



Milk bread with wagyu and Hokkaido uni



Chef Zimmerman by Joseph Weaver

WHERE'S THE WAGYU BEEF - GOZU

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

Executive Chef Marc Zimmerman celebrates the versatility and entirety of wagyu beef at his open-fire restaurant, Gozu, in San Francisco, California. Chef Zimmerman and his team create delicious dishes comprised of Japanese and local seafood, foraged wild produce, and wagyu beef. The goal of Gozu is to celebrate and translate the spirit of Japanese food.

The staff at Gozu works as a team, and each member is encouraged to let their creativity flourish. Sitting at the “chef’s table” allows guests to watch the team dance together like a well-choreographed musical. Thoughtfully designed courses are well-balanced, tasty, and Instagram-worthy. The fireside tasting menu with uniquely prepared dishes served alongside wine or whisky pairings is top-notch. It is exciting to experience wagyu beef served in so many delectable and interesting ways.

THE INTRO

My friend Alyson and I arrived early for our reservation, anticipating our wagyu-themed dinner. Molly Mueller, the general manager, met us at the

entrance. Because the restaurant is known for its wagyu beef, Molly said, “It has taken a bit of time to remove the idea that we are a steakhouse. The word Steakhouse gives the illusion that we will serve you a ribeye or another big piece of beef. While you will enjoy plenty of beef tonight, it is never a slab of meat; it is always intricate and incorporated. The whole concept is full utilization. We incorporate wagyu into every course on the menu, but it is not always obvious.”

Gozu features two dinner options, the Fireside Tasting Menu, with multiple courses around the open fire kitchen, and the Whisky Lounge Menu, allowing diners to enjoy numerous wagyu dishes a la carte. The Whisky Lounge has 180+ whisky options focusing on rare bottles from Japan. The Lounge, a beautiful and intimate space for up to twelve people, is a fabulous place to sample one or more of Gozu’s supply of delicious spirits.

THE METHODS

At Gozu, Chef Zimmerman and his team use all the various parts of the

RESTAURANTS

animal. Beef pieces are occasionally fermented and added to soy sauce or used as glazes, but traditional preparations like smoking meat on the barbeque are also popular. The wagyu on our menu came from Chateau Uenae in Hokkaido prefecture. In addition to being raised outside of Sapporo, the beef is beautifully balanced, and the owners only harvest six animals at a time. While spending time in Japan, Chef Zimmerman realized the importance of utilizing the entire animal. Molly said, “This is where Chef developed the idea of using other cuts of beef in a way that would be delightful for guests and doing things in a way that will honor the ingredients and create more sustainability.”

THE DINNER

Canapés

The ten-course Fire side tasting menu began with a trio of canapés, each featuring a different taste, texture, and shape. Each canapé was designed to be one bite. The first was a mini squid ink croustade cup with an avocado puree, apple, onion, and wagyu ponzu marinated firefly squid. The second was a wagyu and rice cracker Sando (sandwich) with black sesame seeds on the outside, and finally, a fried spring roll with wagyu tartar topped with a nori crème fraîche. Each of the three canapés was stunning to look at and a step forward into the culinary world of Japan.

Pairings

I opted for the wine and sake pairings, and Alyson chose the Japanese and Scotch whiskey pairings. My first pour was a Carte Blanche Charles Ellner Champagne, with a vivid taste of lemon offering a delicious freshness that was well-balanced and fruity. Alyson began with Ichiro, a deliciously smooth and creamy textured Japanese whisky displaying excellent minerality and notes of vanilla cream and apricot. The overall texture was a delightful creaminess. Both the Champagne and whisky paired well with the canapés.

Caviar Soba

The next course was a silken buckwheat tofu with wagyu shoyu sauce, beluga caviar, and shiso flowers. This dish is the chef's take on a soba noodle dish without the noodles, but with all the typical flavors one would expect from this traditional dish. It was creamy and flavorful with a savory, salty finish.

Signature Browned Butter Custard

Chef Zimmerman has been perfecting his browned butter custard for years and makes it with various accompaniments. Foam made from wagyu broth, prawn shells, and lobster topped our custard, and a prawn from Kauai, white scallions, and mustard blossoms garnished the dish. My custard came with a tasty sake boasting floral notes and a slight acidity to cut through the custard. Alyson was thrilled when they poured her a Single Cask Nation Invergordon, a wonderfully soft, round, 34-year-old single-grain scotch whisky.

Alyson and I loved the amuse-bouche of grilled milk bread with a special sauce, barbecued wagyu brisket, and Hokkaido uni.

Top Cap

The top cab meat, rubbed with smoked vanilla, long pepper, and a little sherry vinegar, lays over crispy leeks in a stone bowl accompanied by milk rolls to soak up the leftover sauce.

Wagyu Teishoku Plate

This gorgeous assembly of wagyu-centric tastings was spectacular. Circling the platter, I discovered sliced wagyu, served carpaccio-style, with a black truffle vinaigrette; wagyu dashi broth to sip on between bites; vegetables; sashimi spice and salt to season any dishes further; and a grilled wagyu goza. In the center of the platter was a wagyu skewer from the shoulder of the cow and Brussels sprouts tossed with buttermilk sesame dressing and topped with a cabbage chip.

A Fabulous Finish

To finish, we dined on date cake, Madagascar vanilla, and tallow caramel, and yes, wagyu was in the dessert. My final pairing was a large splash of Port Niepoort Colheita 2009, a fantastic tawny port aged for at least seven years. It was the perfect ending to a delicious wagyu-intense dining experience. ❖

