my chopsticks, and each plate was beautifully presented. If you're a timid eater, be sure to watch out for a few things: the tamagoyaki (egg) in the maki rolls can be a bit too much, and the roe is sometimes out of proportion to the rest of the ingredients. As for décor, Café Asia can't be beat. It's sleek and modern (or contemporary, I can never remember which is which) with a lot of modular furniture and a unisex bathroom. If you're in the market for a snack rather than a dinner, stop by in the early evening—Café Asia has a fantastic happy hour Monday through Saturday with nigiri sushi for \$1 per piece and \$2 selected draft beers. Café Asia is steps away from either Farrugut North or Farrugut West metro stops. Café Asia, 1720 I St., NW, 202-659-2696, www.cafeasia.com;