

Japonais – Signature Style, European Elegance and Modern Japanese Cuisine Debut at The Mirage in Las Vegas

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LAS VEGAS

This fall, Japonais, one of Chicago and New York City's most adored and critically acclaimed restaurants, goes west. Renowned restaurateurs and partners in all three Japonais properties, Miae Lim, Rick Wahlstedt and Jeffrey Beers (also the restaurant's designer) have joined forces with The Mirage to open a Japonais outpost in one of the country's most thriving culinary cities.

Las Vegas tourists, avid foodies and locals alike will be instantly seduced by the restaurant's distinctive approach to ambiance, service and progressive Japanese cuisine that seamlessly fuses innovative presentations, flavors and ingredient pairings within each selection. Since opening in 2003, Japonais in Chicago received three stars by the Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Tribune, and was named "Best Restaurant" by Chicago Magazine in 2005. This July, Japonais opened in New York City's Gramercy Park neighborhood, offering Manhattanites and travelers a taste of their signature flavor and hospitality. Created entirely for the guest from the guest's perspective, Japonais brings its signature style and cuisine to the flourishing restaurant landscape of Las Vegas.

"Las Vegas is an exciting food destination, fueled and inspired by some of the world's greatest chefs," Wahlstedt said. "In the past several years the city has become one of the country's premier dining destinations and we are thrilled to bring our very own Japonais to The Mirage and Las Vegas. Our hope is that residents and travelers embrace Japonais as they have in Chicago and New York City."

Scott Sibella, president of The Mirage said, "The Mirage continues to emerge as a leader in the city's dining scene and Japonais will add to the culinary excitement and high energy of the resort."

Japonais offers the best of both worlds -- signature sushi and cold appetizers by world-renowned Sushi Chef/Partner Jun Ichikawa and hot appetizers and entrees by celebrated Chef/Partner Gene Kato. Upon

completing intensive culinary training in Japan, Chef Kato returned to the U.S. and worked as Chef de Cuisine at Mimosa Grill (Charlotte, N.C.) and as Chef de Cuisine for Upstream (Charleston, S.C.). While at Upstream, Kato met Miae Lim and the two agreed to launch Ohba and later Japonais. Executive Chef/Partner Ichikawa is known for his ability to blend years of training with a naturally creative eye resulting in some of the highest quality, most innovative sushi in the country. A position with Honda Restaurant (Kanda, Japan) resulted in the chef moving to the United States to study under the Master Chef at Honda Chicago. A stint at Hatsuhana followed where he met Lim, and the two developed the Mirai Sushi concept and later Japonais. Together the chefs blend two sophisticated, innovative culinary styles creating a menu that is beautifully composed with the guests' needs and preferences in mind. Classic French technique is married with clean and simple Japanese ingredients, as the chefs take a progressive approach to create a signature menu with "wow factor" and sex appeal.

"We feel the cuisine of Japonais is signature to our brand: it is progressive yet approachable," Lim said. "We hope our new guests in Las Vegas will become fast fans, and we are going to develop special, new dishes just for them."

Signature hot appetizers (Les Entrees Chaudes) include Japonais' popular "The Rock," thinly sliced marinated New York strip steak cooked on a hot rock right on the table; Kani Kani, a flavorful combination of snow crab claws wrapped with shrimp and crab mousse in a spicy passion fruit sauce; and a variety of Robata selections created especially for the Las Vegas location including Smoked Wagyu with Ginger Wasabi Ponzu, Togarashi (Japanese Seven Spice) Burger Yaki with Wasabi Truffle Mayo, Sweet Shrimp and Diver Scallop with Yuzu, and Spicy Chicken with Shiso and Mint Leaf Buds.

Delectable hot entrees (Les Plats Principaux) consist of Grilled Hamachi, fresh Hawaiian hamachi served with crispy shrimp dumplings in a light wild mushroom broth; Madai Mushi, sake poached madai, sansho seared diver scallop served with Japanese eggplant stew and black bean vinaigrette; Chestnut Chicken, roasted chestnut encrusted organic chicken with flavorful shiitake rice and tangy ginger lemon sauce; and the whimsically named Le Quack Japonais, Chef Kato's unique take on Peking duck served with tender maple leaf smoked duck, tangy hoisin sauce, mango chutney and soft mushu wraps. (Half or whole duck available.)

Master Sushi Chef Ichikawa uses the finest fresh fish to create signature cold appetizers (Les Entrees Froides) such as Bin Cho, delicately marinated baby tuna with shaved diakon in a zesty citrus-sake vinaigrette; Kani Nigiri, two pieces of warm and spicy baked King Crab, and Sweet Ceviche, sweet shrimp tartare marinated in ginger yuzu and served with a rich avocado mousse and lightly fried taro chips. The Chef's Special Tasting offers guests the opportunity to sample a variety of fish selections including toro tartare, sea urchin and squid; and monkfish foie gras wrapped in fluke and octopus.

Integral to the Japonais dining experience are the innovative sushi rolls that spotlight beautifully prepared, clean flavors prepared with the chef's signature flair. Sushi bar specialties include Spicy Mono, a delightfully spicy octopus

roll topped with spicy tuna tartare and sweet unagi sauce; Tuna Tuna Salmon, delicate salmon tartare graced with sliced tuna, avocado sauce and wasabi tobiko sauce, and Crispy Shrimp and Salmon, a crispy panko shrimp roll topped with marinated salmon sashimi and wasabi tobiko sauce.

Japonais offers an extensive and sophisticated list of red and white wines, sake and signature cocktails. Not to be missed is The Floating Orchid, Japonais' popular drink that combines Stolichnaya vodka, Cointreau, fresh pear and lemon juices with an edible orchid garnish; a refreshing Pomegranate Cooler with Pama Pomegranate liqueur, sake, mathilde poire liqueur and passion fruit juice; and the smooth Cucumber Passion with Hanger 1 Kaffir lime vodka, passion fruit juice, lime juice and muddled cucumber.

A decadent finale to the meal is found in the Chocolate Indulgence (for two) featuring chocolate ginger mousse cake, chocolate chawan mushi, wild berry soup and chocolate truffle beignets. Green Tea Panna Cotta offers a creative alternative to a classic as it is a homemade blend of creamy citrus tapioca soup and honeydew sorbet, and the Kabocha Cheesecake, an innovative and flavorful Japanese pumpkin cheesecake served with five-spiced pineapple mousse and almond cookie crust.

At Japonais the setting complements the cuisine. Upon entering, guests are welcomed by a "glowing" fire-red canopy and dark slate platform that creates a theatrical foyer to the restaurant. Accommodating 300 people, the 11,000-square-foot space features an array of distinct dining and lounge areas that allow guests multiple ways to experience the restaurant. Designer Jeffrey Beers has created a vibrant 3,000-square-foot bar and lounge overlooking The Mirage casino floor. This modern tropical haven, with cascading palm trees and water elements throughout, features a 110-foot-long glowing "fire" wall made out of glass, providing an artistic and bold backdrop for the curving and inviting onyx bar.

The lounge accommodates 100 guests and features a Robata Grill designed especially for the Las Vegas location. Custom-designed chandeliers, a disc jockey booth and circular mahogany trellises with shimmering silver and gold sheer drapery also add a dramatic touch to the glamorous setting. In the lounge guests can dine on sushi and small plates while enjoying a spectacular view of the casino. Adjacent to the lounge is a private dining room with its own bar, custom copper chandeliers, trellises, water elements and colorful lounge seating. Within the private room, up to 16 guests may dine around Japonais' custom 15-foot-long "royal mosaic" table constructed of gold glass created especially for The Mirage.

The main dining room, traditionally known as the Red Room, offers seating for 175 guests, a 17-seat, L-shaped marble and slate sushi bar and an adjoining Golden Niche. The room is situated on a raised wide-plank platform, constructed of dark wood with additional raised seating areas throughout. Other noteworthy design elements include Japonais' signature walnut "fin" ceiling-stone columns with copper and onyx details and custom blackened-

steel railings.

The restaurant's trademark walls, made of red brick and blue glass designed to resemble water, beautifully complement the Madagascar ebony-wood screens and gold accents throughout the room. These design elements, fused with dramatic theatrical lighting, create a warm and inviting restaurant space. Japonais' striking signature tree sculpture takes center stage with its magnificent up-lit branches of hand-crafted exotic wood and custom-made moss pods. A large, square banquette surrounds the tree sculpture and is ideal for accommodating large parties.

Other aesthetic details include custom-designed furniture pieces, decorative lighting and accessories by Jeffrey Beers. Once again, Beers and his team have collaborated with various artists, designers and craftsmen to create a distinctive and artistic dining environment. The designer's use of various textures, including sumptuous velvets, colored glass, exotic woods, stone and copper combined with a rich and luscious color palette, come together to create an effect that is at once elegant and refined, yet inviting.

"I always strive to design restaurants that are perfectly suited to their environment and the city they inhabit," Beers said. "With Japonais at The Mirage, we created a space that is sophisticated with a sexy edge. The main dining room is luxurious and comfortable -- ideal for long, leisurely dinners. The lounge is expansive with cozy seating areas yet intimate -- perfect for a night in Las Vegas."

Japonais is open for dinner seven days a week: Sunday - Wednesday, 5 p.m. - 11 p.m., Thursday - Saturday, 5 p.m. - 11:30 p.m. The Lounge will be open seven days a week, Sunday - Saturday, 4 p.m. - 3 a.m.

For more information on Japonais at The Mirage, please contact KB Network

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