



Food & Drink

By Kris Griffiths

REVIEW - So Restaurant



It's a reassuring sign when visiting any restaurant purveying a particular international cuisine that there are natives of that country dining within, and particularly so with Japanese restaurants I've found. Indeed 'So' Restaurant in the heart of Soho was voted the UK's favourite Japanese in 2009 by the most discerning customers of all – Japanese residents in London.



You can see firstly from the look of the place why it's so popular: unpretentious, minimalist use of darkened wood, a mirrored wall on one side, large display cabinet of oriental bric-a-brac covering another – it's every bit the modern, contemporary Japanese restaurant.

The prevalent feature of the ground-level dining space (a roomier dining area lies downstairs) is its classic sushi bar helmed by Head Chef Matsuya, who has been with 'So' since its outset. My companion and I duly opt for a spread of sushi and sashimi as a starter, and receive a beautifully presented selection with a pot of soy sauce and plentiful wasabi and fresh ginger.

Hearing that certain grilled dishes are cooked on a yogan-yaki grill over volcanic rocks from Mount Fuji, we order the mixed fish grill as our main but are disappointed to hear that it's not on the menu that evening. We are brought half a lobster to share instead – delicious all the same but there's never much flesh to play with I find with lobster.

Thankfully there is an excellent range of sakes to wash things down with, and the knowledgeable Japanese staff are happy to make recommendations. The steaming hand towels that arrive after the main are also a nice touch, especially after the buttery lobster dish.



Part of the dessert we finally order is also not available that evening but, curiously, its replacement – a scrumptious green tea cake – must surely be better than the standard chocolate cake it was supplanting? It goes down perfectly with its accompanying mango mousse, and should become a dessert menu fixture rather than a substitute item.

So, 'So' was far from so-so in the end – succeeding even when it got things wrong, something that can only bode well for a future return visit when the menu is fighting at full strength. They even offer 25% off for Monday to Thursday bookings made online, making it even better value than the restaurant already provides.

3-4 Warwick Street, Soho, W1B 5LS.

www.sorestaurant.com
