



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.
©2008 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313
E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306

Caterpillar roll
 photo by Chris Fritchie



Chaucer's Sushi & Grill

By Lee Ratliff

FROM ITS UNLIKELY NAME to its menu and decor, Chaucer's Sushi & Grill is a study in contrasts. Is it a restaurant? Is it a nightclub? Chaucer's appears to be both with varying degrees of success. An offshoot of the similarly named Chaucer's Steak & Sushi in Addison, the younger sibling recently opened in the former Eddie Merlot's building on the south side of Stonebriar Centre on S.H.121.

In an effort to duplicate the success of its Addison location, Chaucer's brought its concept to Frisco in December. Mild-mannered, upscale restaurant by day, it morphs into a nightclub at 9:00 p.m. complete with a live DJ and thumping techno-pop. Marketing material for the restaurant encourages potential patrons to "dress to impress." In fact, a sign near the hostess stand warns

that a dress code is strictly enforced. Untucked shirts, sports jerseys and open toed sandals are among the dozen or so fashion offenses that might result in would-be customers being turned away.

We ordered a caterpillar roll of crab and cucumber covered with layers of unagi and avocado which had a remarkable resemblance to its namesake.

Upon arriving, our party of four was told there would be a 30-minute wait – not unusual at all for 7:30 p.m. on a Friday night in Frisco. We ordered cocktails and settled into a place at the bar, but before our drinks even arrived, the hostess told us our table was ready. This pleasant surprise turned into puzzlement when we entered the dining room and found the vast majority of the tables empty.

We started with the young green soybean pod, edamame (\$4.95) and shrimp and vegetable tempura (\$9.95) while we looked over the menu. The tempura was light, crisp and tasty. However, the edamame seemed slightly



Green tea ice cream (left);
Salmon sushi (below)
photos by Chris Fritchie

Green Tea Ice Cream

- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup whipping (35%) cream
- 3 Tbsp. Green tea leaves or green tea with mint
- 2 egg yolks
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp. Cornstarch

IN A MEDIUM SAUCEPAN over medium-low heat, bring milk and cream to a simmer. Remove from heat. Stir in green tea leaves and let stand for 10 minutes. In a bowl, whisk egg yolks with sugar until thickened and pale yellow. Whisk in cornstarch. Gradually whisk in cream mixture. Return entire mixture to the saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon. Be careful not to let it boil. Strain into clean, large bowl. Let cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate until completely cold or overnight. Stir cream mixture. Transfer to an ice cream maker and freeze according to manufacturer's instructions.

From 125 Best Ice Cream Recipes by Marilyn Linton and Tanya Linton

overcooked – not mushy, but a little limp.

While the grilled portion of the menu was limited, the sushi menu was quite extensive. We stuck with sushi. Dozens of types of sushi and specialty rolls were offered but we chose to order the standards.

The tuna (\$5.75), salmon (\$5.75), and yellow tail (\$5.95) were very good and fresh. The spicy tuna roll (\$5.95) was also very tasty and noticeably spicy, unlike the usual preparation of this roll at other restaurants.

Our spider roll (\$7.95) was nicely executed, with crisply fried soft-shell crab, avocado, and cucumber rolled in nori and sushi rice. Finally, we ordered a caterpillar roll (\$11.95). This roll of crab and cucumber was covered with layers of unagi (fresh water eel) and avocado. It was served on a platter and attractively laid out in a serpentine fashion. Alternating bands of light and dark green avocado gave this roll a remarkable resemblance to an actual caterpillar.

Not completely sated after the sushi, we returned to the appetizer menu. We ordered more of the reliable tempura (\$5.95), though we stuck with vegetables the second time around. The broccoli and asparagus were firm and fresh, the pepper was crisp and the sweet potato and avocado were creamy on the inside with a crunchy shell. We also ordered fried calamari (\$6.95). Although it had a great flavor, it was a little chewy and – oddly enough – was served with ketchup.

Throughout the evening service was quick, friendly and efficient. The dining room was nicely appointed and the tables widely spaced. Marble floors and warm wood paneling added to the upscale feel. We chose a table for

easy conversation, but a long sushi bar extends along one side of the dining room, giving diners another seating option. Another full drink bar extends along another side. Incongruously, six or seven large plasma televisions are scattered along the perimeter of the room, sports bar style.

At nine o'clock, the music started. In a perch above the bar, a DJ started playing very loud dance music. This, despite the fact that the room was by now filled with diners trying to enjoy a nice meal and conversation. Maybe it was Chaucer's way of clearing the room for the clubbers who would presumably be arriving. If this was the case, it worked. With conversation now impossible, we left.

Chaucer's Sushi & Grill serves up good sushi, but as a dining experience it suffers from its nightclub alter ego. Loud music and giant TV screens might work for a nightclub, but they detract from a pleasant evening of good food and conversation. There is something to be said for having a little nightlife in Frisco, so if that's your goal Chaucer's is a great option, but if you are just wanting a pleasant meal, plan to leave by 9 p.m.

Lee Ratliff is a freelance writer living in Plano.

