



Fuji

KOBE BEEF FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY AT THIS SANNOMIYA GEM

Scott Victor



There's an old advertising saying that instructs to "Sell the sizzle, not the steak." What it means is that a steak is generally just a steak, but the "sizzle" is the whole experience surrounding it. Take a wander around Sannomiya and you'll find plenty of Kobe beef restaurants selling a whole lot of "sizzle"—at a price. But if you happen to veer off the main strip a little and find steak eatery Fuji, you'll discover a little less sizzle and a whole lot more steak for your yen.

For more than 10 years, the owner of this unpretentious restaurant has prided herself on high quality food that families and those without corporate expense accounts can afford. From Kobe beef to free-range chicken to locally grown vegetables, Fuji provides the kind of dishes that make you want to come back. On top of the certified *wagyu* beef and fresh ingredients, they purposefully cook with less oil, and a lighter one at that. Dishes that are normally greasy aren't, consequently not leaving you too full afterwards.

We began by ordering the Kobe beef sirloin steak course (200g, ¥5,520), which could easily feed two people. First up in the course was the *tonpei-yaki*, an omelet with pieces of sliced pork covered with *negi*, which was a unique and delicious combination. Another omelet type dish, the *suji negi-yaki*, followed, but this time with small pieces of cooked beef tendon (*suji*) sprinkled on top. We later discovered that tendon is

a common ingredient at Fuji, and many people who have tried it tend to be regulars at the restaurant.

At last, our Kobe beef arrived—200 grams of luscious, marbled, perfectly grilled *wagyu* served in bite-sized pieces on a hot iron plate, with grilled vegetables, garlic chips and salt. As a resident of the area, I've had Kobe beef at several places over the past few years, and though I have typically paid far more at other restaurants, this beef was just as melt-in-your-mouth tasty. Finally, *sobameshi* (fried and diced egg noodles with rice and pork) was served to round off the set. The dish is a Kobe specialty that's sort of like fried rice, but the noodles give it a more interesting, less salty texture and flavor.

Fuji had a few more tricks up its sleeve before we left. The grilled vegetables with seafood (¥1,260) and grilled vegetables (¥650), which both came out on large hot iron plates, tasted light and delicious. The 100% Kobe beef hamburger steak (¥1,000) was served topped with a rich sauce and smothered in red and green peppers, onions, carrots and mushrooms. I am not exactly a hamburger aficionado, but this was the best I've ever had... no kidding.

Drinks-wise, let me say that if you love shochu like I love shochu, you'll be happy at Fuji. Boasting at least a dozen *mugi* (barley) choices, close to 20 *imo* (potato) varieties, and a select few *kome* (rice) bottles and at least two *awamori* (Okinawan shochu) varieties, there's plenty for the aficionado. I sampled the Kamo



Kagura imo shochu (¥600) couple of times. Interestingly, they also offer blended shochu with ingredients like brown sugar, wild berry, wasabi, and chestnut. Of course, the extensive English menu had a good selection of beer, whiskey, wine, sake and soft drinks.

I'll definitely be visiting Fuji again soon. My only regret is that I've lived in Kobe for so long without knowing about it. Oh well, I guess I have some eating (and drinking) to make up for.



Fuji, 1-9-5 Nakayamate Dori, Chuo-ku, Kobe City. Open Mon-Sat 5pm-midnight, Sun and holidays 5-11pm. Tel: 078-391-1141. Closest station: Sannomiya. Find Fuji online at <http://www.engmenu.com/page/fullpage/fuji>