

Texas Chefs to Watch

The South Will Rise Again

Personal chef really delivers.

WORDS ANNIE POTASZNIK PHOTO VAN DITTAHVONG



On a (Sushi) Roll

Tyson Cole makes his mark

WORDS BETH STOCKWELL PHOTO GEORGES SCHEMAGIN

When asked for tips on making sushi at home, Tyson Cole says, "Don't do it—it's too messy, too complicated." But, more importantly, the sushi you attempt to make at home will never be as mouth-watering, evocative or innovative as the masterpiece sushi you'll find at Uchi.

Uchi's daily and permanent menus "marry global ingredients and flavors with traditional Japanese flavors." The concept of smaller plates and tasting menus has spread like wildfire on the Austin food scene. Cole's menu caters to people who prefer a wide variety of tastes as opposed to heavy, simple comfort food. He grew up on all-American cuisine such as macaroni and cheese, sandwiches and TV dinners, but years of training and tasting have given him enlightened senses and a seasoned palate. Until he was 14, the only fish he'd ever had came in the form of sticks. But as soon as he began working as a dishwasher at Austin's Kyoto, he was encouraged to try the restaurant's main fare. After that, it was history.

Cole, named one of *Food & Wine* magazine's Best New Chefs in 2005, spent time in Japan to learn about the cuisine and culture. He found that the younger generations in Japan are much less traditional and more open to American

adaptations of sushi and Japanese cuisine. On the thoughts of the more traditional Japanese, Cole says, "To each his own. They may think my take on Japanese cuisine is a travesty or genius."

His favorite ingredient is anything citrus. "I could open a restaurant tomorrow and call it Lime or Orange," Cole says. "I could create savory dishes, sweet dishes and drinks. You can do so much with citrus, whether you're using the juice or the zest or the seed."

And his advice to novice cooks?

"Keep it simple! And always go with quality ingredients," he says. When he isn't cooking for Austin's "See and Be Seen" crowd, Cole prefers to grill at home or use his Dutch oven.

Cole advises Uchi diners to go easy on the soy sauce, wasabi and ginger. "Americans love to dip," he says, "but it can really ruin the flavors of the dishes. Ginger, in particular, should be used to cleanse your palate; you shouldn't put on top of food."

Cole's gifts don't stop at the kitchen—he's charming and funny, too. You can order the catch of the day at Uchi, but he's surely the real catch.

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