

food ^{bn}

RESTAURANT // RECIPES // WINE



Pure and simple

A restaurant in Teneriffe is bringing out the best in basic ingredients, delivering tasty morsels that pack a punch, writes David Bentley

Simplicity can be complex, as I discovered when my wife and I spent a week in Hagi, a medieval castle town at the western end of Japan's main island, Honshu. Famous for its pottery and 17th-century Samurai houses, Hagi also happens to be a gastronomic hotspot. We found the food remarkable, and became converts to the Japanese way of eating. More than any other cuisine, Japanese food relies on natural flavours. What could be simpler than sashimi, consisting of nothing more than raw fish cut into slices?

Behind the simplicity stands a philosophy that celebrates aroma and texture. Sydney super-chef Tetsuya Wakuda says Japanese cooking is the art of making simplicity seem like abundance.

In Japan, traditional cooking is mostly done in or over water, not in oil. This explains why Japanese remain generally slim – despite a yen for hamburgers among the young.

In Brisbane, Japanese restaurants are few in number, fast-food outlets aside. One new addition is Mizu in Teneriffe, where co-owner and chef Soichiro Chaki presides over a casual dining space.

Chaki's food covers many bases – salads, sashimi, tempura, teriyaki, tonkatsu and steak. The wine list is ordinary, but the range of sake (five types) and beer makes up for it.

The waiter's command of English was equivalent to my fluency in Japanese, which led to charming confusion, rectified when we were seated and served with a Japanese amuse-bouche dish of cold tuna with egg.

Mizu's pottery plates have been hand-thrown and reminded us of Hagi as we shared entrees of green beans with sesame sauce (\$7) and fried fish with onions and

carrots marinated in sweet vinegar sauce (\$8). The beans were enlivened by a sauce in which tartness and nuttiness seamlessly combined. My fish, amid julienned vegetables, delivered a pleasing pickle taste due to the vinegar sauce.

For some reason, Chaki refuses to heat sake in quantities of less than 150ml, so I left my wife to sample a large, warm sake at \$15, while I investigated a flight of three 50ml thimblefuls of cold sake (\$12).

By way of mains, we opted for blackboard specials. My wife ordered a warm salad with tempura prawns (\$18). I chose mutsu saikyo yaki (\$24), left, fillets of grilled toothfish marinated in miso. They were fall-off-the-chopsticks tender.

The warm salad consisted of fresh green leaves spliced with slices of mango, and the tempura prawns were encased in crisp batter. The salad came with tofu and tiny cubes of cheese described as wasabi cheese. This is not the first time the East has lunged towards the West, but the inclusion of cheese did nothing for the salad, or the prawns.

A pot of green tea (\$3.50) rounded off a meal that delivered satisfying flavours with quintessential simplicity.



MIZU

2 Macquarie St, Teneriffe.

Ph: 3254 0488. Chef-owner:

Soichiro Chaki. Lunch & dinner, daily. Licensed and BYO except sake. Most cards & eftpos. Off-street parking. Wheelchair access.

FOOD // 8.5 WINE // 6.5

SERVICE // 7 AMBIENCE // 7

RATINGS 10: perfect; 9: excellent; 8: very good; 7: good; 6: passable; 5: disappointing; 1-4: woeful

Photographs // Justine Walpole

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