

Koo Japanese Restaurant Review January 2009

Tucked away in the heart of historic Ludlow, this intimate Japanese Restaurant has the feel that you are being personally invited into the owner's house to dine. The small restaurant in typical minimalist style is pristine, well lit with authentic artefacts dotted around. The owner and hostess Marie Kure greeted us on arrival and showed us to our table.

We started the evening with some warm Sake which was the perfect anti dote to a bitterly cold evening and began to peruse the menu. The set menu changes fortnightly and gives a choice of meat, fish and a vegetarian alternative. As you would expect from the **worlds healthiest cuisine** the emphasis is on well balanced dishes, delicate flavours and of course freshly prepared produce. Everything sounded so healthy that the usual guilty conscience about over indulgence wasn't an issue.

After placing our order with Marie who was very helpful with her recommendations, our entrée of a Sushi platter arrived, a selection of fish accompanied with traditional pickled ginger and fiery wasabi. The **platter was beautifully presented with obvious attention to detail** and the fish was tender and fresh.

Following a suitable pause and some more Sake our starters were ready. I had opted for the Gyoza – steamed chicken dumplings with crispy fried bottoms and my partner had chosen the Ebi Fri – large breaded prawns with wasabi mayonnaise. Once again these were **presented like works of art on delicate bamboo tableware** - it seemed like a crime to ruin the handiwork of the chef, but our destruction was rewarded. The prawns were juicy and firm coated in the traditional honey panko breadcrumbs and the dumplings were deliciously moist and very moreish!

As a prelude to the main event, came a selection of vegetables that was most unexpected and by far my favourite point of the evening. If all vegetables were so flavoursome and tasty no one would ever have any issue with eating their five a day! The **platter was authentic Japanese** and included items such as crisp fresh edame beans and shredded lotus root slow cooked until caramelised and topped with sesame seeds – absolutely delicious.

After this most enjoyable interlude we tucked into our main courses. My Teriyaki Chicken served with rice was sticky and sweet, and my partner's Sea Bass coated in chestnut flour and shallow fried was crisp on the outside and perfectly cooked inside.

A selection of exotic fruit replaced the normal sinful choice of puddings that we have come to expect when dining out. This light and refreshing end to an extremely healthy meal was complimented by a couple of glasses of Japanese Plum Wine liquor, followed by a pot of refreshing roasted Rice Tea.

Koo Japanese Restaurant can be whole-heartedly recommended to any level of diner, whether you are experimental or 'like what you know', Marie will happily explain any dish, and accommodate to suit any need, as long as it does n't compromise the authenticity of this hidden Ludlow gem.

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