



SO FRESH

SHINSEN BRINGS AN INSTA-WORTHY
AHI TOWER AND GREAT VIBE TO
NEW YORK CITY'S CULINARY SCENE

WORDS BY VANESSA PASCALE

When Shinsen's Ahi Tower crossed my Instagram feed a few months ago, I knew a visit to the new restaurant was in my near future. An edible work of art, the Ahi Tower is placed in the center of an artistic sea of sauces and built with white sushi rice, crab meat, avocado, spicy tuna, and topped off with four types of colorful fish roe and seaweed. Seriously, it's what sushi dreams are made of.

Tony Bo Chan opened Shinsen's doors about six months ago. The airy Japanese restaurant, nestled on Bowery Street in Manhattan, New York, boasts clean lines, minimalist decor, light wood floors and tables, exposed brick, sleek chandeliers, a neon-pink samurai sign, a communal table, and sushi bar. "I wanted it to be really, really cool and fun and hip. This building is like 120 years old, so I wanted to use the brick. I wanted to make it modern, use natural wood. I wanted to play cool music, have a sake lounge in the back to hangout, for private parties. Luckily, we're doing all that right now," says owner, Tony Bo Chan.

Before entering the restaurant business, the former men's wear designer with 20+ years experience founded two fashion labels, SwishNYC and Bo Clothing, and opened two stores, GOTO (a lifestyle shop) and Swish (a skate shop). "They were in 100 stores in Japan as well as in London and Paris. We had a really good run [16 years]. I really like the clothing business, but it was exhausting...but creating is my thing; I like to create and I like to design."

Fashion had him traveling for months at a time, and Tony longed to be around his family more, so he opened Shinsen, which means fresh in Japanese. "Clearly, I want everyone to know that the fish is fresh! But also the vibe is fresh. I really like being on the ground level 'cause I feel like it's really inspiring and you meet a lot of cool people. I was trying to fill a void on the Bowery. There's nothing around here, so I thought it would be a good opportunity."

While this is the entrepreneur's first foray into the restaurant business, restaurateurs run in his family; he has learned much from his father and Grandma Sin, who opened their own restaurants in the past. Now, Tony gets to spend more time with his 1-year-old daughter, James Collette, and 4-year-old son, Hendrix, who visit him at the restaurant every day. "He loves sushi," he notes about Hendrix.

Grandma Sin, who Tony credits for helping craft Shinsen's menu, is at Shinsen every day, too. "I gotta give a shout-out to Grandma, she's a big part of what we do here. She brings out the more traditional approach, and then me and my wife [Theresa Sin] try and fill in the more modern... what would be fun and cool? What would be tasty? What are people feeling right now?"



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE DISH?

"Salmon Osaka 'cause I love salmon and the smokiness. It changes though. I really like the Hamachi off-the-menu roll you just had. I was back there and started messing around. The Hamachi we've got is so good, it's so fresh. I was like, what would go nicely with this?"
Tony shares about the roll he created.



FOOD

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Shinsen’s menu is comprised of sushi sets, sake, matcha, starters, specialty dishes, Chirashi Bowls, hots dishes, and rolls. During our visit, we trust Tony to lead our culinary journey. He starts us with the Grilled Shishito Peppers with Sea Salt and Fried Baby Octopus on Skewers. The peppers are tasty and tender, while the octopus is crispy and delicious. Next up, the pièce de résistance: the Ahi Tower —Grandma Sin’s recipe, which was served at her restaurant in Alaska thirty years ago. It. Is. Divine. All the flavors and textures fuse together to create perfect sweet-salty-spicy bites. From the salty goodness of the roe to the creamy avocado and plump pieces of spicy tuna, it’s everything you imagine it will be and more. If you order one thing off their menu, make sure it’s this!

We sip our sake and savor the last few bites. Then, the Hamachi Kama with homemade ponzu is delivered to the table, which is perfectly fried, nice and crispy on the outside, with tender, flaky fish on the inside. I tell Tony that uni is a favorite of mine, and he brings over the Otoro with uni and black caviar. Again, it’s a hit with my taste buds. And last but not least is the Hendo Hand Roll made with fresh yellowtail, fried garlic, garlic sauce, and jalapeno peppers. The heat from the peppers and garlic combined with the fresh fish work together nicely. Everything is so delicious. Shinsen offers omakase Tuesday-Saturday only, and requires a reservation.

Though Shinsen is fairly new to New York City’s food scene, the restaurant is receiving a steady stream of locals, tourists, and even celebrities, including Atlanta Hawks’ Jeremy Lin, rapper Q-Tip (who is a friend), actor Vanness Wu, and *Night at the Museum’s* Mizuo Peck. If you could invite one celebrity to Shinsen, who would it be? “The Beastie Boys —I’ve been outta touch with them, but I used to hang out with them a lot —that’s how I met Q-Tip... But they, two of them, moved to California. If they could come in, that would be great, ‘cause they’re friends,” Tony says about Mike D and Adam Horovitz.

Expect a *fresh* culinary experience at Shinsen —from the vibe to the fish and the traditional-meets-today menu. “I think if you don’t come for the food, just come to check out the restaurant; I think it’s a cool vibe. I used to be a DJ too in college. I had a radio show. I deejayed at clubs in New York. I’m all about vibe —it’s fun, young, downtown.” ML

Shinsen is located at 44 Bowery, New York, NY 10013. For more information, visit www.boweryshinsen.com or call 347-688-5404. Follow Shinsen on Instagram: @ShinsenBowery