



Eating

Let's do Sushi-Hiro! Just tick the box Charles Champion goes gourmet Japanese at bargain prices



Sushi-Hiro is a very self-effacing sort of restaurant. The sign outside says 'Sushi-Hiro, Japanese Gourmet Foods', and if it were not for the constant stream of Japanese people calling for sushi boxes to go, the blanked-out windows would make it look a bit like the London office of some Japanese conglomerate, or perhaps one of those very discreet 'specialist' shops. Inside, you find that half the room is given over to a waiting area for takeaway customers, there is a sushi counter with stools, a handful of tables, and that's about it. The ceiling is high, the lighting bright, and all is spotlessly clean. It can be a bit intimidating, but take heart, all the experts agree that Sushi-Hiro serves some of the best sushi in London.

The menu offers sushi in various guises; you are given a miniature clipboard with a small form to fill in detailing your requirements and that's when it all gets tricky as there are 50 or so boxes to tick. The best strategy is to start with the chef's selection, superior nigiri (£12), which brings ten pieces of sushi: tuna, salmon, herring roe, turbot, bass, red clam, scallop, salmon roe, red bream and sweet shrimp. Try them all and then have a second go at the ones you like.

The sushi here is very good, the rice is soft and almost warm, the balance between the amount of rice and topping is just about perfect. The fish is squeakily fresh and delicious. When you've taken the sting out of your appetite with the chef's choice, go freestyle and consider trying a piece of eel (£1.80) – very rich; mackerel (90p) – a revelation, light and not oily at all; pickled plum roll (£2.20 for four) – rice, pickled plum and shiso leaves, an addictive flavour; salmon roe (£1.50) – salty and sticky. Then round things off with a small bowl of rather splendid miso soup (£1), which comes with a couple of little clams lurking in the depths.

These are all sophisticated flavours and textures, but even if you go wild, your bill will still not be as savage as it would be in a halfway decent French restaurant. Beware of one trap: this restaurant sticks to Japanese opening hours: lunch is between 11am and 1.30pm; the dinner hour stretches from 4.30pm to 9pm; and they close on Mondays. The staff at Sushi-Hiro are reserved and polite, so do not be intimidated. Blunder on and have a good time. ■
Sushi-Hiro, 1 Station Parade, Uxbridge Road, W5 (020 8896 3175)

Five other great sushi restaurants

- **Kiku**, 17 Half Moon Street, W1 (020 7499 4208). The very thought of a sushi restaurant in Mayfair makes the wallet shudder, but Kiku is surprisingly good value. Fresh fish, good rice, and a reasonable bill.
- **Sushi-Say**, 338 Walm Lane, NW2 (020 8459 2971). A husband and wife run this friendly little establishment in Willesden. A menu in English and very helpful staff make this an excellent place for sushi novices to take their first steps without breaking the bank.
- **Ikkyu**, 67A Tottenham Court Road, W1 (020 7636 9280). It is very easy to walk straight past the stairs leading down to this cellar restaurant. Inside, all is hustle and bustle, with well-made sushi at keen prices. Look out for the crispy chicken skin on skewers.
- **Defune**, 34 George Street, W1 (020 7935 8311). Defune is a pretty inscrutable sort of place. It recently moved from Blandford Street to George Street, but the sushi (you can get all those obscure varieties described as 'challenging') is still ultra-fresh and ultra-pricey.
- **Kulu Kulu**, 76 Brewer Street, W1 (020 7734 7316). A bright little conveyor-belt restaurant in Soho. The sushi is sound enough, and good value – the little dishes are very tasty – but you need to be a contortionist to cope with the low, low stools.

The B

Elle Macpherson shows us her pan



Cocktail shockers

And the prize for the worst cocktail pun in town? **The Basil Blush** (boom boom!), a heady mix of pink vodka, basil leaves, lemon juice and sugar, which features on the menu at the Fifth Floor, Momo and Eclipse bars. What next? Pinky and Perky? Well, yes, actually. They do those too...

Do they rate... E&O

Master chef or a dog's dinner? The critics have the last word on the hottest tables in town

The critic	The verdict	The rating
The Daily Telegraph	'Dreadful'	★
The Independent on Sunday	'Food bops its way round the Orient like a pinball'	★★
The Sunday Telegraph	'Resolutely W11. Food good, but not <i>that</i> good'	★★
The Sunday Times Style	'Better than Nobu'	★★★★
Square Meal	'Comically trendy customers'	★★
Our man Foulkes	'If only all places were so uncomplicated'	★★★

Average rating: 2 out of 5 E&O, 14 Blenheim Crescent, W11 (020 7229 5454)

It's the Groucho with lip gloss Why the stars love the Wellington

Around ten years ago, when a small fight broke out in the bar at Terence Conran's spanking-new flagship restaurant, Le Pont de la Tour at Tower Bridge, the famously obdurate gastro domo was reported to be quietly delighted by the harmless rumble. 'It's not a *proper* bar until there's been at least one fight,' he told the papers the next day.

These days, it seems, a private members' club is not a *proper* club until its notoriety and profile have been established via some grisly incident with a badly behaved footballer or two. Red Cube had Dwight Yorke ostentatiously pawing page-three stunna Jordan, Sugar Reef had inebriated West Ham players peeing against its bar, while at the end of last year, Knightsbridge's Wellington Club saw a rather regrettable incident involving, among others, a somewhat worse-for-wear Jody Morris of Chelsea FC.

The much-publicised episode was particularly painful for the nightclub's proprietor, Jake Panayiotou (formerly of Browns), who is a lifelong Chelsea fan. 'It was very upsetting because, between us, my family have around 18 season tickets,' says Panayiotou.

'Unfortunately, those players will not be welcome here again.'

Not that they'll be missed. Since opening last autumn, the Wellington has become late-night catnip for superstars, players, models and music-industry types – a sort of Groucho with lip gloss. They are attracted, no doubt, by its palazzo-fabulous décor (always popular with celebrities) – marble everywhere, huge leather bean bags which threaten to engulf you and your Seabreeze whole when you flop down, paintings by Damien Hirst (a member) and a sound system designed by Pete Tong.

The door policy is strictly members only – when regulars include Kylie Minogue, Nicole Kidman, Freddie Ljungberg, the Le Bons and Calum Best, you wouldn't want just anyone coming in, would you? **Simon Mills**

