

The Stomach's trip to Japan

Samdado is attracting hungry Dhakaites with their authentic Japanese and Korean cuisine

FAIZUL A TANIM

If you haven't had Japanese food before, this is your opportunity. Samdado is the only eatery in Dhaka serving authentic Japanese dishes and some Korean food as well. Most Japanese food they serve, ingredient-wise, may not surprise the Dhakaites. However, be ready to gulp down items that are high on taste but low on spice. At *Samdado*, everything comes with a bona fide *Far Eastern* signature. There is a lot of recipes that use white rice and seaweed mixed with soy sauce, healthy diet to appease one's appetite.

Samdado, the island of three rocks, as explained by the owner and chief chef Chris Lee, is Japan brought closer to the Bengali stomach. It is a nicely decorated cosy eatery with traditional rice paper windows, skin coloured tables and chairs, interesting artworks and wall hangings. Together with the lighting the restaurant gives a formal yet relaxing atmosphere. The all-spreading gleam is reassuringly oriental in ambience.

They have the first of its kind 'sushi bar', "specifically meant for single food connoisseur who is to sit alone and enjoy the opportunity to place order directly to the chef, adding to the already existing friendly environment orchestrated by a cheerful staff," as Chris puts it.

My favourite was the cucumber and mixed fresh vegetable salad with dressing. Beware though; it comes in tiny little containers, so you might not resist the temptation to order for two. The kimchi -- Korean pickle adds

extra taste to the salad.

There's beef and chicken, fully cooked, with *teriyaki* and soy sauce. And 'yes', and there is of course the 'killer sushi' served on wooden platter. This is usually raw fish and is ready to take your Bengali breath away. If you want to get started with *sushi*, it is better to go easy on your taste buds by ordering shrimp or salmon. They are cooked. There are also *sushi* rolls, which are just made of vegetables rolled around seaweed and rice -- the taste is heavenly.

"The fishes used for the *sushi* has to be brought from Thailand, Korea, and Japan to maintain the quality and that causes the price to shoot up," says a smiling Chris.

Apart from these courses, one can also lose oneself into a pot of 'soup miso'--a very popular soup among Japanese. To the locals, its flavour is more akin to the illustrious flavours of *shutki*. With countless vegetables, bean curd and leaves, the soup is certainly a prize for the fitness buff.

"A lot of customers coming in on a daily basis, prefer our Korean cookery as well. Korean mixed rice (*bibimbab*), boiled and grilled beef and vegetable (*bulgogi*) along with steamed duck in herbal seeds (*orijjim*) suits the local taste," asserts Chris.

Finally, the desserts: the sweet rice cake (*mochi*); green tea icecream and fruit yogurt icecream are prepared by the Chef himself and they are his own concoction.

The menu at *Samdado* changes every four months. The idea is to serve dishes that are well keyed with the seasons. Chris loves to prepare items out of fresh available products, for which sometime different sorts of vegetable preparations and fishes becomes a spring-board.

The place boasts of a string of loyal customers. "I am a regular customer of this place, absolutely love the décor and most importantly the FOOD!" says an enthusiastic Mr Thomson.

The restaurant kicked off in January 2003 and has definitely added a distinct colour to the spectrum of Dhaka's food culture.

