

April 27, 2004

Modern Asian pleasures

Tuck In

By [Amy Van](#)

FROM today to Thursday, My Humble House will be hosting Bryan Nagao, executive chef of Denver's Mao Asian Bistro and Sushi Lounge, in conjunction with the World Gourmet Summit, which ends on Friday.

Modern Asian creations with Japanese, European and American flavours are what you can expect from this Los Angeles-born and Hawaii-bred chef.

Nagao worked at places such as Hyatt in Hawaii and San Francisco before heading to Hong Kong, where he made his mark at The Peninsula's famous Felix, and later at Kokage. He traded his surfboard for a snowboard and moved to Denver to launch Mao last December.

He said that Mao's cuisine is light and healthy and incorporates more vegetables and reductions.

Dishes being served at My Humble House include pan-roasted Kobe beef tenderloin with black truffle white soya sauce, suckling pig with miso clam broth, and seared salmon with green peppercorn sweet miso and gorgonzola cheese sauce.

One of his specialties is hamachi (yellow tail) and avocado served with mountain yam puree and black truffles.

I find ingredients to complement sashimi rather than the other way round.

For this dish, I added some acidity and vinegar to cut the fattiness of the hamachi and avocado.

He said that he likes using the citrus flavours of yuzu (Japanese citrus fruit), lemons and blood oranges, and spices such as chilli, Thai curry and lime leaves.

I'm a big fan of sashimi only when it's super fresh and I loved the kampachi (amberjack) garnished with

cilantro and fragrant green shishito pepper.

The fish slices were dressed with shishito vinaigrette made of chives, ginger, garlic, shallots, yuzu juice, grape seed oil and truffle oil.

I prefer to use truffle oil for its flavour, and grape seed rather than olive oil because it's lighter.

With it was a salad of blood orange segments, fennel and black truffles.

Next, I was served the barbecued lamb chop on a bed of celery root puree - a lighter and more fragrant alternative compared to stodgy potatoes. The medium-rare lamb was served with asparagus and shimeiji mushrooms, and topped

with ribbons of beetroot and crunchy pea shoots tossed with a dressing made of ume (Japanese plum), orange juice and piquant morioji (Japanese chilli sauce).

The meat dish came with a delicious red wine and wasabi sauce. Dessert-wise, he said he likes to borrow from his childhood memories and serve items such as doughnuts and chocolate cake - but I add a twist. He took the malasado, a

deep-fried pastry introduced by the Portuguese in Hawaii, and created his own version of Hawaiian-style doughnuts served with a pool of jasmine infused chocolate.

The mildly bitter chocolate went perfectly with the morsels of sugar-coated dough. To throw in a fun element, the chef embellished the dish with swirls of candy in red, yellow and white.

My Humble House is at #02-27/29, Esplanade Mall. Tel: 6423-1881. Open: Lunch: Noon to 3pm; dinner: 6.30pm to 11pm.

Daily Epicurean Delights set menu prices: Lunch: \$60+++ (without wine) and \$90+++ (with wine). Dinner: \$120+++ (without wine) and \$150 (with wine).



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