

Time Out

New York

SPECIAL
DOUBLE
ISSUE

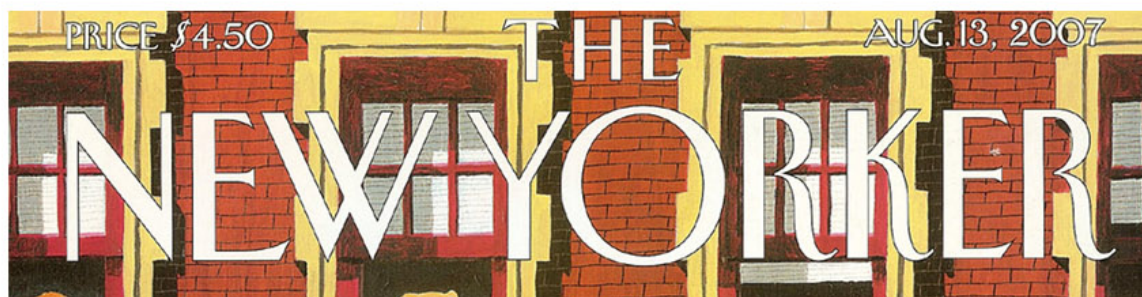
Eat Out

The city's best restaurants and bars

New this week

Space odyssey Husband-and-wife team Marco A. Moreira and Jo-Ann Makovitzky earned a loyal following at the French-American eatery Tocqueville and then moved the restaurant down the block in April—but they held on to the old space in the hope that some day it might become a Japanese restaurant. It's a dream no more: At **15 East**, Moreira (who once trained as a sushi chef) is serving traditional sushi and modern Japanese fare with the help of Masato Shimizu (Jewel Bako). 15 E 15th St between Fifth Ave and Union Sq West (212-647-0015). —Leslie Price

Eat Out



TABLES FOR TWO 15 EAST



15 E. 15th St. (212-647-0015)—There's barely time to settle in at 15 East's sushi counter before a fellow diner leans over and whispers, "Did you follow him here, too?" The "him" is Masato Shimizu, formerly of Jewel Bako, thirty-two and improbably boyish, with a surfer's loungy demeanor. (One foodie Web site refers to him as "the cute one.") Where other gatekeepers of rarefied sushi tend to be dour and secretive, he keeps within reach an illustrated almanac of seafood ("Grunt fish? Page seventy-three") and a stack of what can only be described as fish-fetish magazines—complete with glossy, full-bleed centerfolds—which he hands to guests perplexed by unusual species.

Marco Moreira, the owner and executive chef of both 15 East and Tocqueville—which originally occupied this address and was recently relocated a few doors down—has recruited an all-star staff: the sake sommelier comes from Masa, the soba chef from Honmura An. (A dish of handmade noodles, topped with creamy *uni*, is so luxuriant that it feels almost immodest to eat it in front of strangers.) The sushi bar is a bright white cube; in the dining room, you are plunged into darkness. A long banquette flanks the slate-gray wall, and above hang giant box lan-

terns that appear to contain light without actually shedding any. It's a sexy space, with the throb of *tropicália* in the background—Moreira grew up in Brazil—and low votives simmering inside wraps of kombu-textured paper.

The menu offers two divergent experiences. The non-sushi half (Moreira's domain) has some fanciful moments, including a delicate spaghettini of *yamaimo* and feathery tempura latkes paired with curry, green-tea, and chile salts, but mostly it's content with the predictable: a plate of wild salmon "five ways," hunks of robust, oddly chewy Colorado Kobe rib eye. But at the sushi bar on a recent night, surprises were legion. The slow-poached octopus was almost absurdly tender, having arrived live at the restaurant that morning and apparently massaged to death. And a pillowy white slab—squid? swordfish?—turned out to be some two dozen baby white shrimp, curled together. (Open Mondays through Fridays for lunch and dinner and Saturdays for dinner. Sushi à la carte \$4-\$12; entrées \$24-\$45; tasting menus \$75-\$120.)

—Ligaya Mishan

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RESTAURANTS

Frank Bruni

Does the Squid Get a Mani-Pedi?



Photographs by Evan Sung for The New York Times

15 EAST

★★

15 East 15th Street; (212) 647-0015.
irestaurant.com.

OSPHERE A front room with a gleaming counter leads to a soothing, gray-walled, dining room with well-separated tables.

ID LEVEL Moderate.

RECOMMENDED DISHES Sushi; sashimi; noodles; mountain yam spaghetti; seared octopus; bluefin tuna tartare; ink risotto; passion fruit pudding.

WINE LIST International and varied, with a dozen wines by the glass. The sake list is extensive and more impressive. Interesting and special cocktails as well.

PRICE RANGE Lunch appetizers, \$6 to \$22; samplers, \$28 to \$55; a tasting menu is \$125, \$22 to \$35; three-course prix fixe, \$125. Dinner appetizers, \$6 to \$22; sushi platters, \$55 to \$75; entrees, \$24 to \$45. Drinks, \$8 to \$10.

HOURS Lunch from 11:45 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday, and dinner from 6 to 10:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Closed Sunday.

RESERVATIONS For prime dinner times, call at least a week ahead, especially for the sushi counter.

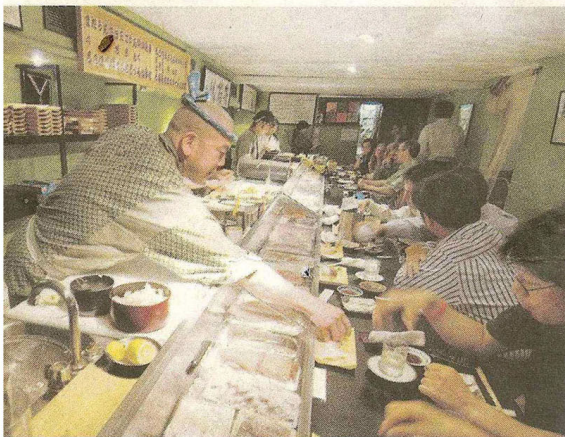
CREDIT CARDS All major cards.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS Small step up to entrance. All of restaurant on one level. Accessible restroom.

WHAT THE STARS MEAN Ratings range from zero to four stars and reflect the reviewer's reaction to food, ambience and service, with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

PAST REVIEWS From The Times, with additional capsule reviews by Times critics:

nytimes.com/dining



USHIWAKAMARU

★

West Houston Street (Sullivan Street); 228-4181. ushiwakamaru.com.

OSPHERE A cramped, disheveled room with a long sushi counter and separate tables.

ID LEVEL Tolerably loud.

RECOMMENDED DISHES Sushi; sashimi; seared octopus; bluefin tuna tartare.

beers and more than a dozen kinds of sake.

PRICE RANGE Appetizers, \$3.50 to \$16. Sushi and sashimi samplers, \$22 to \$100. Desserts, \$5 to \$6.

HOURS From 6 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Closed Sunday.

RESERVATIONS Call at least two days ahead.

SHIATSU, deep-tissue or maybe even Rolwing: Which manner of pummeling becomes a cephalopod most? I asked a server at 15 East, and he looked at me as if I were some nutcase troublemaker. But he had started this, volunteering that the restaurant's slow-poached octopus was so tender because "it's massaged 500 times." I was just posing the obvious follow-up question.

I can't tell you the answer, which I never got. But I can tell you that this octopus is outrageously good. Its tentacles are cut into thick, thick coins and arrayed beside a hillock of sea salt, which you can sprinkle on the octopus or, if you dare, dredge the octopus through. It accentuates the sea creature's distinctive meatiness.

"What have they done to this?" marveled one of the two friends with me the second time I tried it. He hadn't been around the first time to hear about the massaging, which gives new meaning to the phrase spa cuisine.

The other friend responded: "I think they've turned it into lamb."

Whatever the precise trick, it's a reflection of the serious efforts behind a meal at 15 East, which manages to stand out in a crowded marketplace of Japanese restaurants that focus on uncooked seafood.

It does this in part with cooked dishes, like the octopus, that augment the selection of sushi and sashimi. It does this with the sushi and sashimi itself: carefully sourced and carefully assembled, the rice warm, the seasonings sensible.

It does this with gracious service; with around-the-edges embellishments like a respectable list of wines in addition to the very fine sake selection; and with a split-the-difference atmosphere that's neither overblown extravaganza nor underdressed broom closet, the extreme directions in which some Japanese restaurants veer.

The space near Union Square that 15 East inhabits used to belong to Tocqueville, which moved just a few dozen feet down the block last year. It's owned by Marco Moreira and JoAnn Makovitzky, the same husband-wife team still behind Tocqueville.

They have put a gleaming sushi counter roughly where Tocqueville's bar was and gray paint on walls that were once yellow. In the process they've achieved the look of a high-priced dermatologist's waiting room, which isn't a bad thing. Both environments soothe the nerves while flattering the complexion.

They have also recruited Masato Shimizu, who worked at Jewel Bako, to supervise that sushi counter, where he's doing exemplary work. Be sure not to miss the sweet shrimp, delicate and almost translucent; the scallop, bathed in yuzu; the needlefish, slick and substantial; and the jack mackerel, wrapped in a shiso leaf, whose perfume remains even after it's peeled away.

The top surfaces of pieces of barbacuda and o-toro sushi, the latter of which came with a \$75 bluefin tuna flight, were seared by a torch, and that char brought the richness of the fish into relief.

Away from the sushi counter, 15

frog's legs" did a riff on Buffalo chicken wings that should never, ever be done again. The name of "Grilled Bigeye Tuna Waldorf" piqued the curiosity, which was rewarded — or, rather, not — with a humdrum hunk of grilled fish beside a Waldorf-like salad using Asian pear in place of apple. Be still, my beating, cholesterol-spared heart.

With Honmura An gone but not forgotten, there's a soba lacuna in the land, and 15 East addresses it with excellent hand-cut buckwheat noodles done up different ways on different days. It also serves a squid-ink risotto with a rising orange center — hello, my beloved friend uni — and small ringlets of squid.

At 15 East the uni was terrific; at Ushiwakamaru, which the chef Hideo Kuribara opened on Houston Street about two years ago, not so much. Ushiwakamaru is like that: for every two examples of faultless sushi or sashimi there will be one that doesn't measure up.

The restaurant was recently promoting, as a special, Copper River salmon, but there was nothing special about the fish, which had a weirdly flat taste, shadowed by nuances that suggested it had been sitting around a bit too long.

So why mention Ushiwakamaru? The fish that's terrific is terrific at lower prices than at 15 East, and finding first-rate sushi that's not grievously expensive is getting tougher all the time.

What's more, the restaurant's proudly ragtag subterranean setting stole at least one ventricle of my aforementioned heart. Ushiwakamaru has an underdog charm that's irresistible, with its billious green walls; its artlessly clumped-up plastic wrap over displayed fish; and its spindly, unsmooth chopsticks, the kind that make you worry about tongue splinters.

It also has some intriguing dishes you don't often find, like turban shell, a sea snail cooked and served in a well of dark liquid in its natural spiraled domicile. You keep lowering a tiny spoon into the well and coming up with fleshy nuggets, more of them than you expect. Some vaguely recall geoduck clam in texture and taste. Others are livery. Still others stake a claim to being anointed the sweetbreads of the sea.

The sushi and sashimi selection is also adventurous, including banded blue sprat, halfbeak and saury.

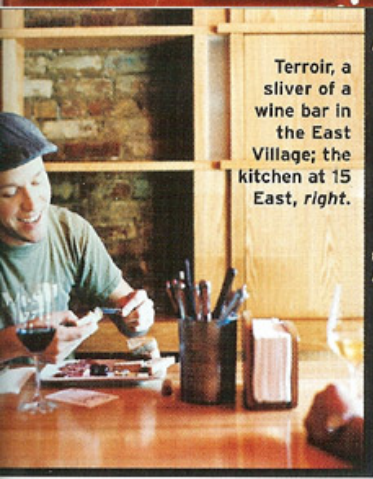
But you can decide to stick with the usual suspects, and here a piece of o-toro sushi is \$8 instead of the \$12 at 15 East, while amberjack is \$4 instead of \$6. You can have a chef's selection of 15 pieces of sushi for \$49.

That's meaningful compensation for the cramped seating, negligible desserts, limited beverages and an octopus therapy program that — as best I could tell — isn't quite so lavish with the pressing and kneading.

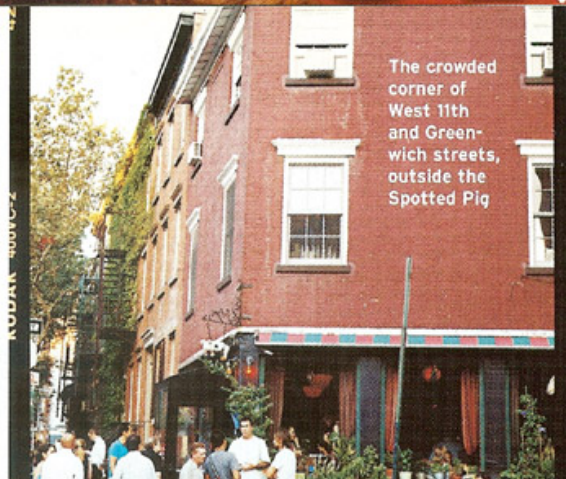
Diner's Journal

A blog by Frank Bruni and other Dining section writers on restaurants and notes from the field.

DEPARTURES



Terroir, a sliver of a wine bar in the East Village; the kitchen at 15 East, right.



The crowded corner of West 11th and Greenwich streets, outside the Spotted Pig



Squash blossoms stuffed with scallops and tofu at Persimmon

"A PLACE WITH 24 SEATS

GENERATES A SELF-PERPETUATING BUZZ

Soto and they are elated. Warning: It's not cheap.

On this most appealing of sushi-bar menus you will see composed Japanese dishes under two categories: cold (labeled "From Sushi Bar") and hot ("From Kitchen"). At Soto these dishes are as imaginative and appealing as any food you can eat in New York.

A couple of things: You have to like *umi*, which is sea urchin, because it's in many of the dishes. There's no reason to not like sea urchin, one of the few dining luxuries that remain affordable. The creaminess of fresh *umi* is unmatched in the undersea world, and the flavor has a purity unrivaled even by caviar. Another thing: You should like fried food because the frying here is the best you'll ever find, even if you are from the South and are prepared to argue the point.

Some dishes are fancy, such as sea urchin wrapped in squid and topped with a raw quail egg. The yolk, when broken, coats the sea urchin, transforming silkiness into sumptuousness. Some are

credit those incredible Barolos and Barbarescos for compelling management to purchase swell wineglasses that are not withheld from those of us who prefer bottles that go for \$40.

La Pizza Fresca's pies are never less than excellent. The variety is superb—19 kinds, including what I think is the signature item, the prosciutto pizza. The crust is lovely and chewy, and the ovens are woodburning, so the pies often pick up a hint of smoke.

For your other favorite food, sushi, I recommend **15 East**, where sushi chef Masato Shimizu keeps prices reasonable. A daily lunch special of miso soup, seven pieces of sushi, plus one cut roll of the chef's choice goes for \$28, which is kind of a come-on because after you complete that very small and very lovely meal you might still be hungry and you will want to keep testing his mastery. I am invariably mesmerized by all that this man can do with raw (and sometimes cooked) fish.

I recommend sitting at the sushi bar, which has only nine—

Address Book

15 EAST

Dinner, \$160. 15 E. 15th St.; 212-647-0015; 15eastrestaurant.com

KUMA INN

Dinner, \$50. 113 Ludlow St.; 212-353-8866; kumainn.com

LA PIZZA FRESCA RISTORANTE

Dinner, \$70. 31 E. 20th St.; 212-598-0141; lapizzafresca ristorante.com

MOMOFUKU KO

Dinner, \$200. 163 First Ave.; 212-254-3500; momofuku.com

MOMOFUKU SSAM BAR

Dinner, \$100. 207 Second Ave.; 212-254-3500; momofuku.com

PERSIMMON KIMCHI HOUSE

Dinner, \$95. 277 E. Tenth St.; 212-260-9080; persimmoncuisine.com

SANDRO'S

Dinner, \$125. 306 E. 81st St.; 212-288-7374

SOTO

Dinner, \$180. 357 Sixth Ave.; 212-414-3088

THE SPOTTED PIG

Dinner, \$130. 314 W. 11th St.; 212-620-0393; thespottedpig.com

TERROIR

Dinner, \$90. 413 E. 12th St.; 646-602-1300; wineisterroir.com

TIA POL

Dinner, \$50. 205 Tenth Ave.; 212-675-8805; tiapol.com

www.elleatable.jp

à table

達人の行きつけを公開
さあ、今日はお肉を食べに!

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No 39

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夏はやっぱり クイック和食



NYにいることを忘れる、本格的な江戸前ずし

15 East フィフティーン・イースト

ジャネットのチョイス!

シンプルかつスタイリッシュな空間で、本格的な江戸前ずしが楽しめる。数々の有名すし職人を輩出してきた東京・京橋「吉野」で経験を積んだ、清水雅人シェフが握る見目麗しい寿司。NY在住の日本人のみならず、ニューヨーカーにも支持されている。ネタは主に築地などのEから仕入れるが、その時期にそこでしか獲れない物は世界中から仕入れている。シャリのかきは程よく、赤酢を使用。ジャネットは「ほかのすし店ではないことだけで、この店ではお任せ頼む」と清水シェフの腕を全面的に信用しているようだ。9席しかないカウンターは要予約。

● 15 E. 15th St. (bet. 5th Av. & Union Square W.) ☎+1.212.647.0015
営業11時45分～14時(月～金曜)、18時～22時半(月～土曜) 日曜
http://15eastrestaurant.com/ MAP P.75 C-2

67 ELLE à table



1 お任せの刺身\$55。器はブルックリンのクリエイターによる。2 プビンガという広葉樹の一枚板で作られたカウンター。3 お任せずしは10巻で\$55。全目鯛、キス、コハダは江戸前。まごガレイ、平貝は九州から。

GOTHAM[®]

GUILTY PLEASURES DINING GUIDE

Stuffed to the Gills

Just where in this town can you get your Omega-3s on? From pubs with paper place mats to spots with sommelier service, there's an ocean of options for spectacular seafood—no trek to the Fulton Fish Market required.

by Amy Zavatto

BLACK PEARL

Roll up your sleeves, unfold the Wet-Nap, and go full tilt into the fun, seaside-style offerings at this Flatiron fishery. Peel-and-eat wild shrimp, clams on the half-shell, and a generous array of other saltwater treats make it feel more like New England than NYC—minus the northbound traffic on I-95. 37 West 26th Street, 212-532-9900.

BLT FISH

Chef Laurent Tourondel knows well that simple things are often best. Here the marine main events are sold by the pound, sometimes whole; but if you don't feel like staring your snapper in the eye, offerings like pine-nut-crusted Maine sea scallops and seven-pepper-crusted bluefin tuna—along with a decadent side of herbed gnocchi or English peas with bacon, mayhaps?—will allow you and your entrée to meet anonymously. 21 West 17th Street, 212-691-8888.

BONDI ROAD

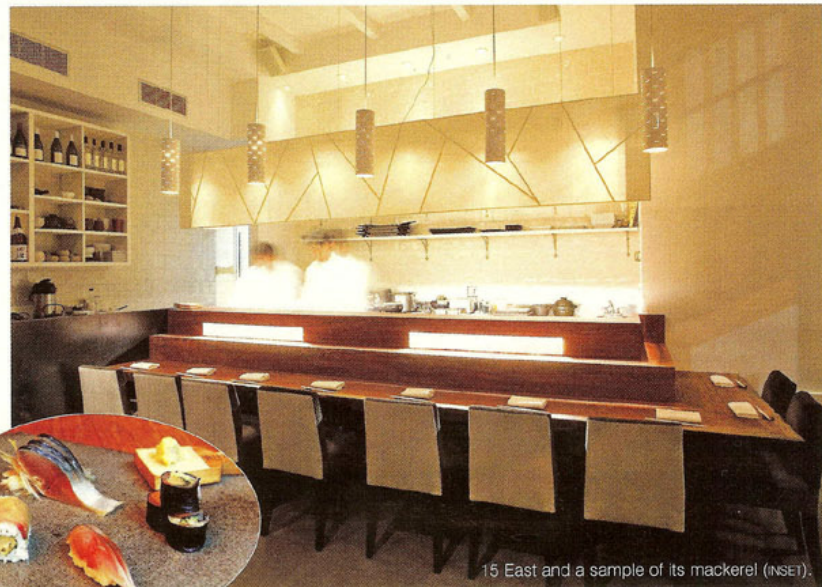
Grab a mini pencil, check off your choice of daily-catch selections, specify how you'd like it cooked, and your dinner arrives lickety-split at this Australian-themed fish-slinger. Hot pots of peppery squid and garlicky prawns, great sides, and pitchers of potent Beach Juice round out the easygoing menu and surfer-themed digs of this LES spot. 153 Rivington Street, 212-253-5311.

CITY HALL

The gleaming, overstuffed seafood towers (appropriately named the Chrysler and the Empire) at City Hall deserve the company of the bartender's perfectly mixed chilled gin martini. And with its old New York black-and-white photos, arched windows facing Duane Street, and commitment to all things surf and turf, this is one place where the Wall Street tycoon aura is alive and well. 131 Duane Street, 212-227-7777.

ESCA

New Yorkers worth their sea salt cannot resist the lure of David Pasternack's Batali-backed seafood fest. Selections change constantly, but whatever



15 East and a sample of its mackerel (INSET).



Garlic prawns from Bondi Road.

Pasternack has reeled in that day, you'll discover you're in the hands of just about the most capable fish maestro out there. Tips: Those smitten by such once-abundant delicacies as Peconic Bay scallops may well find them here (season-permitting, of course), and the crudo is a must. 402 West 43rd Street, 212-564-7272.

ESTIATORIO MILOS

With all due respect to the lovely dining room, we

probably wouldn't care if Estiatorio Milos were housed in a crumbling bomb shelter—we only have eyes for the glistening display of newly caught seafood. Strewn across an ice embankment, the fish are poised for grilling over hot coals (the specialty Loup de Mer is a must), followed by a dousing of sea salt and Greek olive oil for good measure. 125 West 55th Street, 212-245-7400.

15 EAST

Watching Masato Shimizu—formerly of Jewel Bako—prepare sushi and sashimi at this Japanese standout (in the former digs of Tocqueville) is to see a true master at work. While the dining room is lovely, we recommend heading straight for the sushi counter and watching Shimizu turn out outstanding selections like the silky sea urchin duo and jack mackerel. And don't skip the home-made tofu: Served with bonito flakes, slender slices of scallion, ginger, and a warm, irresistibly fragrant bonito broth, its lusciousness will enchant your palate. 15 East 15th Street, 212-647-0015.