



The Cupertino COURIER

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Cupertino, California
Permit No. 411

Volume 51, Number 48 • December 23, 1998 • Cupertino, California • Established in 1947

Banker, chef join to start Kitsho Japanese eatery

By PAM MARINO

Behind the sushi bar at Kitsho there is a combined 65 years worth of experience in preparing Japanese food.

The managing chef, Howard Arita, was head sushi chef at Ikenohana restaurant in Cupertino for 14 years. He and two other experienced chefs are now bringing their talents to one of Cupertino's newest Japanese restaurants.

Kitsho opened in late October, with the help of local Chinese-American businessman Chi-Wen Chang. The former Cupertino branch Wells Fargo banker, who now has several of his own businesses, loves Japanese food.

"My number one food is sushi and sashimi," Chang said. As a frequent customer at Ikenohana's, he had become a fan of chef Arita.

Chang looked at eight sites in the area before settling on what last year was Oliver's in Cupertino, an American-style diner, with a decidedly American-style decor. Now the restaurant features a sushi bar and a tatami room, where traditional Japanese sliding doors close for a private, grass-mat covered floor, complete with low table and cushions for sitting on the floor.

The traditional decor is deliberate, Chang said. He wants customers to know the second they walk in the door that Kitsho is a traditional Japanese restaurant. The restaurant has both a Japanese and an English menu.

With a number of Japanese restau-

rants in Cupertino and Sunnyvale, including two that recently opened and one about to open, the "competition is very tough," Chang acknowledged. So Kitsho competes by making sure all ingredients are the freshest and highest quality possible, he said.

"We want to make sure we have the best quality food," Chang said.

So far, just on word of mouth, the restaurant is staying busy, Chang said.

Customers enjoy the daily special Lunch Bento, a traditional Japanese box lunch, at \$6.50. The chefs change the wide array of seafood and vegetable dishes served daily. The Kitsho Lunch Bento, which is a fancier version of the special, is also popular at \$9.50.

The sushi is popular at both lunch and dinner. But also well-liked are the chicken teriyaki and the tempura. Tonkatsu, a deep-fried pork tenderloin is also a favorite with customers, Chang said. Dinner prices are in the \$9.50 to \$20 range.

Kitsho also caters and can provide custom sushi and sashimi platters for special occasions.

Kitsho is at 19541 Richwood Drive, Cupertino, at the corner of Richwood and Estates Drive, one block from Stevens Creek Boulevard and Vallco Fashion Park. Lunch hours are 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Dinner hours are 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5:30 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The restaurant is closed Sunday. For information call 873-1444.



Photograph by Skye Dunalap

Chiaki Yoshihara displays one of Kitsho's many traditional Japanese dishes. The restaurant features a sushi bar and a tatami room, decorated with a grass-mat covered floor, low tables and cushions for sitting on the floor.