

Kitaya offers savoury and trendy Japanese treats

New Toronto restaurant
Kitaya offers up trendy
Japanese menu

Dr. Jonathan Eto
Contributor

TORONTO — One of Toronto's newest Japanese restaurants, Kitaya Japanese Takeout, offers savoury Japanese dishes and trendy desserts. Located at 138-890 Don Mills Rd., just blocks away from the JCCC, Kitaya started to welcoming customers in late March but had its official soft opening on April 26.

Tucked inside the C&C Grocery Mart plaza, the attractive takeout store will offer limited dine-in space for approximately 8 to 12 people once pandemic restrictions lift. Their delicious desserts and assorted Japanese dishes are available for in-store purchase and on UberEats.

"A one-stop takeout place for Japanese food and dessert. Our variety of dishes will be sure to satisfy everyone in the family," says Elaine of Kitaya.

Along with its authentic Japanese dishes, Kitaya offers a variety of Japanese sweets, including "wafu" or Japanese-flavoured ice creams. Their matcha and hojicha soft serve ice cream are made from tea powder imported from Kyoto. In customary Japanese fashion, the flavours rotate throughout the seasons.



They are also one of the few places in Toronto that serve fruit sandwiches and "croffles," a hybrid of croissants and waffles. Both are popular treats in Japan gaining popularity in Toronto. Some of their most popular sun-daes are Ms. Kyoto and Tokyo

Cheesecake flavours.

Kitaya's menu of sushi, sashimi, and donburi are traditional, authentically Japanese and a must-try. In addition, Kitaya also offers Japanese beverages and snacks. Everything is well presented and available in cute takeout containers. They are all delicious.

"We strive to make our food



PHOTO CREDITS: DR. JONATHAN ETO

as authentic as possible, and we hope that we can become a go-to place for Japanese takeout and desserts in the neighbourhood. We also hope that we can give the Japanese Canadian community a sense of being at home without having to travel back to Japan," says Elaine.

Their lovely staff is very wel-

coming and offers service in Japanese and English.

Kitaya's Grand Opening is scheduled for this summer in July, where they will offer grab bags (*fukubukuro*) giveaways for their first few dozen customers. Give them a taste, you won't be disappointed! *Oishii-desu!*

Mindfulness in the city: Does your food spark joy?



Falling out of love with
food when cooking for
one

Caroline Ishii
Columnist

OTTAWA — Lately, I've been surgeon-like in my dissection of food. Not what I'm cooking or eating, but my love of food. I learned I've been living a lie.

Instead of the love affair, I thought I had with food, it's been more of a tumultuous love-hate relationship. I've come to this realization while making food for myself at home.

Alone in my kitchen, I am not inspired to cook for a party of one and quickly get bored with what I make.

What?! You're a chef, are you not? Friends ask, which makes me feel guilty.

I get spurts of energy and inspiration, but usually, I quickly get tired and frustrated when I

hit the kitchen. I am usually hungry—which brought me to the kitchen initially—and I want to eat right away.

I'm bored with what I cook for myself. *How can that be*, my friends say. *You have the most expansive palate of anyone we know.*

I love cooking for others, but cooking for myself is uninspiring. It feels more like a chore, it takes time to make something, and then there's the constant clean-up. Is anyone out there like me?

Food diary

I'm keeping a food diary. It's not for weight reduction, and it not to make me feel bad or guilty. It's a diary of the food I eat and how I feel before, during, and after eating anything.

I give what I'm eating a rating on a scale of 1 to 10, like a food critic. One is no enjoyment, bor-

"Instead of the love affair I thought I had with food, it's been more of a tumultuous love-hate relationship."

ing, or even bad-tasting at times. Ten is a delightful taste experience that makes me happy.

At the same time, I'm more mindful of the eating process. I love eating in front of the TV. I fear not having the TV or radio on or something to read. Why? It is too quiet, and I don't want to feel like I am alone, even though I am. It is company and a distraction.

I'm trying to practice silent meals, often at breakfast, where I have nothing playing like music or the TV. It is often done on yoga and meditation retreats.

I've created a special place for my meals with a placemat, candle, a vase with a flower, and a book on mindful eating, *How to Eat*, by beloved Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. I read a short passage from the book before I start eating.

Itadakimasu

I also express gratitude like a prayer for the food I am about to eat. It's my way of saying *itadakimasu*, as is done before meals in Japan, to be thankful for the food.

With hands together, I close my eyes, slightly bow my head, and I thank all that has gone into the food, from being grown, harvested, prepared, and everything in between until it reaches me.

I carefully observe the meal before I eat it. It's like saying "wait" before you let your dog or cat wolf down the food in their dish.

As I am eating, I repeat, *I am eating this bread, I am eating this bread, I am eating this bread.* This repetition goes for whatever I am eating, like a meditation.

Unless I do this, I am eating but thinking of something else, a problem I'm working out, something I must do, or an email I for-



PHOTO COURTESY: CAROLINE ISHII

When food is presented beautifully, like this meal columnist Caroline Ishii had in Japan, it's easy to enjoy it. But who has the time or patience to do that when cooking for one?

got to answer.

It could be one of the 60,000 to 80,000 thoughts experts estimate we have in a day, and often not one is related to the food in my mouth! Before I know it, I've finished the sandwich and don't remember much.

I want to remember as much as I can about my life, savour it. How do we do this?

We slow down, and we try to ground ourselves before we eat and be present. That's why prayer or an *itadakimasu* is essential. I

try to put down my fork, spoon, or the sandwich between bites and chew thoughtfully before moving on to the next bite.

Think of the fork and hand together like the gas pedal. If you don't pause sometimes, you will quickly reach the destination and miss looking at the scenery.

Putting the fork down sometimes helps you to pay attention. It's like putting on the brakes slowly when you're going too fast

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around a corner or down a steep hill.

It takes longer to eat this way and might be frustrating at first. I love multi-tasking and keeping busy. I often eat while working or watching a talk on my computer. So this practice does not come naturally for me.

But I guarantee you'll learn a lot about yourself and your eating patterns, and your food will taste better. And if it doesn't, then why are you eating it?

The food critic

When I first started writing in the food diary, I gave most of my food a five-rating. It was blah, not that good. I was busy and slapped together what I could or grabbed something from the fridge and didn't take the time to warm it up or prepare it more in an attractive way. *It's only me*, I think. *And I'm starving!*

Over time I started asking myself, what could I do to make my food tastier and more attractive, and what do I love to eat?

It wasn't about what I think I should eat, others tell me to eat, or I'm scrimping on. After a while, you'll be able to taste and feel the difference in real food you love rather than what you think you should have. I am.

You don't need to eat every meal in silence and mindfully, and it is hard to do this if you live with others. But you could try once a day to start. Maybe even the tea and cookie you have during a break.

Remember the principles of eating mindfully and slowly, be with the tea and cookie and not your thoughts, and please, no guilt allowed.

Food tastes better with others

My dad used to say that food tastes better with others. I agree. There is nothing like company to make a simple meal taste better. We make the extra effort when cooking food for others.

I didn't put in the extra effort when cooking food for myself. Instead, I prepared food quickly, as if in a race, missing the care I put into cooking for my clients and friends to make it delicious.

I'm returning to eating what I love and enjoying it. And it's often the simple things with good quality ingredients.

Heaven on earth

I love my friend's rustic Italian salad of ripe seasonal tomatoes with buffalo mozzarella and fresh basil. For me, it is heaven on earth.

I asked her for the recipe to ensure I was getting it right. She said there is no recipe but gave me the ingredients; tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, fresh basil, red wine or balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive, and good sea salt.

I didn't want to skimp on anything as I usually do for myself. Less of this ingredient because it's too fattening, reduced this because it has too many calories, or I'll buy another ingredient because it's cheaper, and so forth. I made it with the ingredients listed. And I made it in the way that



PHOTO CREDITS: CAROLINE ISHII

Fresh, high quality ingredients can make even the simplest dishes taste delicious.

I wanted.

In doing so, I demonstrated that I could care for myself as much as I care for others. Revolutionary? For me, it is.

I often gave myself the day-old, the leftovers I've had two days in a row, and dishes without the embellishments, and I was okay with that.

But I realized I wasn't often happy with this food I fed myself. It didn't bring me joy.

Food preparation, I'm discover-

ing, doesn't have to be complicated. I thought it had to be. Take a cheese sandwich.

We can take it from ordinary to extraordinary. Using fresh bread

"I speak a lot about food and love. I realized that I wasn't putting the special ingredient that I was using for others in my food. Love."

and cheese that we love. Making it in the way that we love, whether grilled or fresh with tomatoes and cucumbers. And eating it mindfully takes our experience over the top.

I speak a lot about food and love. I realized that I wasn't putting the special ingredient that I was using for others into my food. Love. It was often missing in buying food, cooking, and especially in eating what I had prepared.

I am feeding myself love, perhaps for the first time. Enjoying what I eat minus the guilt, shame and the shoulds. Try it. It may change your relationship with food and with yourself.

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From CHEESE ISLAND P. 11

Provincial Park located between Peterborough and Ottawa, off of the TransCanada Highway, also known as Highway 7?

Always arm yourself with the facts, I say.

No! Mom said, almost indignant. *Where did you read that?*

On Wikipedia, I said triumphantly.

Then my little sister sailed into the room and said, "I know Cheese Island! It's the place Cheese Daijin rules—you know, the Minister of Cheese? It's one of the islands around Whole Cake Island that Momma Pirate rules in Totto Land. Sanji and Charlotte Pudding got married there."

Now it was my turn to say, "What?"

"You know, it's a place on *One Piece*, the TV show. The anime."

Ohhh, now I get it! And so did Mom, too. Sort of. We all knew *One Piece* because when Mom took us to Japan, a former student of hers told us it was her favorite anime on TV and so we all got hooked on it, too, as kids. Mom not so much, but she was glad we were watching Japanese TV. That's why she took us to Japan. So we would watch Japanese TV. Not American TV like what she grew up with.

I'm mixed race; I'm also Christian. In either case you wouldn't know it to look at me. So when that Christian dude went into that Asian spa and killed all those women that looked like my mom, I was really torn up about it.

I went to a Christian camp on an island in the middle of a lake. There I swam a lot and took kids on canoe trips. On those trips, I told kids that God loves them no matter what they look like. There used to be a song sung on that island that they don't sing anymore.

*Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world
Red and yellow, black and white,
all are precious in His sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world.*

I guess that song is considered racist nowadays. And also, there's some missing colors, like where's brown?

I like the idea that somebody out there got sent to Cheese Island. On the satellite image on Google maps, you can see there's a dock on it with a boat parked there.

The island is in the middle of a provincial park so I know it's beautiful and harsh at the same time, and the Japanese in me, says that's the way life is, sometimes, *Shikata ga nai*. It can't be helped. But then the Christian in me says, 'But God loves you always and forever no matter where you are.'

That's the great thing about being mixed—you can think and feel at the same time.

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