

South Florida CEO

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The sushi is good, but sample the rest as well.

On a Roll

It is not difficult to shoot past Doraku — The inconspicuous Japanese restaurant that operates in the huge shadow of the Lincoln Road movie theater. Still, three years in business has earned Doraku a loyal following, so we stopped in for lunch one weekday afternoon.

Avoiding the weekend crush turned out to be a smart move. Even on this day regulars had already laid claim to all the outdoor seats. We snagged one of the com-

fortable, inside tables that are perfect for people watching. Though it sits on busy Lincoln Road, the 120-seat Doraku manages to be a restful place apart. Trance music droned in the background and we settled into a blue, low-back couch tossed with an assortment of loose overstuffed pillows.

Doraku's menu ranges from "power lunch" specials to a hefty selection of regular Japanese fare. We started with appetizers: The Double Happiness roll topped with Maine lobster, shrimp, scallops, tuna and salmon. Also great were the fresh, black mussels steamed in sake and the Ahi Poke, a humongous serving of fresh tuna mixed with sea kelp marinated in a way-to-spicy-for-us pepper sauce. They were followed by Beef Maki — warm, tender slices of rib eye rolled with asparagus finished with a sweet teriyaki glaze — and crispy duck salad in a colorful bowl of mixed greens, mandarin oranges and funky cellophane noodles. It could have been a meal on its own.

Most who frequent Japanese restaurants do so for the sushi, and here it shines.

With more than two dozen rolls to choose from, we had trouble narrowing our selection down. We finally settled on the Dynamite roll, six fresh California rolls buried beneath a heaping mound of creamy baked seafood. And we practically fought over what turned out to be our favorite, the Chef's roll, a masterpiece of snow crab tempura fried with avocado and lightly sprinkled with red and black caviar.

We washed all this down with a few glasses of sparkling homemade ginger ale — a lightweight's alternative to the impressive sake lineup. The weakest link here was the service, which was a bit erratic. But all was forgiven when our waiter came running out the door after us holding high our forgotten container of leftovers. — *Barbara Perkins*

Doraku, 1104 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach. Phone: (305) 695-8383 web: www.sushidoraku.com; Lunch Monday - Friday, noon - 3 p.m., Dinner Monday - Thursday 5 p.m. - midnight, Friday 5 p.m. - 1 a.m., Saturday 3:30 p.m. - 1 a.m. and Sunday 3 p.m. - 11:30 p.m.

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