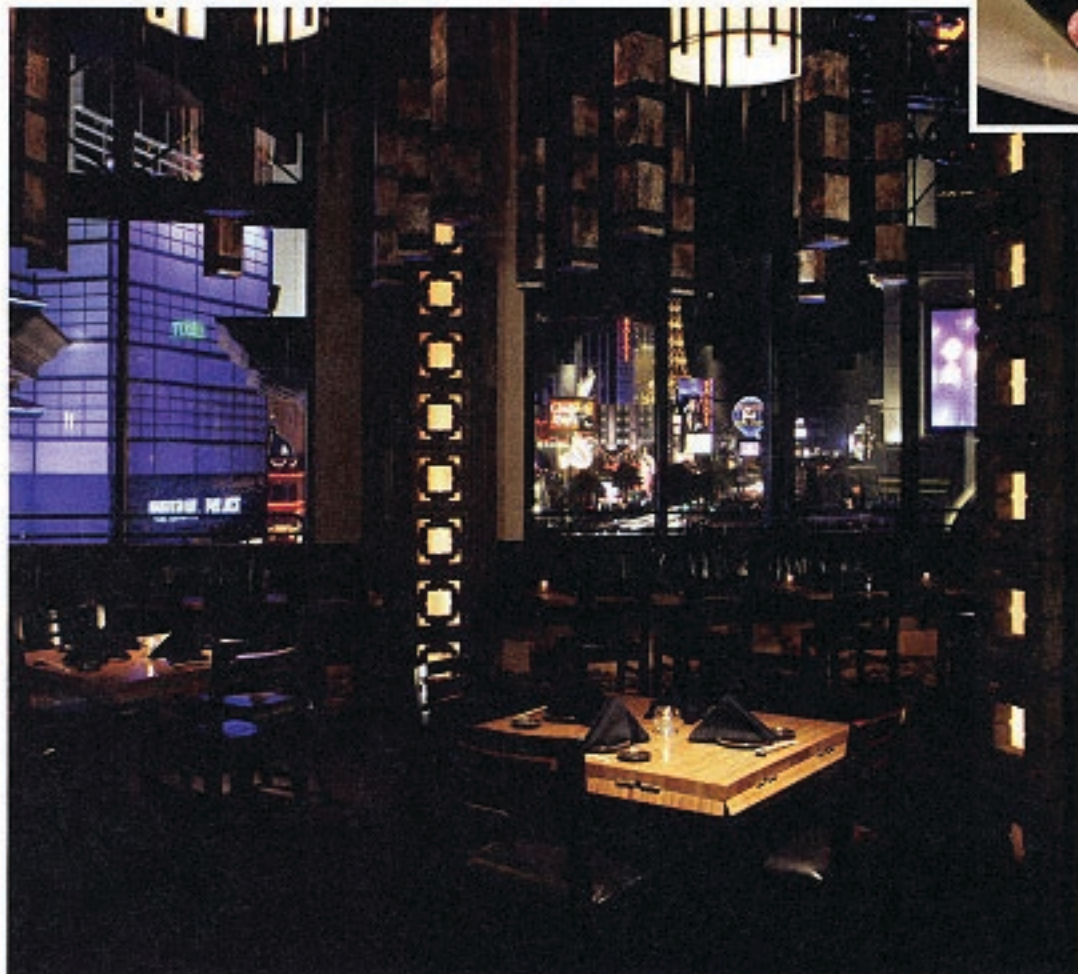


dining out by Muriel Stevens



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY GREEN

FRESH CATCH

It was a rare happening the first time I dined at **SUSHI ROKU** in the Forum Shops at Caesars. My friend and I had no dining plan (and thus no reservation) and we were finished after a day of shopping. Usually, with a hot new eatery such as Sushi Roku, it's always wise to plan ahead, but undaunted, I walked to the reception podium, shared my story—and waited. Luckily, we didn't have to wait long. After studying the reservation charts and a bit of discussion, the charming young hosts gave us a comfy booth with a view. Ahhhhh... happiness is the kind of service we received at Sushi Roku.

Sushi Roku is a handsome restaurant with a sophisticated, welcoming décor. Within minutes after being seated, we were sipping drinks

and studying the extensive carte. Our small banquette faced the Strip, giving us a view of the bright lights while being warmly embraced by the seductive surroundings.

Even the music level was magic. This was how dining was meant to be. We could enjoy the music, converse and get to know the diners in the adjoining banquette—a trio of buff hunks celebrating a friend's birthday.

Our only dilemma was deciding what to eat. Our server suggested that we let General Manager Brian Marcus direct us. Marcus is a globe-trotting food authority who speaks four languages, adores his chosen profession and is passionate about the food at Sushi Roku. In a short time, the first of many dishes arrived.

Sushi Roku features more than a fine selection of sushi. It offers modern Asian cuisine that's creative and appealing. We started with a trio of tartare—tuna, yellowtail and salmon—presented on a slim, oblong plate. Each tartare was surrounded by its own sauce. It was a marvelous complexity of flavors that held our interest until the next dish arrived—thin slices of yellowtail sashimi arranged as if they were petals of a flower.

There was no pattern to the service. Dishes came in a steady flow. As soon as they were cooked, each was a work of edible art. We were never rushed, although the dining room was now at capacity. There was time to discuss the savory nuances of each dish. By now, we were friends with our neighbors who were eating dishes totally different than ours. Of course, we thought ours were the best, so we had to taste. It ended in a tie. It was all so good. We ate a bowl of baked eggplant that had been cut coarsely into ratatouille-size chunks. It was a marvel of simplicity and goodness.

I loved the pungent watermelon turnip that was a dead ringer for the real thing and the seabass in yuzu butter sauce. Thin slices of beef filet wrapped around fresh asparagus was so good it made us smile. We sampled and enjoyed five different teas and ate a "Volcano" for dessert—a molten heart of pure chocolate lava. Pure bliss.

Sushi Roku hours are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Reservations for dinner are recommended. Call (702) 733-7373 for more information.

BOA STEAKHOUSE **Caesars Palace** (702) 733-7373
In the Forum Shops. Features a prime selection of traditional American cuisine and offers a contemporary take on conventional steak and lobster dishes. Open noon-10 p.m. Sun-Thurs.; noon-midnight Fri-Sat. \$5

SUSHI ROKU **Caesars Palace** (702) 733-7373
This hip space inside The Forum Shops features a greatest hits list of Pacific Rim favorites such as marinated black cod and Kobe beef, as well as