

Sushi and hibachi on a budget hit Harrisburg

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The battle cry of the American college student is all too familiar to Penn State Harrisburg. "I'm broke, I can't afford that!" Yet, after scrimping and saving every penny to pay for textbooks, parking passes, gas, rent and a myriad of other expenses, we still have to eat. For most this means a quick trip to Stacks Market or a fast food chain drive-through. This does not have to be the case. If you hunger for something off the beaten path with a price you can afford, might I recommend looking to the East

It may not be the first item on your dining out list, but I would strongly suggest Sushi and Hibachi the next time you want to sit and enjoy your food. Of course, most readers will think that the suggestion is immediately out of the question. Some will point to Benihana or Mikado and note that a meal there can run \$25 before you even ask your date what they want. It is true that the Japanese Steakhouse or Sushi joint have come with some relatively high price tags. Steak and seafood often cost more than other menu items at more conventional American restaurants and the "Far East" theme usually adds a few dollars on top of this. However, I have

found a local chain that delivers quality food and service with a cost you can afford.

The Tokyo Diner has humble beginnings. The brainchild of owner Zu Wang Zhang, the once single location restaurant now boasts six locations in central Pennsylvania. Among them are establishments in Selinsgrove, Mechanicsburg, York, Hershey, and Lancaster. While all of them offer the same great food and service, my personal favorite is still the very first in Harrisburg. Although it may be tucked behind Lowe's Home Improvement off Union Deposit, it still pulls in enough guests to keep the hibachi tables sizzling as chefs delight crowds with their culinary tricks.

The menu at the Harrisburg location is very much like that of its sister locations with a handful of notable exceptions. For hibachi the exception lies in the recent arrival of crab cake. As with all of the Tokyo Diner's hibachi orders, the price includes ginger salad, onion soup, vegetables and rice prepared with your choice of protein. The Maryland crab cakes are enticing a few taste buds to be the protein of choice. I personally look past the seafood and chicken for the hibachi steak. Ask them to prepare it medium and the juicy, teriyaki meat will almost melt in your mouth. Do not forget the mustard and ginger sauces they offer in which to dip the delicious

steak slices. These flavor boosts send each bite into another dimension of taste. The steak works very well to absorb the season of the sauces employed in the preparation of the dish. The price for the hibachi meals ranges from 10.95 for the vegetable and goes to 17.95 for the tuna or crab cake options. This may appear high but it beats most competitors by two to five dollars on every option. You can also come between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm to pay almost half price on all the hibachi items. You can also get fifteen percent off you bill by joining the Royal Club.

The Royal Club is an annual option for the Tokyo Diner fans, like myself, who wish to save a few dollars by eating at one of their favorite restaurants. Normally the fee is \$10 a year, which more than pays for itself in a few visits. However, an interview with Mr. Zhang revealed that Clipper Magazine currently has a coupon for free membership. Take the fifteen percent you save and be sure tip the staff. The Diner is the only establishment I have seen wherein the wait staff will ignore zoning to ensure the customer is satisfied.

If you want to save a few dollars at any time of day without the Royal Club card, be sure to check out the Happy Menu. Do not confuse this with some fast food monstrosity with toys. No, this

menu features entrees starting at \$5. You can enjoy tempura dishes, grilled salmon, teriyaki stir fries and more. All meals are prepared in the kitchen and include onion soup and white rice. I strongly recommend taking advantage of this delicious low cost option. Although it eliminated the salad and fried rice of the full hibachi dinners, one customer was thoroughly pleased with the portions and flavors of his chicken with teriyaki.

First and foremost I must order a jungle roll. While many sushi establishments offer similar rolls, the Tokyo Diner does this one best. Scallops, white fish, and roe (fish eggs), cut into six pieces, covered in house sauce and baked. It makes my mouth water every time. While I do not know the ingredients of the house sauce, I have encountered places that actually coat this delicious roll with overpowering amounts of raw mayonnaise. While I am not opposed to mayonnaise, it makes my stomach churn at the thought of it on my sushi. The Diner does not commit this grievous sin.

For fresher and lighter tastes, I opt for the Flamingo rolls. You can choose either salmon or tuna but the end result is a smile on your face. If you have not tried raw fish, this is one of the first rolls with which to experiment. If you want a sense of the familiar and some of that famous raw fish,

the Rainbow roll tops a California roll with tuna, salmon, and white fish.

At this point you may wonder what you may want to wash down those hibachi orders and fish concoctions. Every Tokyo Diner has a BYOB policy except for the Harrisburg location, which offers its own low cost wine, liquor and beer.

For the sushi eater, Mr. Zhang and his staff recommend warm sake. At \$3.75 the rice wine is well worth its cost. I would say the sake with plum is even better. If you prefer a chilled beverage, the plum wine is a very sweet white wine made, you guessed it, from fermented plums.

For the hibachi inclined, an eastern brewed Sapporo is a beer well suited to the grill. Otherwise, you may want to try one of the many mixed drinks on the beverage menu. Zhang, while not a big drinker, stands by his Asian Mai Tais. A passing waitress pointed out that the Tokyo Margarita with tequila and Midori is a sure bet. Other wise you may want to try a Tokyo Blue, Acupuncture, Geisha or Sumo as you sample the Far East concoctions of the Tokyo Diner. Almost all mixed drinks are a mere \$4.95. If that does not excite you, then you want to try the adjoining, Wild Tuna Bar and Grille where draft pitchers are only \$5. However, that is a review unto itself.

Jim and Pam finally do it

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On Oct. 8, 2009 Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly added their nutty nuptials to the list of classic television weddings. The comical Dunder Mifflin crew traveled to Niagara Falls for the most anticipated episode of "The Office" in a very long time. The special hour-long avoided the clichés of television weddings. Writers Greg Daniels and Mindy Kaling created a truly hilarious and unique day for Jim and Pam.

While many television weddings get lost in the flowers, champagne and tulle, "The Office" maintained its comedic structure. Jim and Pam, played by John Krasinski and Jenna Fischer, somehow

manage to find a few moments of their own amidst the chaos of their co-workers. This episode did such a great job of featuring every character that it could have been a series finale.

The episode begins in classic "Office" style, presenting a vomit fest straight from the film, "Stand By Me." With Pam's morning sickness as the starting factor, Dwight commented, "A three ounce fetus is calling the shots. It's so badass."

But the real fun begins when the group leaves Scranton and heads to Niagara Falls. Michael and Dwight find twins. Kevin's foot odor problem becomes a safety issue. Andy tears his scrotum dancing. Jim's slip of the tongue reveals Pam's pregnancy to a disapproving relative, and Michael, of course, makes it worse. Michael also painted a portrait of the couple for their wedding gift.



Photo courtesy of NBC.com

Jim and Pam have a cut tie and a torn veil, a scene that reminds us why they're meant to be together. They sneak out and privately marry on the Maid of the Mist ferry. Later, back at the church, the Dunder Mifflinites put their own spin on the YouTube dancing

wedding video, complete with Chris Brown's "Forever" even though Pam specifically banned it.

This hilarious deviation was brilliantly intercut with the touching scene where Jim and Pam exchange vows. The show's editors created a heartfelt video valentine for everyone's favorite "Office" couple.

This episode manages to highlight every character without ever taking the focus off Jim and Pam by excluding most of the actual wedding. The ending montage is the perfect representation of Jim and Pam's relationship. Despite their chaotic workplace, they've always managed to create moments all their own.

Jim and Pam's relationship has been a breath of fresh air for television audiences everywhere.

For three seasons, the "will they, won't they" chemistry between them helped make "The Office" one of the best shows on television. Once they got together, however, that was that. No childish fights or break-up/make-up storyline ensued. Stability has defined their relationship since the day they got together.

As Jim said, "I bought those boat tickets the day I saw that YouTube video. The boat was actually plan C; the church was plan B, and plan A was marrying her a long, long time ago."

"Niagara" will take its rightful place among the best episodes of "The Office." With such a great episode debuting as only the fourth episode of the sixth season, this show is still at the top of its game. So congratulations Jim and Pam. Your big day may not have gone according to plan, but your big episode went off without a hitch.