

Yamato – fine Japanese dining in Tollcross

You know that feeling when you discover something wonderful and can't believe it's been there all along? That's exactly how I felt stepping into Yamato, an exceptional Japanese restaurant tucked away on Lochrin Terrace in Tollcross.

Its sleek black and red frontage had somehow escaped my notice until now, despite the restaurant being a neighbourhood fixture since 2018.



My relationship with Japanese cuisine has always been complicated. Thirty years ago, when Japanese food was still exotic in Britain, I'd save up for special occasions at a teppanyaki place near my Nottingham graduate flat. But as

sushi took over the culinary world, my seafood allergy left me feeling like an outsider at Japanese restaurants. Yamato, however, proved to be a revelation.

On a buzzing Thursday evening, I found myself in a sophisticatedly designed space where traditional meets modern. Ornate Japanese knives and rare sakes line the displays, while delicate shoji blinds create intimate dining nooks throughout the 60-cover restaurant. The clientele was as diverse as Edinburgh itself – from students to young professionals, plus a few “mature” diners like myself (though I prefer to think of us as “seasonally experienced”).



Behind this culinary haven is chef-owner Max Wang, whose story reads like a passion project come to life. Born and raised in Taiwan – a former annexed territory of the empire of Japan – Max grew up with Japan's culinary influence running through

his veins. In 2005, his dedication led him to California's Sushi Chef Institute, where he mastered his craft under Chef Andy Mastuda.

My dining companion (bless her) sympathetically joined me in exploring the non-seafood options. We started with small plates that proved Japanese cuisine is far more than just raw fish.

The crispy brussels sprout salad with yuzu sauce and pine nuts was nothing short of revolutionary – if someone had told my childhood self that I'd one day rave about brussels sprouts, I'd have thought them mad. The half-grilled aubergine, scored and glazed with sweet miso sauce, was a melt-in-your-mouth revelation that we devoured entirely (minus the stalk, though we weren't entirely sure about the etiquette there). The karaage (crispy fried chicken thigh) transported me straight back to my student days, though this version was several leagues above what I remembered.









For main course, nostalgia led us both to teppanyaki – my companion chose the Black Cod Saikyoyaki while I opted for the Hobayaki Sirloin Beef, served dramatically on a hot stone. Both arrived on leaves over tea-lit wooden serving dishes adorned with Japanese calligraphy – a feast for both eyes and palate.



Dessert was another pleasant surprise: home-made white sesame ice cream, nutty and perfectly grainy. The kitchen even added a Black Sesame Mochi with a candle for my birthday – a thoughtful touch that exemplifies the attention to detail here. Don't miss the Japanese Sweet Sakes, particularly the Umenoyado Yuzu. Think of it as Limoncello's sophisticated cousin – less sweet, more refined, and the perfect digestif.



The experience was elevated further by our waiter, Evan, whose engaging conversation and impeccable service turned a excellent meal into an unforgettable evening. It's this combination of outstanding food, beautiful presentation, and

warm hospitality that sets Yamato apart.

For those intrigued, Yamato has recently launched a Japanese brunch menu (Friday-Sunday, 12-3pm), featuring teishoku (set meals) that include dishes like their 12-hour Tonkotsu Broth and sirloin beef hobayaki. And they're happy to accommodate dietary restrictions – music to this seafood-allergic food writer's ears, I'm in.

The only downside? Knowing how many years of exceptional dining I've missed since they opened. But as they say, better late than never – and in Yamato's case, it was worth the wait.

[Yamato](#),

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Opening Hours

Monday and Tuesday – Thursday Lunch

Closed

Tuesday – Thursday Dinner

17:00 – 22:30

Friday and Sunday Lunch / Saturday Lunch

12:00 – 14:30 / 12:00 – 15:00

Friday – Saturday Dinner / Sunday Dinner

17:00 – 23:00 / 17:00 – 22:00