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HAWAII MAGAZINE – March 8, 2018

The *Bliss* List



Chef Morimoto returns to Waikiki in style.

Photo: Tracy Chan

Morimoto Asia is Waikiki's hottest new restaurant

Returning to Waikiki, “Iron Chef” Masaharu Morimoto brings a menu of Asian-fusion cuisine to his new restaurant Morimoto Asia Waikiki.

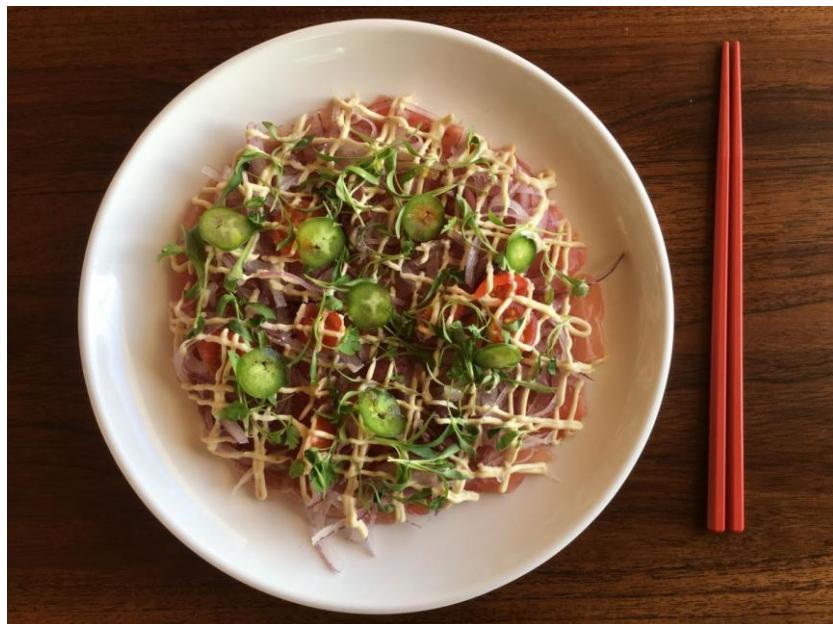
BY KEVIN ALLEN MAR 8, 2018

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Seated on the veranda of the newly opened Morimoto Asia Waikiki, I have an hour until sunset and an unrivaled view of Waikiki Beach. On the corner of Kalakaua Avenue and Liliuokalani Avenue, the restaurant, spearheaded by “Iron Chef” Masaharu Morimoto, is the Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach’s premier dining experience.



The Tuna Pizza serves as the perfect appetizer.

Photo: Kevin Allen

I order the Tuna Pizza to start and I’m happy with my choice. Each bite feels light, however the mixture of anchovy aioli sauce, drizzled atop freshly sliced and locally sourced tuna and an array of sprouts, baby tomatoes and olives fill my mouth with flavor. The real standout of the dish is the crisp flour tortilla that the pizza sits on, which I’m told by my waiter is lightly brushed with an unagi sauce, giving it a salty kick.

The sun is nearing the horizon now, and although the Pacific is lit in a beautiful orange glow, I can’t take my eyes off my main course, the Ishiyaki Buri Bop. Brought to me in a cast iron bowl, the dish is seared tableside, and the smell of

HAWAII

M A G A Z I N E . C O M

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the sweet ginger soy sauce has me drooling. Morimoto's take on the traditional Korean dish, bi bim bap, replaces the meat with seared hamachi.



An overeasy egg, which has now been soaked into the white rice, mixes well with the royal ferns and pickled daikon. Near the bottom of the bowl, where all of the sauces and juices have mixed together, each spoonful becomes better than the last. Before I know it, it's all gone.

During a slight reprieve from my fine dining, I take in my surroundings. Morimoto Asia Waikiki shares the same aesthetic traits with the resort. Downplayed beige furniture and wooden decor give the space a refined, sleek look. A window is all that separates you from the bustling kitchen, giving diners a look at how the cooks are preparing their meals.

HAWAII

M A G A Z I N E . C O M

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Finally, dessert. I watch as my waiter sets the Chocolate Sphere, an unassuming ball of dark chocolate, alight with burning alcohol. The flames melt away a layer of chocolate to uncover chocolate ice cream and whipped cream in the sweet's interior. Every spoonful is pure cacao bliss. Slices of strawberry give me a brief escape from the rich dessert, however I can't stay away long.

Sipping away at a cup of Kona coffee at the end of my meal, I walk to the bar and am offered a Clean Shave. Not on the drink menu, but the bartenders will be happy to make you one, it's a blend of Zaya rum, Bulleit bourbon, honey liqueur, orange and aromatic bitters and finished with a long orange swath. The drink effectively cleanses my palate, and is a satisfying way to end my extravagant evening.

2490 Kalakaua Ave., Waikiki, (808) 922-0022,
alohilaniresort.com/dining/morimoto-asia/.