

IZAKAYA AND ETC. AT COZARA

Japanese tapas and beyond on Drexel's campus

By Nicole Malick | Photos by Sarah Tse

CoZara is a restaurant of many menus: lunch offers a wide variety of lighter fare, dinner introduces izakaya cuisine—a Japanese-style tapas—and “Sunday” presents an assortment of ramen dishes. Though the original concept was to serve only small plates, sushi is now also on the menu due to popular demand.

I sampled dinner and Sunday lunch at the two-story restaurant, located just off Penn's campus and part of Drexel's revamped Chestnut Square. The space is very pleasant, with both floors bathed in natural light thanks to the exterior wall of windows.

Dinner was unremarkable. There were starters to nibble on, like the Tempura Corn (\$4), and an extensive selection of kushi, or skewers. I sampled the shishi-to pepper and potbelly skewers (\$4 and \$7, respectively), both lightly doused in a garlic ponzu sauce. These items were each tasty, but not satisfying as a complete meal. Be prepared to order (and ideally, share) several dishes.

The sushi, while immaculately presented, was inauthen-

tic; it underwhelmed compared to that offered at Chef “Zama” Tanaka's Rittenhouse restaurant, Zama. Of the two rolls I tried, the UPenn roll (tuna, jalapeno and Chilean sea bass, \$8) far outshone the Drexel Roll (kani crab, eel...and cream cheese, \$8)—take that as you will.

“Sunday” was an entirely different story. Four items between three people were more than enough. We started with the Bacon Mazemen (\$9), a “dry” ramen dish, flavored with sauce and sans broth. With a heaping serving of bacon and a poached egg, the dish was warm and thoroughly satisfying. The Shoyu Crispy Ramen Maki (\$5), however, a deep-fried tempura roll stuffed with chicken and ramen, was less enticing—over-battered and under-flavored.

The Spicy Shrimp and Eel Maki Wrap (\$12) and a homemade version of the now-famous Ramen Burger (\$15, Sunday only) were stellar. The former, wrapped like a burrito in sesame soy paper, was an oversized roll any sushi-lover would enjoy. The burger's pan-seared

ramen “bun” was crispy yet not brittle, and the patty was dense and juicy. A fried egg, Gruyere cheese and the ginger ketchup/spicy mayo combo made each bite a fusion of flavors. We were too stuffed to eat the side of chips.

CoZara is close to campus, and late “Sunday” lunch will perfectly complement late Saturday nights. But save the small plates for happy hour, offered Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., when skewers and drinks—beer, sake, wine and cocktails—are only \$2 each.

COZARA

3200 Chestnut St
@coZaraPhilly
(267) 233-7488

DON'T MISS: Weekday happy hour and Sunday ramen

SKIP: Wine or beer—opt for sake

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