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Courtesy of Tojo's

A golden roll: crab, scallop, salmon and sweet shrimp rolled in an egg crepe.

PAULA DISBROWE

As the chef and owner of the acclaimed [Uchi](#) and [Uchiko](#) restaurants in Austin, Texas, Tyson Cole is an unlikely sushi expert. First, his restaurants are located in the heart of central Texas, which doesn't immediately register as the land of octopus and yellowtail. Second, he's a boyish-looking 40-year-old guy, not a face that patrons expect to be speaking Japanese and wielding razor-sharp knives behind a sushi counter. But Cole is all for breaking traditions, and he does so convincingly. With a modern menu that melds punchy global flavors with traditional Japanese preparations (such as maguro sashimi and goat cheese with cracked pepper, Fuji apple and pumpkinseed oil), Uchi has amassed a local cult following and national recognition: Cole was awarded a coveted *Food & Wine* "Best New Chef" award in 2005, and earlier this year he received a prestigious James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef: Southwest. Cole became obsessed with sushi in his early 20s and dedicated himself to the intricacies of knife dexterity and Japanese cuisine. Today, he's a busy guy: *Uchi: The Cookbook* was published earlier this year, and his second Uchi restaurant will open in Houston in December—but the chef slowed down long enough to share his favorite moments of sushi nirvana.

**The Locale:** [Tojo's](#), 1133 West Broadway, Vancouver

**The Sushi Master:** Hidekazu Tojo

**The Draw:** Hidekazu Tojo, who worked as a sushi chef in Osaka before moving to Vancouver in 1971, has become famous for sesame-coated bites of local tuna and smoked sable in Japanese pumpkin broth, among other specialties. Tojo even caught the eye of Martha Stewart (he taught her to make sushi on her cooking show). "I went to Vancouver in 2000 and had one of the best sushi meals of my life here," Cole says. "Being located in the Pacific Northwest, with access to some of the best deep-water sushi fish on the planet, Tojo has lots to play with."


**The Highlight:** "The real standout was his fresh albacore, cut into bite-sized cubes and served in a soy vin with scallion and grated daikon radish," Cole says. "It was supersoft and melt-in-your-mouth luxury—one of the best bites of fish ever."

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