

Savouring Satsuma in Soho

When meeting a friend on the busy and fun packed streets of Soho, we were faced with a familiar conundrum. That is the restaurant consumer choice conundrum. If you're not aware of it, it goes a little like this,

"Hi, how are you?"

"Good, and you?"

"Starving let's get some food!"

"Me too that's a good idea, but where shall we eat? Let's make it cheap and cheerful! How about Chinese?"

"Had Chinese last night - wouldn't mind something different. How about Italian?"

"No, not in the mood for Italian - we could do Thai or even pizza?"

"Pizza is Italian, silly, but obviously you are in the mood for Asian food, so let do Japanese!"

"Ah! perfect - why didn't we think of that before" "so where then?" etc.

So that is the conundrum and starting to rain didn't help matters, but luckily right where we were having the conversation, there was Satsuma restaurant with its prime location on Fifth Street. Looking in we could see the hum of activity inside making this choice an easy one.

The restaurant with its contemporary design is divided into two floors. The ground floor has a vibrant open feel to it with exposed dark-wood panelling and bare walls. This is perfect if you

like a little people watching as all the characters of Soho pass by the glassed fronted restaurant which lets in lots of natural light. Or you could opt for the more intimate basement. This is what my dining partner and I decided to do. The walls are warmly painted yellow and there are coloured down-lighters. The architectural design by Stiff + Trevillion reveals an opening in the ceiling which enables light to filter down on to the room, so you can hear the chatter and buzz from both floors giving the atmosphere a lively tone. Also adding to the atmosphere is the fact that everyone eats at communal tables making the whole experience a highly social affair.

Having worked at the esteemed Japanese restaurant Zuma, I felt it only right that Satsuma should get my humble criticism. As we were led downstairs, I was careful to survey the contents to make sure I wouldn't miss out on anything. As a self-confessed sufferer of food envy it comes with the job! With the look of things there was a lot to envy.

Once seated and having ordered a cold beer each, we told our waiter that we would leave the choice of food in his capable hands and to supply us with the best. Thus the biggest decision of the night had been made! My table guest was in a sharing spirit,

so we decided to split everything between us, which is of course the best way to get your chopsticks on a little bit of everything.

While biting on the bright green eddame beans we both anticipated the delights to come. To start with, we were brought '5 Kinds of Sashimi' which came out on a black board with finely and brightly coloured seafood, including prawn, salmon, scallop, surf clam and yellow tail. When eating sashimi, the most important thing is the freshness and these certainly were fresh. So much so that you could still taste the sea.

Next we were presented with the Crispy Aromatic Duck Roll, A take on Peking duck, the sushi was rolled tightly with aromatic duck, spring onion, hoi sin sauce, cucumber, rocket and sesame seeds. You would normally expect to find them in a pancake but instead they were rolled in well cooked sushi rice and the sweetness coming from the hoi sin really worked! These six pieces of sushi were moorish. Admittedly, I may have failed on splitting things evenly with this dish as my chopsticks went instinctively towards a fourth roll while my table partner distractedly glanced towards the next dish. Fried Gyoza, or grilled chicken dumplings, with a crisp textured outside and a soft well-seasoned filling made for good comfort food.

Next up was the Saba Shioyaki Set, which is a dish of grilled mackerel with crushed salt served with mooli and lemon. The moistly cooked mackerel had that perfectly smoky taste and the crushed salt and lemon gave it an addictive quality. Good to see that they can cook the fish as well as they could sashimi it. Beef Teriyaki arrived shortly afterwards to share the limelight, and this oldie but goodie was tenderly cooked, and the sirloin steak was perfectly pink in the middle and was complemented well with a tangy teriyaki sauce.

When asked if we



would like anything else, I thought something sweet would be in order but instead of being given a desert we were given a sweet potato tempura. This was far from a disappointment as we had not had any tempura and is, in my book, a must in any Japanese meal. Something so simple can so easily be done badly. However in this case it was just what was needed as the light crisp tempura coated the fluffy sweet bright orange inside and was complemented perfectly by the dashi it was served with. Once we finished this, our appetites for something sweet were appeased.

The staff are wonderful at Satsuma, and dishes are served effi-

ciently and with an enthusiasm that suits the crowds who throng to the restaurant for something quick and delicious. Satsuma is part of the Royal China Group's prestigious restaurants, and is the only Japanese restaurant in the group.

Satsuma has the humming atmosphere that comes only with a full house of happy diners. Full and content, we made our way upstairs to discover that the rain had subsided, and through the semi-steamed windows you could see the streets of Soho were still alive and well with people.

So next time you are faced with the all too familiar consumer choice restaurant conundrum, Satsuma will help you to solve it. If you like good food but want a casual authentic eating experience then look no further. With value for money, good service and a fun buzz, I have no doubt that they will be seeing me again.

George Tannock

See back page for fantastic Reader's Cruise offer!



Online ticket reservations

São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro ...	€754.35
New York... ..	€457.68
Funchal	€136.91
Kiev	€295.54
Athens	€308.98
Helsinki	€226.78
Johannesburg	€703.48
Warsaw	€220.91
Berlin	€219.98
Stockholm/Copenhagen ...	€205.92

All prices are starting prices for return flights including airport taxes (ticketing fee is excluded, exact amount subject to confirmation).

MAIN OFFICE:
Tel: 282 480 580
Fax 282 480 589
Email: info@airpass.pt
Mobile: 932 070 707

LISBON AIRPORT
Tel: 218 439 510
Fax: 218439 516
Mobile: 932 090 909



The interior of Satsuma.



Fine dining doesn't need to be expensive...
Enjoy your choice of Starter & Main Course from our à la carte menu and let us delight you with our special L'Olive Dessert for only €39,00



Our Promise
Finest Dishes from the grill
Great Mediterranean flavours
A unique ambience

Vila Sol Algarve, A Renaissance SPA & Golf Resort
Vilamoura | Tel. 289 320 320

NEW ROUTES
SUMMER '09



LONDON GATWICK
From 26 April

FARO AIRPORT

FLIGHT INFORMATION: +351 289 800 617 | faro.airport@ana.pt | Europe's gateway to the sun
PC, pocket PC or PDA timetable downloads at www.faroairport.com.pt
Choose your destination: http://www.ana.pt/portal/page/portal/ANA/INOV_NOVOS_HORARIOS_TODOS

www.aerlingus.com

Aer Lingus

ANZ Aeroportos Algarve