

April 7, 2018 (Saturday night)

RADIO ANAGO

226 W. Kinzie St.
no phone number online
contact@radioanago.com

4 diners @ 6:30 pm

Cuisine: Japanese, sushi

Opened: 3.13.18
Owner: Hogsalt. Brendan Sodikoff
PR: press@hogsalt.com

What's up with the name?

Sent this question to Hogsalt PR.

Nagrant: **Anago = salt water eel.** Guessing it just sounded cool. Radio Anago

THE PLACE

Entry décor: Sodikoff on steroids. The space used to be ceramic store and so they left the gold and white blingy tile on the walls. Wildly colorful, floral-patterned pillows on white couches, a lime green chair that looks like pods stuck together. **Startling** effect when you walk in.

The dining room is entered through a heavily draped doorway. **In terms of changing the mood, it positively brilliant.** As shatteringly bright and colorful the lounge is, the **dining room is dark and moody.** All muted colors; dark and chocolaty. Pin-point light chandeliers on wires. Fanciful. I half-expected to see miniature acrobats jumping from wire to wire. Service station in the middle. Open kitchen framed in lights, like a Broadway stage or a billboard, in the back.

Beautiful wood tables. Tufted backs and comfortable seat cushions: lush plum or eggplant color. Ooh. Aubergine. Horseshoe booths line one wall—but not those oversized ones. Our party of four was in a **comfortable semi-circle.** No one was too far from anyone else, as is so often the case in those megabooths. Megabooths require megaphones for conversation. We saw a party of five. Did not look crowded. Perhaps six could work. Two tops in the center and on the other wall.

Each table has a small cool lamp that sheds enough light so you can read the menu. That's a welcome touch and did not interfere with the hideaway sense of the room.

Small intimate sexy room. **Too bad about the music.** Techno beat. Thump! Thump! Thump!

In fact, the room is **so dark, I don't know how the staff functions.**

Waitress: Teresa. Almost too attentive. She was good, however, about replacing a cocktail that we did not care for.

Staff took good care of the table. Cleared used plates, Brought me a fork on request. Lots of table wiping and keeping things manageable.

Did I feel pressured to keep ordering? Or to order more quickly? I'm not sure.

THE MEAL

Cocktails

An awful lot of ice in every glass.

Mai Tai \$14

Dark & light rum, orange, cherry, pineapple

This was **cool looking with a curlicue straw but tasted boring.** It was like slightly jazzed up pineapple juice. **Teresa gushed about this one,** so it was doubly disappointing.

Tokyo Mule \$14

Shochu, vodka, ginger

This drink rocked. Of course, I love vodka and ginger.

Nikka Gimlet \$13

Vodka, yuzu sake, lime

Another winner

Tequila Yuzu Sour \$13 (to replace the Mai Tai)

Tequila, aperol, yuzu sake

Ditto.

I'm not sure how Japanese any of these tasted but they were interesting, lively, well balanced, and well conceived.

BUT OH SO MUCH ICE—IN EVERY GLASS. WE KNOW THAT'S WHERE THE MONEY IS, BUT COME ON.

HELLO (Please spare us the absolutely adorable menu categories. Hello, Rolls, Bites. Sigh. The menu items, however, were pretty straightforward.)

Edamame \$5

Sea salt

We ordered this ASAP, so we had something to nibble while thinking over the rest of the order. **Good as any we've had.** Teresa missed a beat and had to go hustle up a dish for the pods.

SIDE NOTE: Edamame? It seems that it would be impossible to botch it up, but many place do. Size? Freshness? Temperature? Too much or too little salt?

Miso Soup \$4

Seaweed, ichimi

Ichimi Togarashi: or red pepper flakes, is an easy way to spice up your noodles, soup or other dish! The only ingredient is dried red chili pepper flakes.

We loved this! So much that we ordered a second bowl. **Deeply flavored** broth. Must be made with the best nori on the planet. No tofu, however. I missed that.

Steamed pork buns \$9

Hoisin, spicy mayo, pickles, scallions

Terrific. Wonderful surprise. Two to the order. Soft pliant bun, tender like a marshmallow. Each bun had two thick slabs of tender pork. Made with hoisin and came with creamy sriracha mayo dipping sauce, rather than (more typical) hoisin dipping sauce. Notched up the flavor. **Pickles were fine, but I personally didn't see the need for them.** Others at my table liked the acidity against the unctuousness.

Wagyu Tartare \$24

Asian pear, seaweed, miso

Did not love this. And it was pricey.

It did grow on me, however, **once I stopped expecting it to taste like steakhouse tartare**. Definitely an Asian take. Tandoori spices involved. Came with wagyu chips.

ROLLS

Warm miso scallop \$10

Spicy mayo, tempura crunch

Super fresh scallops. **Tender, succulent**. **Repeat appearances** by spicy mayo and tempura crunch.

Tonight's special roll: spicy salmon roll \$??

Perfectly lovely and tasty but **probably not any better** than **Chicago's best sushi spots (Kai Zan, Juno, Arami)**. The tempura crunch was a nice touch and the avocado was well curated.

King crab roll \$12

Avocado cucumber, tobiko (flying fish roe)

Same comment as above for salmon roll.

NOT IN ANY CATEGORY: **Houji fried chicken \$25**

Fried chicken, roasted matcha (green tea leaves), buttermilk, **edible gold**

WHAT IS HOUJI?

Nagrant: There is a dude Hou Ji who is like the ancient dude of agriculture and food- maybe it's a nod to him, but not sure.

I think there were three thighs. Pricey! Even if there were four thighs, it was pricey. Hey, it's chicken. Does the **miniscule sprinkling of gold** jack up the price? A **gimmick**, in my opinion.

Comes with a scissors for cutting and sharing. **Same spicy mayo dipping sauce** as on other dishes.

Way too much crispy breading. Yes, we all love **crispy breading**. Although it is a bit burnt. And we all love fried chicken. But the **ratio was way off**. Could barely find the chicken.

We told Teresa that we were less than impressed with the chicken and that dish was **comped** (as was the Mai Tai cocktail).

No room for dessert.

THE END

The most expensive dishes were the most disappointing: wagyu tartare and Houji chicken.

By 7:30, the room was packed and the vibe was vibing.