

***Texas Monthly, March 2006***

Tyson Cole. In the flesh. Delivering to our table one of the evening's specials. The much-acclaimed Cole—a Food & Wine rising-star chef—is rather supernatural in ability, his artful presentations nearly unmatched in Austin (an aji sashimi special cradled in the delicate skeleton that the pristine mackerel occupied until a couple of hours earlier; yes, it sounds odd, but it looked stunning). Similarly, his skill with flavors can take your breath away (mint sorbet tastes as if you'd just been chewing on fresh mint leaves). It's no wonder the sushi faithful flock to his colorful Japanese fusion sanctuary night after night.

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Yes, you can do raw seafood, like the silky sea bass with grapeseed oil, garlic, and pepper in an orange vinaigrette—a delicate, flash-marinated "ceviche." Or you can go with a turf-and-turf of duck breast with rabbit confit and find out how the lighter, leaner rabbit contrasts with the earthier, fattier duck, rare and perfectly tender; an accompanying grilled peach goes beautifully with both. Chef Tyson Cole's genius for combinations is ably matched by dessert maestro Philip Speer's, whose brilliant, icy pepper sorbet, with bay leaf and thyme, has a lingering finish like a fine wine. Crowds dig the hot red floral wallpaper and cool taupe sushi bar.