



Clockwise from top left: Oto Sushi's dining room; sushi and tempura dishes; the Sweet Pea cocktail

## Sustainably Sourced

SIMPLE FLAVORS SHINE BRIGHT AT THE NEW OTO SUSHI.

By ASHLEY RYAN

**S**ushi has been a booming business in town as of late and yet another spot has opened its doors—however, Oto Sushi stands apart, with a menu curated entirely of sustainable fish.

Located downtown at Mermaid and Glenneyre streets, the stylish space—which has remained empty since the closure of comfort food spot Harley Laguna Beach in summer 2022—opened in November, beckoning passersby with twinkling lights, a radiant fireplace and ocean blue seat cushions that provide a pop of color.

The carefully selected ingredients, which

include both wild-caught and responsibly farmed seafood, are sourced from certified fisheries and suppliers in an effort to protect marine ecosystems off of our shores and around the world. On top of that, the restaurant is entirely nut free and everything except the burgers and desserts is gluten free as well.

Creative cocktails offer the perfect introduction to the menu, with drinks like the Snapdragon, incorporating house-made pea shoot flower syrup and served with a side of yuzu juice, and the Sweet Pea, which features shiso, sweet pea and grape muddled with sake, enveloping the senses in fresh botanicals.

Select a starter or two to share. The cauliflower, smothered in a spicy black bean sauce, and the chicken karaage, accompanied by a miso aioli and sprinkled with fresh dill, are excellent choices; the eatery also offers tempura vegetables and a variety of salads.

As you transition to seafood, discover sake pairings that perfectly complement the cuisine, with tasting notes listed on the menu to help you make your decision. Order by the glass or bottle, then take a peek at the nigiri.

Each nigiri selection at Oto Sushi comes with yakumi, or thoughtful toppings that enhance the natural flavors of the fish. Try the New Zealand king salmon, with orange, lemon zest and oil, olive oil and flaky salt, or the albacore, accentuated with black pepper and everything bagel seasoning. Or add some spice to your meal with the scallop nigiri, which features Calabrian chile flakes, or the hamachi, topped with jalapeno and drizzled in ponzu sauce.

For some innovation, delve into the rolls on the menu. In the Laguna Heat, spicy tuna and steelhead trout seared in butter mingle with avocado, cucumber and micro cilantro, with a touch of tang from yuzu olive oil and shishito jam. Another thrilling bite is the Hoki Poke Box, a press-box option prepared in rectangular slices that features tuna, a house-made crab mixture, avocado, Japanese green onion, togarashi spices and an ample dressing of poke sauce.

Wasabi lovers will enjoy the added treat of tableside wasabi, which is grated fresh to order to accompany any of the restaurant's many seafood options.

Beyond sushi, the menu includes savory robatayaki sticks, or grilled meats and fish on skewers, ranging from wagyu marinated in miso herb butter to Jidori chicken, black cod, anago (or saltwater eel) and smoked mackerel. Also popular is The Kraken burger, uniquely presented with a wagyu patty, white cheddar cheese, dill pickles, a fried egg and house-made sauce on a deep black squid ink bun.

End the night right with a house-made, kumquat-glazed Japanese cheesecake that is light as air—a necessity after the feast you're sure to enjoy. ■

### OTO SUSHI

370 Glenneyre St.; 714-485-7599; otosushi.co

**HOURS:** 4:30-8 p.m. Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday; 4:30-9 p.m. Friday; 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday; closed Monday and Tuesday