

FOOD

UMAI, authentic Japanese cuisine

Looking for authentic Japanese dining experience and that too at an affordable rate? There's one place in town that surely lives up to the expectations — UMAI in Gulshan 2.

So what makes UMAI so spectacular? Certainly the ambience is one reason. Once you have entered the restaurant you are greeted by hospitable faces, a warm welcome drink, and a calm soothing interior décor that transports you directly to a tranquil city somewhere in Japan. And of course, there's the food!

The restaurant serves delectable Japanese cuisine like sumptuous prawn fritters, spicy edamame, beef negimaki, a platter of sashimi and sushi, chicken teriyaki, unagi rolls, maki rolls, prawn fritters, avocado salad, mango tartar, and so much more.

"We import our salmon directly from Norway," said Nayeem Ashraf, Head Chef at UMAI, adding on to include, "To maintain authenticity, we cannot procure most of our items from the local market. They are instead flown in from various parts of the world. And that's not all, to preserve the freshness of the food, especially the salmon, we need to keep it in a special freezer set at -70 degree Celsius. The sushis are chilled at this temperature, inside the special freezer and not frozen — it's a big difference. And this is why our food stays fresh, flavourful, and authentic."

Inquired about the selection of menu, Khan Faisal Islam, Owner and Managing Director at UMAI Ltd. chipped in.

"We have regular food tasting sessions by the directors, who are also seasoned foodies; unless and until a menu fulfils all the requirements and our taste buds, we do not finalise it for the menu chart," he said.

Shoji Morita, a renowned Japanese chef, who honed his skills at the popular Sushimasa Restaurant in Kudanshita, Japan, had been the Executive Chef at UMAI, since its opening in 2015.

Morita is famous worldwide for his veteran culinary skills and his presentation style. UMAI has been blessed to have him as a guide, for the longest time. During his tenure at the restaurant, Morita personally trained all the employees including the kitchen staff.

"His teachings were a blessing for me," said Nayeem Ashraf, the current Head Chef at the restaurant.

We spoke to the Operations Manager, Aminul Islam, to find out explicitly why UMAI was popular. Aminul gladly replied, "Anybody who understands authentic sushi dishes will definitely come to our restaurant. I don't think I need to say anything else. Plus, the value for money, which they get for each item, is excellent and it's a direct review from our customers."

And the claims must be true because business has not subsided even during the pandemic, as UMAI is consistently providing home delivery for online orders. On any given weekend without the pandemic, the bustling restaurant

brims with customers.

"Even the two private rooms that we have at the restaurant for family get-togethers or corporate events are full," said the Managing Director, Khan Faisal Islam.

While we wait for the pandemic to get over and the sun to shine beyond the clouds, we can order online and order

some authentic Japanese cuisine this Ramadan from the much coveted restaurant.

Bon appétit!

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo Courtesy: Umai Ltd