



BEN CANNON

All's well that's plated well: unidentified sashimi and micro greens.

Sudachi is a sensory experience

BY BEN CANNON

A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to be one of the first guests of Sudachi, the West Bank's new sushi restaurant. Given the dragging economy, the past year has been marked by almost no restaurants opening, so I warmly anticipated the debut of a new one on the Village Road.

Sudachi, named for a Japanese citrus fruit, is the joint venture of four friends whom I was told are new to the dining industry. I know almost nothing about the owners except that they're a pair of couples who appeared to be in their 30s. I only met one of them, a woman named Colleen Lee, who extended the invitation and came over to say hello during dinner. The partners recruited Jarrett Schwartz, of Blu Kitchen, as executive chef and consultant.

Sushi, especially the sumptuous sashimi presentations that bear Schwartz's signature, is always a better experience when it's a shared one. So I was happily surprised when I took my reserved seat at the sushi bar to see I was sitting next to a couple I know whose small business is a Sudachi neighbor. Between them and me sat Randle Feagin, owner of Aspen Travel, another West Bank Center tenant.

While I waited for my own food

to come out, my neighbors at the counter insisted I share in whatever plates came their way.

Speaking of counters, the former Mizu interior was given a face lift by local artist Ben Roth, who installed around the sushi kitchen a thick glass counter illuminated with LED lights.

I FOUND MYSELF EATING LAST NIGHT'S RAW OCTOPUS AT MY DESK, AND ENJOYING IT THOROUGHLY.

We tried so many plates that evening, it's hard now to remember what was what, but one of my favorites was the tako kosho, an octopus sashimi dish fired up a few notches with jalapeno and served in a yuzu – a tart citrus fruit – and green chile vinaigrette. The spicy and citrus flavors worked beautifully with the tako's mildly chewy texture.

Later, when the meal was nearly over and I couldn't finish a second order of tako kosho, chef Jason King, formerly of Blu, said-tako is "one of the healthiest things in the ocean" and suggested I take the rest home. The next day, to my own surprise, I

found myself actually eating last night's raw octopus at my desk, and enjoying it thoroughly.

The lightly-seared kobe beef tataki, seasoned with ginger, shallots and red chile and mildly sweetened with truffle soy sauce, was truly delicious and would have had my full vote for best taste of the night – had I not disqualified it from the running for being non-sushi.

And of course there were rolls – hearty, rich, savory and sometimes sweet rolls, like the decadent "kichigai," filled with tempura shrimp, spicy salmon, avocado and jalapeno.

There are plenty of other winners at Sudachi – including the nightly crudo preparation of seasonal fish in organic olive oil and the house-cured mackerel – and you probably already know if sushi and Japanese fusion cuisine is your thing. There's also a Kobe strip loin. With price points comparable to the valley's other preferred sushi, Sudachi will test the West Bank's appetite while luring out foodie-townies looking to treat themselves to the next new thing. **JHW**

Sudachi is located at 3565 N. Pines Way. \$4-25 starters; \$7-15 rolls. 734-7832. sudachijh.com