

HONOLULU

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Two New Restaurants by Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto Opening in Waikīkī Soon

MORIMOTO ASIA WAIKĪKĪ IS SLATED TO OPEN IN FEBRUARY, WITH MOMOSAN WAIKĪKĪ TO FOLLOW.

BY CATHERINE TOTH FOX



CHEF MASAHARU MORIMOTO IN HIS NEW RESTAURANT, MORIMOTO ASIA WAIKĪKĪ, WHICH IS SLATED TO OPEN ON FEB. 15.

PHOTO: DAVID CROXFORD

Dressed in a sweater, white shorts and super-clean sneakers, chef Masaharu Morimoto holds up a whole roast duck made of plastic.

“Made in Japan,” explains the Iron Chef, adding that these ducks—he’s got 10 of them—cost \$400 each. **“Looks good, yeah?”**

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The fake ducks will be hanging in a showcase near the glass-encased exhibition kitchen of his new restaurant, **Morimoto Asia Waikīkī**, which is slated to open on Feb. 15.

The menu will feature, in fact, *real* Peking duck, along with other globally inspired creations, from Thai lobster chow fun to wok-fried kung pao chicken. The 250-seat restaurant, located on the second floor of the new **Alohilani Resort Waikīkī Beach**, will serve as the hotel's signature restaurant. Downstairs from Morimoto Asia will be **Momosan Waikīkī**, a more casual restaurant by Morimoto that focuses on noodles, small plates and yakitori, with an outdoor beer garden with signature sake, wine and local craft beers. There's no date set for the opening of Momosan.



INSIDE MORIMOTO ASIA WAIKĪKĪ IN THE NEWLY RENOVATED ALOHILANI RESORT WAIKĪKĪ BEACH.

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ONE OF THE MORE POPULAR STARTERS AT MORIMOTO ASIA IN ORLANDO, THE TUNA PIZZA IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF FUSION DISHES MORIMOTO WANTS TO BRING TO HONOLULU. THIS DISH FEATURES 'AHI SASHIMI ON A CRISPY TORTILLA WITH TOMATOES, JALAPEÑO PEPPERS AND ANCHOVY AIOLI.



THE HOUSE-ROASTED DUCK, A POPULAR ITEM ON THE MENU AT MORIMOTO ASIA IN ORLANDO, WILL BE SERVED IN WAIKĪKĪ, TOO.

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THE STICKY RIBS, ONCE ON THE SEASONAL MENU AT MORIMOTO WAIKĪKĪ AT THE MODERN, WILL BE PART OF THE DINNER LINEUP.

The space for Morimoto Asian, converted from a 24 Hour Fitness gym, is stunning, with **panoramic views of Kūhiō Beach and Kalākaua Avenue. Sprawling over 10,000 square feet** facing the ocean, the restaurant has both indoor and patio dining areas, with design **elements taken from Morimoto's travels throughout Asia. For example, the interior has an elegant Balinese feel with beams that resemble driftwood. It's striking.**

The restaurant has been a long time coming: It was three years ago that Morimoto and the hotel first discussed opening a restaurant there. Morimoto was still running his namesake restaurant at The Modern Honolulu at the time. (He closed that restaurant in December 2016 after six years.) There have been delays in permitting and construction.

"We try to open [here] very quickly," Morimoto says. "But we don't want to rush to open before we're ready."

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MOMOSAN WAIKĪKĪ, LOCATED DOWNSTAIRS FROM MORIMOTO ASIA WAIKĪKĪ, WILL FOCUS MORE ON NOODLES, YAKITORI AND PŪPŪ.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MOMOSAN ASIA

The restaurant hasn't released the menu yet, but some of the fusion dishes, taken from the original Morimoto Asia that opened in Walt Disney World in September 2015, will be served here, too—in particular, the house-roasted whole duck, spare ribs with a hoisin-sweet-chili glaze and Korean barbecue kalbi. There will even be a dim sum cart rolling around the dining room during dinner service.

"I try to make something interesting from all over Asia," says the Hiroshima-born chef, who has traveled extensively throughout Japan, China, Thailand and Taiwan.

Both restaurants anchor the hotel, formerly the Pacific Beach Hotel, which completed a \$115 million renovation this year. The resort boasts a saltwater infinity pool, a pool bar and tiered day beds, and a 280,000-gallon lobby oceanarium teeming with more than 1,000 protected marine life.

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