

## **Toki okey dokey**

Toki is the latest addition to the burgeoning selection of Japanese restaurants in Abu Dhabi. It's the younger sibling of the well-established Wasabi, one of our favourites, so it would be an understatement to say we were looking forward to eating there.

Initial impressions are very good: the décor is cool, contemporary and unmistakably Japanese. Sleek screens and discreet lighting divide the tables neatly into private areas, and the tatami rooms (which unfortunately are all booked) are simply stunning. It is still early on a Monday evening, yet the restaurant is surprisingly busy and there is a healthy quota of Japanese patrons – always a good sign.

We settle into our booth and order some edamame beans (delicious) as we peruse what's on offer. Chef Goto's extensive menu is suspiciously similar to that of Wasabi, which is no great surprise but no bad thing either. Toki is an 'izakaya' style restaurant, specialising in what is best described as a kind of Japanese tapas, so we order a selection of dishes to share in order to experience as much of the menu as possible.

As our food comes out it soon becomes clear that our eyes are bigger than our stomachs. The complimentary sushi is possibly the best we've eaten anywhere; the ume cucumber and the hijiki (seaweed) tofu salad are clean, fresh and flavoursome. We wash this down with bowls of miso soup and loosen our belts as we prepare for the next round. Tatsuta chicken and negima (grilled chicken and leek with teriyaki sauce) are followed by tuna tataki steak and menchikatsu (breaded minced beef) – all of which are beautifully presented and mouth-wateringly tasty.

The desserts are also worthy of a mention. We opt to share a fancy bento box containing a selection of sweets: the black sesame crème brûlée, dorayaki pancakes and macha green tea ice cream are all delectable.

The service is friendly, efficient and unobtrusive and the prices are very reasonable considering the upmarket, swanky feel of the restaurant and the quality and quantity of the food.

Considering its heritage, we had high expectations for Toki – and it more than delivers on all fronts. We have a new favourite.

**What?** Toki

**Where?** Hilton, Abu Dhabi

**Cost:** Average price (starter, salad, main and dessert excl. drinks) AED 150 per person

**Why:** Sleek and sophisticated with delicious, authentic Japanese food

**Why not:** Without nitpicking, the only reason for not going there would be that you don't like Japanese food

**We say:** Grown up Wasabi – we like very much

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