Sundaram Tagore on Zuma

Since opening his eponymous gallery on Hollywood Road in 2008, Sundaram Tagore has become well acquainted with Zuma, for it was here that the art expert and lover of all things Japanese held his launch party.

One dish that he remembers going down particularly well as it was circulated among the throng of guests was the fried squid. “It’s delicious because it’s light and just melts in the mouth,” comments Tagore. This effect is achieved by the restaurant’s use of rice starch instead of wheat flour to make the bite-sized squid balls, which are then deep-fried and subtly flavoured with a gentle sprinkling of green chilli and a dash of lime.

Another favourite is the hacho miso marinated lamb chop with yaki hotate no ume shiso yaki – grilled hokkaido tiger prawns; I like the sea bass sashimi and the tuna.”

Chef Rainer Becker took London by storm when he founded Zuma in 2001, followed by Roka in 2004. “It’s not traditional Japanese, it’s contemporary Japanese,” he says. The Hong Kong branch that opened in 2007 represented a chance to extend his vision. “I always try to bring design to the next level, to do something different because otherwise it becomes boring for me. Executive Chef Dan Segall is a great talent here; he’s doing a very good job. I don’t really have one favourite dish; I love spicy beef here; I like the sea bass sashimi and the tuna.”

When in town, he naturally needs to cast his professional eye over the works displayed in the neighbouring art galleries dotted along Hollywood Road. As Tagore’s gallery is a showcase for both Eastern and Western artists, this former director of the prestigious Pace Wildenstein gallery must pay close attention to what’s happening in the art world in every corner of the globe.

“Eating here is not simply about having a meal – it’s an experience. Being able to watch the chefs at work is like culinary theatre,” he enthuses. Tagore also appreciates the ease and convenience of going on here. “Tagore also feels that the grand spiral staircase adds an agreeable touch of drama. “You feel like you’re really making an entrance,” he says. Imported whisky or cold cloudy sake, before heading downstairs – I know the owner quite well now, so he usually reserves a good table for me. Once I’m in the lounge, I enjoy the open kitchen, as being able to watch the chefs at work is like culinary theatre,” he comments Tagore. This effect is achieved by the restaurant’s use of rice starch instead of wheat flour to make the bite-sized squid balls, which are then deep-fried and subtly flavoured with a gentle sprinkling of green chilli and a dash of lime.

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