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THE DOS AND DON'TS OF SUSHI ETIQUETTE

Posted on [March 21, 2012](#) by [Stephen Stromberg](#)



Traveling to Japan soon? Or maybe just the nearest sushi restaurant? For first timers, doing either can be intimidating. While no one will kick you from a restaurant or ban you from Japan for mixing sake with your sushi or using too much soy sauce, knowing sushi etiquette can help prepare you for your next sushi endeavor or even expand your knowledge of the culture.

As the executive chef at Sapporo in Scottsdale, I ensure the staff embraces the Japanese culture in everything from the preparation of our food to the overall dining experience. Most of our guests are sushi regulars. While the question of how to use chopsticks may be a no-brainer, many are unaware of the dos and don'ts of sushi etiquette.

Whether you're a first timer or just wanting to brush up on your sushi etiquette, following are a few tips that will have you looking like a sushi pro in no time.

Greetings from Sapporo

When arriving at any restaurant, it is polite to acknowledge the hostess. At traditional sushi restaurants you may even hear hostesses greet customers with the traditional "irasshaimase" which means "please come in." At Sapporo, guests are greeted with traditional décor and a warm hello.

Interactive experience

For guests who are looking for more interaction, sitting at the sushi bar or teppanyaki table will provide exactly that. Sushi chefs, better known in Japanese as "itamaes," will engage in conversation while allowing you to watch as your food is prepared. Make sure to fill up and not leave any food on your plate, as the Japanese culture sees it as rude.

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Sake to me

Many pair sushi and sake together, but the Japanese culture doesn't seem to agree. Traditionally, sake should only be served with sashimi and should be drunk before or after a meal. At Sapporo, we offer 12 different selections of sake for guests to choose from — and don't worry; we won't judge you for drinking sake throughout your meal.

To dunk or not to dunk

We've all done it; dunking our bites of sushi into soy sauce. That's what it's there for right? Wrong. Japanese culture says the purpose of soy sauce is to flavor the fish not the rice. Dunking or pouring soy sauce directly on the rice is a no-no. When using soy sauce, make sure to dunk only the fish side. If that's not possible try pouring it over the fish in the center of your roll.

Chopsticks challenge

Some use their hands, others use a fork, but whether you know how to use them or not, there is one thing you can find at all sushi restaurants — chopsticks. In the Japanese culture, you'll often find that it's actually customary not to use chopsticks at all, but to use your hands. While we encourage you to follow this tradition, Sapporo also offers chopsticks for those who prefer. Two things to remember when using them: never use chopsticks to pass food and never leave chopsticks standing straight up in rice. Instead, pass the plate of food or set chopsticks flat on a plate.

Today's sushi restaurants bridge the gap between modern and traditional, offering exciting palate pleasers and putting a new spin on the old favorites. At Sapporo, we take the traditional and make it 2012, infusing the little touches of culture in the overall dining experience.

For more information on Sapporo, visit sapporoscottsdale.com or call (480) 607-1114.

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ABOUT STEPHEN STROMBERG

With nearly 20 years in the food and beverage industry (the past 14 being in Arizona), chef Stromberg has worked his way up the restaurant ranks — from dishwasher, to waiter, to executive chef and everything in between. As executive chef of Sapporo, his day-to-day activities include overseeing all aspects of food preparation and execution, along with morning prep, lunch and dinner service, ordering, inventory and table-side chats with guests.

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