

Yakitori is a specialty of Japanese newcomer Zeppelin in Shaw.

AMALFI COAST-INSPIRED FARE AND "BALLER BUBBLES" MAKE WAVES IN D.C.



Springing Forward

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

High rollers can always bet on fun dining options at MGM National Harbor—from the playful Maryland Fry Bar tasting menu with bubbly pairings at Fish by José Andrés to the Voltaggio Brothers Steak House, where the cuisine is inspired by the namesake siblings' home state of Maryland (think dry-aged rib-eye topped with sea-bean chimichurri). The latest concept at the resort and casino,

in for dinner and drinks one night after spending an indulgent hour sampling the spa's new holistic facial. (Yeah, it was a rough evening.)

I eschewed the typical Spritz for a mix-my-own Sicilian Gin & Tonic, which paired a rocks glass of Tanqueray with a carafe of San Pellegrino Aranciata Rossa. Perfect accompaniments came in the form of a trio of meatballs and an order of fritto misto; the batter-fried shrimp and thinly sliced zucchini were crunchy, sprinkled with sea salt, and not the slightest bit greasy. The rest of the menu is a parade of Italy's greatest hits, including shareable grilled branzino topped with arugula, veal milanese, pappardelle with sausage, and broccoli rabe. Williams sat down with me during dessert and admitted that while he'd love to focus exclusively on Amalfi favorites, he also wants to keep the menu accessible. Either way, this newish concept is a win-win.

Across the river in Shaw, a new sushi and yakitori den called Zeppelin pays homage not to the rock gods but to the golden age of passenger airships. The

beverage program, run by brothers Ari and Micah Wilder of Chaplin's, leans heavily on saké; there are currently 65 offerings by the bottle and six by the glass, which will ultimately expand to 120 and two dozen, respectively.

The cocktails, meanwhile, feature shochu, gin, vodka, and Japanese whisky. Perusing the Hi-Ballers section of the menu, I ordered the Kabuki Springs, which mixes Suntory's Roku Gin with Italicus Bergamot Liqueur, grapefruit, and lemon; it's then topped with "baller bubbles" produced in a proprietary Highball machine that makes seltzer at the ideal bubble rate for the classic Japanese cocktail. (Another standout, the Zephyr, tops Haku Vodka, Pimm's, pandan-ginger syrup, cucumber, and lime with said seltzer.)

As for the menu, the best way to tackle it is simply to order everything—shumai, beef short ribs, silky pork skewers, fatty tuna maki, and all, plus a bottle of junmai saké for the table. That'll prep you for the moment around 10:30 p.m. when karaoke takes over the dining room, outfitted with a sound system that includes 30,000 tunes in English and Japanese. ■■

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Zeppelin's Highball menu includes the Zephyr (above at left) with Haku Vodka, Pimm's, pandan-ginger syrup, cucumber, lime, and seltzer. At right, the mix-your-own Sicilian Gin & Tonic at Osteria Costa, which features Tanqueray and San Pellegrino Aranciata Rossa, is garnished with a makrut lime leaf and orange peel.

Osteria Costa, is a delightful little slice of the Amalfi Coast overseen by Executive Chef Beau Williams. I stopped

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