



**Oodles of Noodles and Robata**  
**Distinguish Masu Menu**  
*Northeast Restaurant Opens April 18*

MINNEAPOLIS – Oodles of noodles and a robust robata menu are just two aspects that separate Masu Sushi & Robata from other Asian eateries, according to Chef Tim McKee. The new contemporary Japanese restaurant, located at 330 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, opens Mon., April 18, 2011.

“We wanted to offer Twin Cities’ diners something a bit different,” said McKee, Minnesota’s first James Beard award-winning chef. “A lot of restaurants might have a couple of noodle offerings; we have more than a dozen. The same is true of our robata. Locally no one has really gone deep in that area, but we’re offering almost 30 different versions.

In addition, Masu is the first sushi restaurant in Minnesota to go sustainable, so while diners won’t find bluefin tuna or hamachi on the menu, they will find a wide variety of dishes featuring fresh, delicate flavors that are true to Japanese cuisine.

“We’re staying away from Americanized versions of Japanese food and concentrating on offering very fresh and authentic Japanese flavors and dishes,” explained McKee.

The “we” McKee’s referring to? That would be Chef Katsuyuki (Asan) Yamamoto, Masu’s executive sushi chef and a 15 year veteran of Origami, and Chef Alex Chase, Masu’s executive chef, who has worked with McKee for more than five years and a veritable Japanophile.

The culinary team has organized Masu’s menu into seven categories: Izakaya (small plates), Sushi, Makizushi (sushi rolls), Sushi Assortments, Robata (a traditional Japanese grilling technique), Noodles and Tesishoku (set meals). Masu will offer 14 different noodle variations including five Soba, four Udon, three Ramen and two Yakisoba (pan fried soba) dishes.

Robata is showcased in Masu’s open kitchen where guests can view the chefs working over the open-flame, wood charcoal grill. The robata menu includes vegetarian, seafood and meat options including: Nasu, Japanese Eggplant with Sweet Miso; Tara-Miso, grilled marinated black cod, and Karubi, grilled BBQ Short ribs. Plus there is an entire category dedicated to five variations of Bacon Roll.

While Masu treats its food with reverence and respect, the restaurant itself is designed to be a fun neighborhood, hangout with a playful vibe. Upon entering guests are hailed by sushi chefs and staff with the greeting “Irasshaimase,” which roughly translates to “Welcome, Please come in. We’re ready to serve you.”

## **Design**

To create the restaurant’s eye-popping, high energy design, Masu brought in restaurant design heavyweight, Shea, Inc.

“Masu’s playful, high-energy interior is in sharp contrast to the building’s stately Greek Revival exterior with its large grey fluted columns,” explains Shea, Inc. founder, David Shea. “The interior uses concrete, stainless steel, dark woods along with bold splashes of color. We also were inspired by imagery from Japan’s youth culture.”

The curved sushi bar that faces guests as they enter Masu serves as the restaurant’s center pivot point. To the right lies the lounge area, while to the left is the main dining area.

The sushi bar is made from rustic, reclaimed lumber. It seats 10, plus an additional nine as it transitions seamlessly from serving up sushi to sake and a lineup of signature cocktails dreamed up by one of the Twin Cities’ most creative mixologists, Johnny Michaels.

Behind the bar a row of traditional sake drums is arranged above a staggered line of inverted sake bottle dispensers. The lounge itself seats 45, including six stools assigned to a row of pachinko machines (Japanese-style vertical pinball games) built in along the back wall. The vivid machines with their flashing lights and bells add to the restaurant’s playful ambience, according to Shea.

In the dining room, which accommodates up to 75, oversized photo murals of Asian models in geisha-style makeup and a wall of colorful Japanese Munny dolls serve as a playful and dramatic backdrop to the large open kitchen.

## **Pricing**

Masu’s menu is reasonably priced with sushi and sushi rolls ranging between \$3 and \$14. The most expensive item on the menu is a Teishoku for \$23 that includes Charcoal Grilled Ribeye, Shrimp Tempura, Sweet Corn Robata, Tomato Bacon Maki Robata and Kani Nigiri.

## **Hours**

Masu will be open for lunch and dinner weekdays and dinner only on Sat and Sun. Hours are Monday-Thursday 11 am to 12 am, Fri. 11 am to 1 am, Sat. 4:30 pm to 1 am and Sun., 4:30 to 10 pm.

Masu Sushi & Robata is the creation of Sushi Avenue in conjunction with James-Beard awarding winning chef, Tim McKee and the marketing and design firm, Shea, Inc.

### **About Shea**

Shea, Inc. is a marketing and design firm integrating expertise in marketing, architecture and interior design. Shea blends diverse perspectives, skills, cultures and knowledge into solid creative strategy for clients. Shea's client list includes Macy's, TCF National Bank, Morton's The Steakhouse, Wells Fargo and Midcontinent Communications. For more information on Shea, call 612.594.4245, visit [www.shealink.com](http://www.shealink.com) or [www.sheaanything.blogspot.com](http://www.sheaanything.blogspot.com).

### **About Sushi Avenue**

Sushi Avenue is a private, family owned sushi company that supplies chefs, recipes, seafood and other sushi-related ingredients to upscale supermarkets, universities and foodservice locations across the country. President and CEO, Nay Hla, has more than 17 years of experience in the sushi industry. Hla founded the company in 2004 rapidly turning it into one of the top sushi businesses in the country. For more information call 651.294.7000 or visit: [www.sushiavenue.com](http://www.sushiavenue.com).

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### **Masu Sushi & Robata**

[www.masusushiandrobata.com](http://www.masusushiandrobata.com)

330 E Hennepin Ave.

Minneapolis, MN

612-332-MASU (6278)

612-331-4705 (fax)

**Facebook:** Masu Sushi and Robata

**Twitter:** @Masu\_NE

### **Media Contact:**

Jacqueline Hanson

Hanson Communications

[jacqueline@hansonpr.com](mailto:jacqueline@hansonpr.com)

952.941.3949