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LABYRINTH OF LIGHT

We gonna walk down to Electric Avenue

IN SEARCH OF THE REAL JAPAN

Tokyo's ten best sentos, summer travel adventures, women truckers

THE BEAUTY MYTH

Strolling down the catwalk with the beautiful ones



+ CITYSCOPE

The city's best bars and clubs, art, film, music, dining, for kids, performing arts, festivals, lively and gay events

WHAT THE HELL IS BUTOH?

Dancing to the Beat of a Different Drummer

Cover photo by Nobuyoshi Araki

THE CITY MAGAZINE

by Michael Bourne

Techno-Twists



That reminds me...

Tokyo Journal's beloved Ms. Edo-san was puttering around the office the other day looking a wee bit confused. With brows firmly knit, she kept muttering something about a lost bento and her misplaced dentures (which explains the muttering). Even worse, it appears she's plum forgotten where she put the list of oft-asked questions sent in by our eager readers.

So, in an effort to aid Ms. Edo-san in her twilight years of mild senility, we all decided to chip in ¥25,000 to buy her a Toshiba DMR-120Z (anything to hush her up). It's a digital memory recorder that can hold 120 minutes of messages, ideas, or reminders. The "Voice Bar," as it's widely known, is swiftly fazing out such antiquated memory aides as the string on the finger, the yellow post-it, and the 'to do' list. And because it's digital, you never have to buy a blank cassette again—all the information is stored on a 64Mbit flash memory chip!

But this technology is not just for doddering old biddies, it has the power to change the world. Just imagine all those students who can now save themselves from painful note-taking hand cramps. They simply switch to 'record' and fall blissfully asleep in the classroom as the teacher lectures on and on (OK, so maybe things won't change that much).

Seized by the muse? Don't write it down on that soggy table napkin—use the Voice Bar. Got an interview with the Prime Minister? Just record your chat with the lightweight device tucked away in your shirt pocket. Want to get that cute person's phone number at the pub? Just step up to the mic. With a built-in microphone and the ability to dub off a tape recorder, there's really no end to the possibilities. And budding James Bonds will be pleased to learn they can tap phone conversations too.

We're happy to report that Ms. Edo-san finally found her dentures (they were in the bento), but she still hasn't tracked down the list of reader questions. We thought she'd use the Voice Bar to make the list, but it appears she forgot where she put it.

For more information about DMR-60Z (¥19,500) and DMR-30Z (¥14,000) models, contact Toshiba at 3457-8552.

Oasis Bar and Grill

Open from 6pm to late (last order 11:30) Tues to Sun. Reservations are recommended. 4-5-7 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106 (5411-2419)

"I wanted to create a casual and comfortable atmosphere so customers can unwind while dining on dishes from around the world," replied Niels Thomsen when asked why he started up Oasis almost two years ago. "Of course, envisioning and creating are two separate things and I found I had no idea how complicated the restaurant business can be," he adds with a knowing smile.

But all of the hard work and long hours have resulted in a restaurant truly worthy of its name. "We're right in Roppongi 4-chome, but you'd never know it from the peace and quiet," Niels remarks. Upon entering Oasis the atmosphere envelops the senses, leaving the sights and sounds of Tokyo behind. A beautifully varnished bar encircles a large open grill, colorful photographs and numerous plants abound, and rhythmic music plays in the background. It's a great combination which creates just the right vibe.

"I used to travel around a lot," said the 26-year-old Danish American. Niels admits that while he's not a chef, many of the menu items reflect his own personal favorites. "A lot of the people living in Tokyo have traveled quite a bit as well, so I tried to create a menu that reflects the kinds of dishes encountered on one's travels. That's why we offer an eclectic menu of Thai, Indian, Brazilian, and Italian foods."

Start with the Middle Eastern Dip Set (¥1,000) a healthy portion of humus, babaganouch, and tzatziki dips accompanied by fresh vegetables and warm, crisp pita bread. Then move on to the potato gnocchi with ham, spinach, tomatoes and sweet onions in a buerre noisette sauce. Topped with a poached egg, it's rich and tangy without being overwhelming. But since Oasis is a grill, you can't miss if you choose the grilled chicken breast or the swordfish steak. The chicken is covered in well-spiced bread crumbs and is grilled around a sweet marinated pepper. Resting atop a vegetable cous cous, the chicken has a smoky flavor which goes well with the herb yoghurt dressing. But the best dish by far is the grilled swordfish steak topped with a chickpea vinaigrette. The fish is well-cooked, just the right texture and flavor.

"Working in the restaurant has been an all-encompassing education," Niels says while reclining on a comfortable teak chair. "And it's been worth it." As diners listen to the ambient and trip hop music and dig into the special Oasis apple pie wrapped in a puff pastry with raisins, they're sure to agree.



days. Just say *o-makase* ("whatever you like") and they'll feed you to satiety for ¥3,000 or so a head. All-Cambodian staff. ¥¥ Juken Bldg., 1F, 1-38-13 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku (3370-3019)

CANADIAN

Salty Box Grill Intimate, casual Canadian-style restaurant with great service and hospitality. Cheese fondue a must. Microbeers and reasonably priced wines. Homemade desserts & lovely lattes. Real Canadian breakfast served Sat. & Sun. 11:30am-3pm (lunch) & 5pm-midnight (dinner), Sun., 10:30am-3:30pm (brunch) & 5-10pm (dinner) ¥¥ 1-11-6 Nishi Azabu, Minato-ku (tel/fax: 3403-6631)

CHINESE

Shanri Gardens Choose from Toshomen, a block of dough sliced at your table into noodles, shark's fin soup, or steamed fish in oyster sauce. A classy 80 person capacity black leather interior and cheap lunch specials make it all worthwhile. Lunch from 11:30. Dinner starts from 5pm. Emerald Nishi Azabu Garden 1F, Nishi Azabu 1-8-21, Minato-ku (3402-1011)

Peking Hanten Closer than Yokohama China Town, but

every bit as authentic. Cold abalone ¥980, Tofu and vegetable sauté ¥580. Dim-sum from ¥240-¥500. Chinese liquor ¥1,500 a bottle. 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-11:30pm; Sun., 5-11:30pm, daily. ¥ Imperial Akasaka Forum, 7-5-34 Akasaka, Minato-ku (3505-1543)

Shin-Hokkaien Authentic Beijing food restaurant with more than 200 kinds of dishes. Reasonable lunch. Dim sum is also recommended. 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-10pm; Sun. & hol., 11:30am-9:30pm, daily. 2F, 3-16-15 Roppongi, Minato-ku (3505-7881)

CONTINENTAL

DMarket Mediterranean dishes in a retro and pop atmosphere with '30s American posters, neon, a Statue of Liberty and old jazz. Large portions. ¥6,000 course for two is sumptuous and reasonable. 11:30am-3pm & 5-10:45pm. Closed every 3rd Sun. ¥¥ Shinjuku Sky Bldg., B2, 1-18-8 Nishi Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku (3348-6556)

Shanghai Club Descend the winding staircase and step through the dingy door frame into a Victorian garage sale. Fashionable free-style fresh foods and spirits for people used to dining interestingly. ¥¥ Shiguma AG Bldg., B1, 2-3-2 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku

(3486-1976)

FRENCH

Azabu Kyara-tei A cozy French restaurant with a friendly atmosphere. Only seats 20, so make reservations. Courses from ¥5,000. Lunch sets from ¥2,000. Noon-1:30pm & 6-10pm. Closed Sun. & hol. ¥¥¥ 4-2-12 Nishi Azabu, Minato-ku (3409-5155)

Mannebiches The Gaelic renaissance is under way and Mannebiches is part of this new wave. An herb garden outside, a bread oven in the back and an equilibrium of quality, ambiance and price that's close to ideal, even though it's tucked away well off the main drag in Nezu. ¥¥¥ 1-16-8 Nezu, Bunkyo-ku. (3824-0484)

Restaurant Verde 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-11pm. Closed Sun. & hol. (only parties accepted) EM ¥¥ Villa Nogizaka, B1, 1-15-22 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku (3796-0530)

GREEK

Mikonos The Tokyo/Yokohama population cluster's most famous Greek restaurant and deservedly so. Cheerful and bright. Reasonable rates for delicious

Aux Sept Bonheurs

Kita Aoyama 3-10-13, Minato-ku. Located off Aoyama dori. Open from 11:30 to 3pm for lunch; 5 to 11pm for dinner, last order at 9:30 (3498-8144)

Don't be fooled by the fancy French name, Aux Sept Bonheurs—the seven kinds of happiness—may just be the best Chinese gourmet restaurant you'll ever try. Here is a place light years away from the typical greasy spoons that serve up ramen and gyoza with a helping of MSG. Heck, this place isn't even in the same galaxy.

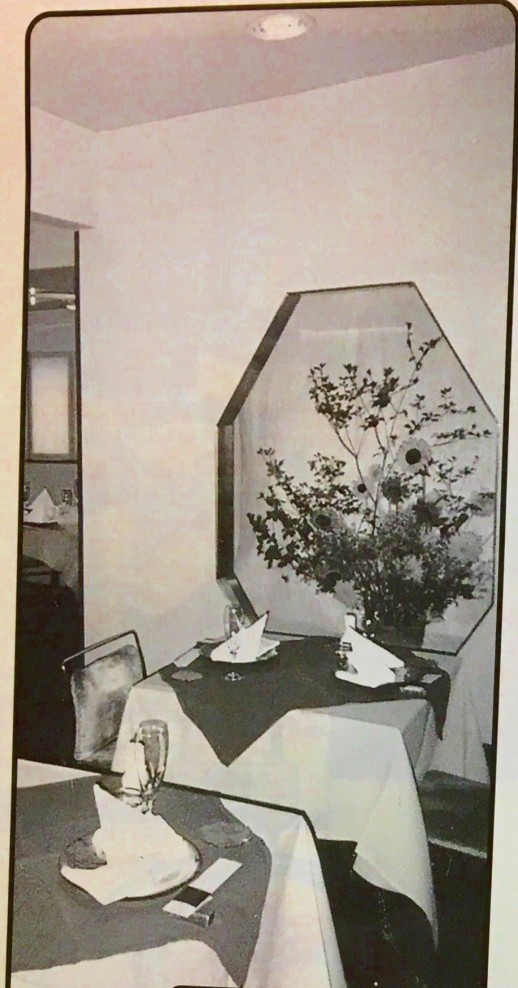
The restaurant's hard-to-find location down a small street behind Kinokuni-ya supermarket insures that anyone who visits will maintain privacy. That's important to the jet-setting actors and powerful politicians trying to escape the limelight while dining on fresh and flavorful cuisine.

Sit back while maitre'd and sommelier Sasaki-san proffers a drink to accompany the meal. Select a rich Paul Conté Pinot Noir from the many wines or a mimosa-like London with a green Maraschino cherry and then begin a course set. Each set offers much more than just seven forms of happiness, and like miniature works of art, the food is soon paraded out to your table on sparkling gold-leaf plates.

The dishes change monthly, but all sets start off with an appetizer selection. Guests may find a quintet of delight on their first plate—crunchy jelly fish noodles, sweet grilled pork, fried octopus, spicy shrimp and tangy tofu. This is followed by a dizzying succession of treats like the botan ebi, grilled Hokkaido shrimps in the shell with a garnish of Yamagata bamboo sprouts. The hotate scallops in black bean sauce leave your tongue tingling and the tan tan men noodles in a sesame and miso broth warm you up. The sautéed beef in miso with cucumber wrapped in a green onion fried crepe is not to be missed.

Once you are feeling full, the waiter will magically appear to whisk your plates away and bring dessert (in fact, they keep out of clients' sight by observing their progress from a mirrored reflection). There are no less than seven kinds of green tea to choose from and the kinmoku sei brewed with honey, rakanka has an unusual taste and is also said to be good for the liver.

The prices are not cheap, but you get what you pay for with a large assortment of dishes gracing the table. For a memorable romantic night on the town or a lunch meeting with privacy, great service, and loads of class, there's really no better choice than Aux Sept Bonheurs.



dishes of lamb chop, herb-laden chicken souvlaki, salads teeming with black olives and feta cheese and finger foods with garlic mashed potato dip. There are even half dishes. But be prepared to wait your turn—reservations only accepted for parties of seven or more. 6-11:30pm. Closed Tue., some Wed. ¥¥ 1-104 Honmokucho, Yokohama-shi. (045-623-9465)

HEALTH FOOD

Gu Takes a casual '60s approach to health food in classic Shimo decor, from the mismatched old wooden tables and chairs to the piles of rastafarian tracts by the door. Try the ¥980 *genmai teishoku*: a main dish like a curry, a couple of salad-like side dishes, brown rice and pickles. ¥ 2-26-8 Kitazawa, Setagaya-ku (3485-2187)

INDIAN/NEPALESE

Bindi Delightful retro basement decor in the linoleum floor/yellowing acoustic tile ceiling mode. Delightful owners too. It's also one of the surprisingly few places in town where you can get a hot, southern-style *pale-sevindaloo*. 10:30am-2pm & 6-9:30pm. ¥¥ 7-10-10 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku (3409-7114)

INDONESIAN

Jembatan Merah No fewer than five branches throughout the country, so if you still haven't tried the

Shizuoka-based "Red Bridge" of Indonesia, it's time you did. Tasty Gado Gado and very reasonable lunch sets served from 11am all the way to 4pm. 1-3 Maruyama-cho, Shibuya-ku. ¥¥

ITALIAN

Il Castello Cheap, tasty and always filled with masses of local students and young working women. They call themselves Tuscan, but to us it's just good neighborhood Italian. ¥¥ 1-34-14 Takadanobaba, Shinjuku-ku (3208-0432)

Il Ciproso Stylish atmosphere, reasonable prices, natural ingredients and convenient location—5 min. walk from Shinjuku Sta. The terrace offers a fine location for viewing Shinjuku foot traffic. And you can ask the chef to ignore the menu and cook your favorite northern Italian dish. ¥¥ 7-7-26 Nishi Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku (3227-0550)

JAPANESE

Hinazushi All-you-can-eat (¥4,300) sushi restaurant. All-you-can-drink for ¥1,200. 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-11pm; Sat., Sun. & hol., noon-11pm. Beach Restaurant Row, O-daiba Kaihin Koen Sta. (Yurikamome Line from Shinbashi Sta) ¥¥ 1-3-5 Daiba, Minato-ku (5531-0017) 13 other branches, such as Mejiro (3205-7552) and Shibuya (3462-1003)

Kadoya A nabe restaurant specializing in some of the lesser known (but more traditional) varieties of this chunky winter stew. Chicken sashimi, crunchy liver dishes and ink-black soy paste sauces comprise the more unusual elements that one of the ¥6000 course dinners might include. Pick one, order drinks, and enjoy as one unique dish after another makes its way into your private dining room. 12-1:30pm & 5:30-8:30pm; no lunch Sat.; closed Sun. & Hol. ¥¥ 1-6-13 Midori, Sumida-ku. (3631-5007)

Sushi Ouchi No, it wasn't named for a careless sushi chef who cut his finger off. In fact, there's much less to be fearful of in this unpretentious *sushiya* than at most—hand-dyed linens and country antiques ease you toward pre-planned platters of ten or more different types served with naturally brewed soy sauce and a beer. Point and enjoy for a mere ¥2000 (¥1000 lunch time). More expensive sets also available. 12-1:30pm & 5-10pm; closed Sun. & Hol. ¥¥ 2-8-4 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku. (3407-3543)

KOREAN

Nankantei Comfortable '70s-chic Ogikubo decor, an accommodating master and Korean food of the highest caliber and at the fairest of prices. And don't think