

THE MAN WHO'LL MAKE ANYONE A **ROCK STAR** | MAYOR MENINO'S **GREATEST FEAR**

THE BEST MOVE THE RED SOX HAVE EVER MADE

Boston

07
2010

HOW TO

GRILL

LIKE A PRO

HOST

A CLAMBAKE

CREATE

THE PERFECT COCKTAIL

SAVOR

THE CITY'S HOT SPOTS

WHERE TO

DINE

AL FRESCO

DRINK

WITH PALS

ENJOY

SUN AND SAND

ESCAPE

THE DAILY GRIND

Summer
FUN





Basho's main dining room.

FIRST BITE BASHO

A big Japanese fusion restaurant that has something for everyone? Amazingly, this crowd-pleaser mostly pulls it off. BY AMY TRAVERSO

THE PRETTY PEOPLE ARE BACK. YES, those stylish young professionals who went underground during the dining scene's Great Malaise have come out of hiding. And it seems they've discovered a new upscale Japanese spot in the Fenway and made it their clubhouse.

It's easy to see why: Basho is a huge, 239-seat space cleverly divided by various bamboo and frosted-glass screens. The room's glossy, angular décor feels like a more-elegant West Elm catalog come to life. But it's also mere steps from the ballpark, so it walks a wise line between the hordes who pile in seeking beer and California rolls, and the *omakase* crowd that embraced its sister restaurant, Douzo, in the Back Bay.

The menus of the two eateries do overlap, but Basho calls itself a "Japanese brasserie." This food isn't as hearty as the term would indicate, but if it refers to the crowd-friendly menu, Basho nails it. You'll find sushi, maki, and sashimi variations, plus tempura, meats cooked on a *robata* (open charcoal) grill, and a laundry list of hot and cold appetizers. Given the menu's size, it's impressive how good the food is.

Start with the apps—if you jump right into the sushi, you'll be missing out. Chef Youji Iwakura, an alum of Ken Oringer's Uni, earned kudos in his previous gig for his homemade tofu. It's still excellent: cool and creamy with mushrooms, *yuzu*, and soy dashi. Black cod with *yuzu* miso (yes, *yuzu* is a theme here) would benefit from crisper skin, but the flavor is deep and zingy. Avoid the wan pork ramen soup, though.

The sushi list is overwhelming, but a safe bet is the "flavored sushi"—single pieces that range from \$3.50 for cured *saba* sushi with apple-mustard soy to \$13 for foie gras sushi with apple and sweet potato. All are finely tuned, and more delicate than the many crazy rolls, dragon rolls, and their ilk. There's nothing wrong with those, but smaller bites leave room for *robata*-grilled chicken thighs and eggplant. (Skip the dry pork tenderloin.) And don't miss the seared scallops with shiitake risotto and pine-nut brown-butter sauce. It's smartly fusion-y—just like the restaurant itself.

1338 Boylston St., Boston, 617-262-1338,
bashosushi.com.