

# Food review – Yamato

I was approaching 44 years round the sun... To be clear: ageing doesn't bother me much but Mother tells me I could get away with knocking a few years off the official number.

Not that she's one to fib about such things herself, but let's just say the only person she reveals her DOB is her doctor, who's known to gasp and faint in disbelief. No joke: Mother is a hottie.

I'm not into birthday celebrations for myself, as I worry the onus is on me to make sure everyone else has a good time. My daughter, being a thoughtful soul and party animal, won't let a celebration pass, so when she asked if I was having a party, and should she buy any balloons, I decided to take her out for my birthday tea instead.



Santa and the Tooth Fairy aside, there isn't much she gets more excited about than sushi. Now whilst that sounds

ridiculously sophisticated for a seven year old, herein lies the lesson: never become complacent about your child's eating habits. When my daughter was one and a half she couldn't get enough olives. Olives were demanded wherever we went and I smugly thought I'd birthed a food loving goddess: no fussy eating round here, ta very much. A month later she turned up her nose at anything olive-related and if I'm honest when she's not eating sushi her favourite dish is spaghetti with butter on it. That said she's been known to hanker after the occasional avocado and smoked salmon.

I decided to take her to Yamato, a step up from our regular wallet draining trips to Yo Sushi, where I tell her the 'Grey' dishes are for grown ups only.



We were impressed with Yamato from the word go. Sitting next to the open kitchen my daughter was entranced by the array of raw fish, although she assured me she would leave some for the other diners. So selfless! However as she took the best seat at the table it was safe to say that the Wilson women genes are firmly established. It's thought provoking to spend dinner realising what it's like to be my dad or any of the men I've dated, looking at a wall for the evening. In fact with its

elegant and stylish interior, not to mention rather flattering lighting, which I'm eternally 44 years grateful for, the only thing I'd change about Yamato is a few mirrors here and there so the second class diners could see a bit more of what's going on.

The restaurant's vibrant and busy, some clientele appear to have settled for the evening and others popping in for a quick bite. The staff are friendly and there are plenty of them too. Edinburgh bars and restaurants could do well to emulate this, as under staffing seems to be a false economy: it's simply good business sense to make sure customers eat and drink as much as they want as quickly as possible.



Not knowing my California roll from my Nigiri I'm mildly relieved to see the menu has pictures on it. Not in a naff 'This is what a Paella looks like in Magaluf' sort of way, but executed with some sophistication.

We're presented with an amuse bouche of Tuna Belly. Quite the revelation, as I always thought tuna looked quite 'toned', the work-out fish of Instagram, what with all the swimming around and high protein diet. So next time you see a tuna that's let themselves go, that's the one to catch. Seriously though, the tuna was melt in the mouth exquisite and the beautiful presentation, with a dab of gold leaf on the top, got us more excited about the delights to come.

Such beautiful dishes passed our table and it would be a sensible option to simply look at the orgasmic food going to other diners and, when 'Harry Met Sally' style say, "I'll have what she's having." But we've already hit the menu and ordered a reasonable cross section. The first dish to arrive is the enticingly named Snow Crab Vulcan, an almost salad like concoction of the softest crab meat with a zing of onion, scallion, Benito, Ponzu, Yba and Tobiko. No I've no idea what half those things are either but the whole effect was like

eating a cloud of tastiness.

Anoushka was most excited about her Prawn and Avocado Hand Roll, possibly because it looks like a sushi version of an ice cream cone and can be eaten as such. While she also enjoyed Salmon and Avocado and Tuna Maki I focussed on my seared Tuna with Chilli Ponzu Sauce. Each dish, one felt, was fashioned and decorated by the whims of the chef, as no two dishes were presented the same and they appear to have an endless supply of varying chic and super cool tableware.

Many people are put off Japanese food because they don't 'do' raw fish. Fair enough, but the cooked dishes on offer were also spectacular. The king prawns in tempura appeared to have had a gym membership in their lifetime, such were their Jean Claude Van Damme beefiness. Our Karaage, Sake Marinated Fried Chicken to you and me, had a rich crunchy batter and light dipping Japanese style mayonnaise. If there's something the Japanese don't require lessons in, it's how to make fried food crispy, if only they could give many of the chip shops in Edinburgh some pointers.

To finish we have a taster of the ice creams on offer. The black sesame was our favourite as it had a smoky richness to it but the white sesame was delicious and on the more delicate side. If I had one criticism of Yamato it would be to have more of a desert selection but I presume most people don't go to Japanese restaurants for the puds.

Raving about our dinner to my chum Jing Jing the following day she asked if the restaurant was staffed by 'real Japanese people rather than pretend ones.' I couldn't answer that because it was typical of me to have left my DNA testing kit at home. However as the restaurant is the sister establishment of the incredibly popular Kampai, so pretend or not, it was an incredibly authentic and impressive offering to me.

We didn't do the menu justice by any means and I could

certainly return several times and try a vast array of new dishes, and indeed I shall. Yamato has a lovely area that seats ten at a round table, so perfect for those to like to celebrate their birthday in numbers, which I might be tempted to do next year. I'll go easy on the cake candles though, as I'm getting to the age I might set the smoke alarms off. I may begin to take Mother's advice after all...

Yamato

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