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KATSUYA

FROM THE ARRESTING DESIGN, DELICATE CUISINE AND SMART TECHNOLOGY TO THE ULTRA-HIP VIBE AND EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE, KATSUYA SETS THE STANDARD FOR A NEW WAVE AMONG RESTAURATEURS

SBE Restaurant Group has invented a concept that is worthy of its own religious following—with patrons like Dustin, Angelina and Reese already holding court.

Located where new and old money meet, in L.A.'s popular Brentwood district, Katsuya restaurant is the newest incarnation of chef Katsuya Uechi's Studio City and Encino sushi spots by the same name—yet this one showcases the visionary work of internationally acclaimed designer Phillippe Starck. The combination of the two talents is matchless.

The clean lines, multiple-level dining room, nooked booths and angular dimensions create the illusion of a sushi bento box—Starck's intentional ode. The timeless simplicity of the restaurant's Japanese design is embodied by the "Katsuya" kanji on black noren curtains and granite boulders topped with flames on the outdoor teak terrace. In the sexier Dragon Room, with its gleaming charcoal wood walls and ceiling, buzzing bar and ornate mir-

rors, groups of skinny fashionistas down cocktails while lounging in white cozy sofas and armchairs, gossiping around shiny white tables. Reese Witherspoon dines nearby, as well as "Apprentice" contestant Allie Jablon.

Overtly sensual, backlit photographs of a Japanese woman's body parts are an alluring touch. Luscious red lips and gorgeous black eyes are sentinel to the illuminated front room, while images of tear-smudged mascara-dripping eyes and a dragon tattoo grace the Dragon Room—the restaurant's darker side.

The maitre d' explains how Starck hand-selected the model for a Parisian photo shoot—that despite all her perfection, the tattoo of a twisted dragon represents what lies lurking beneath the surface. If that heightens your curiosity, take a trip to the restroom where you can finally see her whole face intermittently flashing in the mirrors. ▷



By Heather Burgett





● ● *In The Know:* Let the chef take out the guesswork by ordering Katusya's seven-course option at \$80 per person. If you can't wait two or three days for a reservation, walk-ins can vie for seats at the sushi or robata bar.





With a six-page menu and three kitchens, our server Trisha shepherded us through an incredible selection of dishes. It's all about presentation and efficiency here. Servers are equipped with handheld PCs wirelessly transmitting orders to the kitchen before they have left the table. Even the ambient music and glowing lighting is systemically timed, based on the flow of clientele throughout the night.

Signature Katsuya classics include spicy albacore sashimi with crispy onion and the crispy rice with spicy tuna, which the general manager aptly described as "sushi candy" with its crispy burnt edges of buttery and chewy rice. The tour de force here is the Kobe beef foie gras, with three filets of beef tenderloin topped with whole pan-seared duck liver and a plum wine soy sauce.

If you're in the mood for a sugary finish, go for pastry chef Masami Komiyma's trio crême brulee with vanilla, cappuccino and hazelnut. Or, at the very least, end with a cup of flower-jewel tea, a hand-picked white tea that is packaged and sewn each morning with invisible dissolving thread.

Katsuya goes Hollywood on Thursday and Friday nights, after dinner. Apart from that, the restaurant is sans attitude—largely populated by upbeat, loyal and casual locals with a smattering of high-powered deal brokers. □

Katsuya
11777 San Vicente Boulevard (at Barrington Ave.), Brentwood
310.207.8744 | www.sbeent.com/katsuya