

Ichiban – Culinary Show Biz with Great Flavor!

By Dave Preston – Guru of the GoodLife®

One of the most enjoyable evenings one can have while dining in Reno is to visit Ichiban Japanese Steakhouse. Located in Harrah's casino you will be treated like 'number one', and that's what Ichiban means in the native language. Gloria and Morris Salem have made this family business part of the restaurant scene here for the past 25 years. Less than a year in the casino, people have discovered this original family-style dining eatery.

Teppanyaki is that true show biz style of cooking in front of the audience with talented chefs who juggle, razzle and dazzle everyone at the table. It's a great venue for special occasions and definitely a treat for kids of all ages. During its 200 year history, this form of tabletop cooking has developed into a highly refined and beautiful form of expression, characterized by an intricate combination of presentation and knife skills. Everyone loves the onion volcano...now aren't you curious? Another highlight of Ichiban's is its 17 seat, all-you-can-eat Sushi bar including salads and tempura chicken, shrimp and vegetables.

What has become a Japanese culinary art with delicious flavor and colorful form, actually evolved from very meager beginnings. In the 7th century, Southeast Asians introduced the technique of pickling. The Japanese acquired this same practice which consisted of packing fish with rice. Nare-Sushi is 1300 years old and refers to the finished edible product resulting from this early method.

Nama-Nare refers to this more rapid process of pickling which cut the fermentation time while including the rice as part of the meal. Improvements through the centuries came about because of a few entrepreneurial Japanese who possessed the knack for recipe variation. The 17th century saw this delicate finger food complimented with vinegar. Matsumoto Yoshiichi of Edo (Tokyo) introduced the use of rice vinegar into the sushi rice. It served to reduce the usual lengthy preparation while adding a pleasant flavor of tartness.

In the 1820's Hanaya Yohei of Edo (Tokyo) brought to Edoites a recipe most similar to what we are served today. His morsels, which included Sashimi (fresh sliced raw fish) or seafood combined with the vinegared rice, were prepared and served for customers directly from his sushi stall. Not only did Hanaya introduce raw fish to sushi rice (Edomae-Sushi/Nigiri-Sushi), he began a tradition of serving snack food at its freshest and fastest.

His idea won immediate favor over the more time-honored sushi dishes. The portable stall was popular through WWII and was the "Fast Food" predecessor to the sushi bars of today. This healthy and delicious mouthful saw its most recent transformation in the 20th century. Sushi now appears world wide with a United States popularity increase around the late 1970's. These adventurous and tasty creations can be found in the most elegant of settings or the grocery market counter.

But Sushi is about culinary expertise and an Itamae-San (expert Chef) continually strives to master his/her skill while performing for the delight of the patron and serving an array of bright colors, mouthwatering tastes and tingling sensations. The Salem's are proud of the fact that they serve the freshest Ahi and Hamachi is all of northern Nevada. Just the history of these rolled treasures should warrant a taste ... so give in and enjoy an authentic Japanese edible art form.

You enter through a Japanese garden, over a bridge covering a trickling stream to a nice size dinning room where several folks are seated on three side of a stainless cooking surface. There is a wonderful, continuous service and the menu has something for everyone. There is a good wine list with 18 varietals by-the-glass and, of course, sake. Also a variety of specialty drinks for those adventurous types.

The restaurant serves dinner seven days a week from 4:30p.m. until 11:00p.m. and reservations are recommended by calling (775)323-5550. Carpe Diem my friends and make it a point to go out and live the goodlife!