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Japonais

600 W. Chicago , Chicago
Tel: (312) 822-9600

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Description

As you head west on Chicago toward the river, industry quickly overtakes city chic—until, that is, you hit Japonais. Stylishly set in a reconverted loft space, this Asian-French fusion hot spot offers the kind of rarified, jet-setting swank that draws the "in" crowd in droves. It's no surprise Japonais saw almost instant success when it opened. It's the favored child of three heavy hitters of the Chicago (and national) dining scene: Rick Wahlstedt (Le Colonial, Le Passage), Miae Lim (Mirai Sushi, Ohba), and Jonathan Segal (P.J. Clarke's, Le Colonial).

Even before you sit down to sample the fare, you'll see the benefit of such expert backing. The design of Japonais is almost achingly beautiful. Swathed in rich tones of brick, bronze, gold and umber, the rooms are dimly lit and tastefully accented. A subtle water theme underscores the restaurant's proximity to the river, seen in a trickling wall of water and rows of undulating waves of dark wood that line the ceiling. To the right is the Green Room, a more casual, clubbier dining space, where low, luxurious couches line the tables, and the water theme is inverted in a wall installation of flames. A more formal dining experience is offered in the Red Room, with its white tablecloths and fully appointed sushi bar. A more limited menu, but an equally posh setting, is offered in the lounge, located downstairs. In fine weather, the lounge opens out onto a River Walk, perfect for a round of romantic evening cocktails.

The menu is extensive, and offers mainly Japanese dishes with a French



accent. Sushi and seafood dominate, but the chef's imaginative offerings also include some heavy-hitting beef entrees and innovative combinations, such as the "Crazy Veggie" maki roll (tempura asparagus topped with marinated squash and shitake mushroom). But be ready to pull out your Gold card: Culinary fusion treasures like 7 Spice Kobe Prime Rib and Kani Nigiri (baked king crab) don't come cheap, and the chefs skimp on neither the ingredients nor the preparation. (Kay Daly)

Directions

Take the brown line to Chicago and walk west toward Larrabee.

Hours

5-11 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 5-11:30 p.m. Friday–Saturday; 5-10 p.m. Sunday

Articles Mentioning This Venue

[NYE 2005: Munch Your Way to Midnight](#), 12/31/04

Our guide to big night dining options.

[Dinner at Eight, For Eight](#), 6/20/04

The more the merrier at these restaurants, where catering to a crowd comes standard.

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