



The Best Sushi In North America

By Anya von Bremzen

SOLD AT SUPERMARKETS AND ASSEMBLED IN MALLS, SUSHI HAS become as American as pizza, and far more popular in this country than in its native Japan. But, while California rolls might be outselling burgers, a true and exalted sushi experience is found only at the rarefied shrines to raw fish run by a seasoned *itamae-san* (sushi maestro) who's spent years honing his mysterious craft. At these restaurants, there's no empty hype. They serve the best of the best—and the spare-no-expense approach means that sushi mall rats won't even be allowed near the place. Here is our guide to North America's top five sushi temples.

3. UCHI Austin, Texas

Tyson Cole doesn't sound like a typical name for a sushi maestro, but the chef's Austin restaurant happens to be the most exciting little raw fish house not just in Texas but east of L.A. Named *Food & Wine* magazine's Best New Chef in 2005, Cole puts his own eclectic spin on sushi at his immensely popular restaurant housed in a romantic, lantern-lit, refurbished old home. Torch-seared wagyu beef, rich salmon belly, delicate todai (Japanese snapper), and Norwegian mackerel are among some of the toppings on the individual nigiri sushi. But the rolls are where Cole lets loose and has fun: Sea bass, snow crab, and golden tobiko roe unexpectedly team up with frozen grapes inside rice paper rolls. Shag is the whimsical name of the tempura-fried bond rolls with salmon and sumiso squid ink sauce. And be sure not to miss out on Cole's creative sashimis, such as toro nuta (silky bluefin belly) embellished with dried cranberries, marcona almonds, and the delicious white soy sauce the chef loves to use.

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