

Clip: 1 of 1



DEEPAK OHRI

Sushi Araki, the Michelin three-star restaurant, in Japan has set an inimitable benchmark for serving the best sushi in the world

I WROTE LAST week about our amazing bullet train experience during the recent World Travel and Tourism Summit in Japan. That was but one piece (albeit a memorable one!) of the incredible logistical puzzle masterfully crafted by JTB company and its president, Hiromi Tagawa. I had the pleasure of dining with Tagawa. His effectiveness at organising the diverse needs of a very demanding group, including the inherent language issues that can arise, was only matched by his humility and calmness during such a busy event. I was also able to visit some of the finest Japanese restaurants that have been on my list for a long time. Not every experience was positive, but this week I'll share one that was: the inimitable Sushi Araki.

Until I visited Sushi Araki, I believed that the deservedly famous Masa in New York offered the world's best sushi. This small Ginza gem is on an entirely different level and I am now confident to proclaim that if you have not eaten at Sushi Araki, ladies and gentlemen, you have not eaten sushi at all. By that standard,

## Sushi at its best



Chef Mitsuhiro Araki is one of the many reasons to dine at Sushi Araki

eating sushi will be a challenge. Sushi Araki has only nine seats, all set around a counter. We were blessed to get a table for three and I was fortunate to be accompanied by my wife, Anita, and our

general manager at Iebua New Delhi, Jay Jhingran.

We arrived in style in a Phantom, although we were thirty minutes late for a set meal. The staff handled our arrival

effortlessly, with earlier guests' meals paused and ours being served quickly. My wife informed the chef that she did not eat raw fish. The chef laughed, informed that many Japanese are now avoiding raw fish and he began to cook for her. Anita loved every course of the meal, as did we all.

Each course was the freshest cuts of the finest fish and if there is one reason dining here is a delight, it is the quality of the seafood. We enjoyed snapper from Akashi, abalone from Nagasaki, tuna from Katsuta, bonito from Chiba... the list goes on and each serving was somehow better than the last. The tuna was as delicious as it was reputed to be.

Of course, there are many reasons that dining at Araki is a delight, and another is the chef. Interestingly, he spoke English well and joked with us throughout the meal. My wife said that she doesn't prefer to dine with chopsticks. Without missing a beat, one of the staff members was quietly sent to buy a knife and fork for her meal. As each course is explained in detail, the chef asked the Japanese guests if he could

do so in English. They happily obliged and our sushi education was fun, interesting, and memorable.

I must emphasise that chef Mitsuhiro Araki is as much a reason to dine at his eponymous restaurant as the meal itself. After dining on such a meal, asked Araki, "So, chef, you are a Michelin 3-star chef..." He quickly interjected "Am I? When I see you and your wife smile after eating with me, that means more than any award. Every lunch I serve a few guests is with my best and if they are happy, then I am happy."

I have eaten at over 18,000 restaurants worldwide, at more than 200 fine dining venues last year. I do not give an unqualified recommendation often and not all supposedly great restaurants are any good at all (more on that next week!). At about \$300 per person, our meal with Mitsuhiro Araki was of an outstanding value and an experience I will never forget. Araki is amazing and you simply must go.

Deepak Ohri is CEO of Iebua Hotels & Resorts. He can be reached at [deepak@iebu.com](mailto:deepak@iebu.com)