

# NEXT

October 2, 2009

## EATS



**MATSURI**  
369 W 16th St  
212-243-6400  
TheMaritimeHotel.com

BY PETER SHERWOOD

**W**hen I told a friend I'd recently been to Matsuri, she asked, "Is it still as good as it was ten years ago?" I responded with a resounding "Yes!" Chef Tadashi Ono is in fine fettle indeed to the delight of all who enter the cavernous restaurant firmly anchored in the Maritime Hotel.

Without prologue, my fella and I launched into a marvelous *Pear Martini* (\$12), a viscous treat with an even pairing of crisp Japanese pear, vodka and pear wine. I could have made a meal from the perfectly ribald *Kumamoto Oysters* (\$16/half-dozen), which arrived on the half shell, decked out with yuzu ice, tobiko and chili paste to tickle the nose and excite the throat. Also available from Small Plates, a little tower of *Toro Tuna Tartare* (\$15) followed with incredible seaweed paste and soy sauce, served on a shiso leaf, Japan's answer to mint.

Buttery, fleshy *Sake Black Cod* (\$22) marinated with sake paste and grilled to near perfection was a bigger catch from the list of Large Plates, and cold *Daishichi "Lucky Seven"* (\$10/glass, \$24/carafe) sake served in a bamboo carafe enticed us through the ensuing delicious selection of fish presented as sushi and sashimi pieces à la carte. We loved the rich *Fatty Tuna* (\$7); fresh, lush *Mackerel* (\$5) with grated ginger and scallions; *Zuke Tuna* (\$5) marinated in soy punctuated with wasabi; pure *Hamachi* (\$5), sweetly glazed *Sea Eel* (\$5) and glistening, scrumptious *Sea Urchin* (\$7). Nothing prepared me, however, for the *Salmon Roe* (\$6) that I simply ordered out of nostalgia, as it's always been a favorite. Here it was a revelation, a confluence of creamy rice topped with juicy orbs of pink salty roe loosely wrapped in sea-ripened wakame. Utterly transcendent.

I exercised rare restraint when it came to our dessert. Incredible *Yuzu Cheese Cake* (\$8) was ridiculously, insanely delicious, covered in a strawberry ice cream that bordered on sorbet. To avoid being asked to leave after plunging my whole head into it, I only ate a quarter of it or a half—I don't remember—and fled joyously into the night. **N**

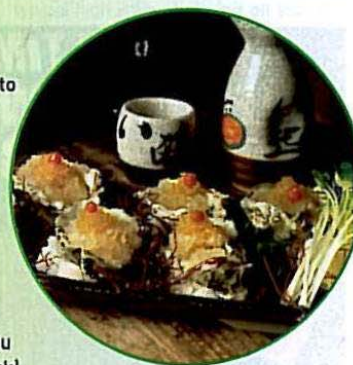
## THE CHEF'S RECIPE

### TADASHI ONO'S KUMAMOTO OYSTERS WITH YUZU ICE ADAPTED FROM MATSURI

#### INGREDIENTS:

##### SERVES 4

- 24 pieces Kumamoto oysters, ½ dozen per guest
- ½ cup yuzu juice (or substitute with lemon, lime and grapefruit)
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp mirin (rice wine)
- ½ cup dashi (kombu and bonito flake stock)
- 2 Tbsp tobiko (flying fish roe)
- 1 tsp red pepper paste (yuzu kosho)
- 2 tsp chives, chopped



#### DIRECTIONS:

To make the yuzu ice, mix yuzu juice, soy sauce, mirin and dashi together well. Put yuzu mixture in flat square container and freeze for at least five hours.

Shuck chilled oysters and keep them on half shell. Arrange artfully on an appropriate plate. Remove yuzu mixture from freezer and scrape it with the tip of a fork to sliver the delicately colored ice into brilliant shards. Place a gentle mound of yuzu ice on each oyster, top with tobiko, a touch of red pepper paste and a light smattering of chopped chives. Work quickly before the ice melts and serve to your guests, who are undoubtedly breathless with anticipation.