



SUIBOKU CONCIERGE

CONFIDENTIAL GUIDE

RESTAURANTS: 2011-2012

FOR SUIBOKU OWNERS AND GUESTS ONLY

2011-2012 saw the publication of the **LUXE Guide Niseko** as an on-line application (available together with LUXE's Tokyo City Guide) and the continued press coverage of Niseko as Asia's top ski destination...so any hope that the global economic meltdown coupled with the earthquake/tsunami would have made it easier to get a place at one of Niseko's top tables can be quickly dispelled.

As in past years you will need to book early. To that end, we strongly suggest that you contact the Suiboku Concierge team (conciERGE@suibokuhirafu.com), which this year consists of an impressive two woman/one man team each sporting sexy black ski jackets with Suiboku-orange piping.

We have listed below our 2011-2012 choices for Niseko/Hirafu's top restaurants. In making this year's choices we have again looked for those restaurants that not only have great food (that's the basic requirement) but also ones that have ambience and character in spades.

You should note that the top local restaurants encourage all patrons to honor their bookings. If for any reason you need to cancel or change your booking please have the courtesy to do so as early as possible either through the Suiboku Concierge or with the restaurant directly.

OUR TOP SEVEN PICKS.

There is no denying that there are a great number of wonderful restaurants in Grand Hirafu, Anupuri, Higashiyama, Kutchan and Niseko Town, but there are seven stand-outs that you will absolutely not want to miss:

EZO SEAFOODS. Keiko and James Gallagher preside over this unassuming, uber-friendly, wonderfully authentic, funky-cool emporium of king crab legs, fresh oysters, gigantic Hokkaido scallops, seafood chowders, paellas, rough-cut sashimi, salmon eggs, uni...the whole seabang. It is a place of pilgrimage for Japanese foodies from Tokyo. If you leave Hirafu without eating at Ezo Seafoods you will regret it...until the next time you come to town when it will be your first stop!! Note: they also do take-away, although it is wise to order your oysters well in advance. This place is not huge and they have to turn away customers every night. *Bookings for Ezo Seafoods can be made by calling +81 136-22-3019 (local 0136 22-3019). You can also email James at james@ezoseafoods.com.*
THIS IS OUR TOP SEAFOOD RESTAURANT PICK.

J-SEKKA DELI AND CAFÉ. Whilst ostensibly a rough-luxey SKI-BOOT-FRIENDLY gourmet delicatessen and café in the J-Sekka building right next to the main town intersection, this wonderful, super-casual little restaurant is the go-to place for all of the town's locals looking for **seriously gorgeous breakfast, lunch and dinner.** In addition to their top-notch breakfasts (the stuff of legend) the J-Sekka Deli and Café also has to-die-for daily specials like venison burgers and the now-famous “dork” (duck and pork) burgers or their chili-con-carne, voted Niseko's best... and then are the cakes and coffees. We are not joking, the chili here is the best we've tasted anywhere in the world. The daily specials in the Café are available in the evening as well so this place is one of the most flexible and best food options in Hirafu. It is very popular for folks who arrive in the town late and don't have a booking on their first night after getting out of the ski rental places. The J-Sekka food zeitgeist benefits from a special award from the Japanese food association bestowing upon them the “green lantern” denoting food made from the freshest, local ingredients. This Café and Deli venue also happens to be the most chilled out café/food store in this part of the world and you will want to spend time here chilling out and reading a magazine or two, but don't forget to go skiing once in the while. Most of the welcome items in Suiboku this year (jam, soy sauce, olive oil, nespresso pods, vegetable chips, crackers) come from J-Sekka. **BEST VALUE DINNER RESTAURANT PICK.**

A-BU-CHA 2. This restaurant is in the Suiboku building, so you don't even need to wear your jacket to go there. The owner of A-Bu-Cha, the uber-handsome and absurdly young Shimizu-san, presides daily over the busiest restaurant in Hirafu and, during the ski season, possibly the **busiest restaurant in all of Japan.** This is the one place in town that is packed even in the summertime. You might as well just forget about eating there unless you book four years in advance, well, okay, maybe we exaggerate... two months in advance. The food is Japanese “izakaya” bar-style food, not fancy at all, but that description doesn't really do justice to the amazingness that is Abucha. You can walk in, of course, but you may be disappointed or need to wait for over an hour for a seat. One other great feature is that Abucha does not go in for overpriced holiday set dinners of the kind that can bankrupt a small country, so you get the great menu, the great owner and the great prices every night of the year. The things to eat: salmon- butter corn hot pot, squid with garlic mayonnaise sauce served with toasted baguette, organic grilled chicken with green tea salt, tofu and tuna salad and the salmon-roe fried rice – but to be honest the menu is extensive and it's all ridiculously tasty so we'll shut up and let you order whatever strikes your fancy...except to say that the place has a raucous, local Japanese bar atmosphere that kids absolutely love. Top tip: the unfiltered sake (the milky one) and the Yebisu “creamy top” stout are the absolute business in the wintertime and, in fact, are only available during the winter months. Get happy and then ride the lift back up to your Suiboku loft to sit by the fireplace. Shimizu-san will let you take your remaining sake up with you if you wish. To book Abucha, call +81-136-22-5620 (local: 0136-22-5620). Or, ask the **Suiboku Concierge** to organize it for you by emailing conciierge@suibokuhirafu.com. **TOP JAPANESE IZAKAYA GRILL.**

KAMIMURA. Kamimura is the only chic and elegant dining room in town, but somehow it also manages to be a remarkably comfortable, casual, cozy and friendly place (especially after a few glasses of prosecco) where Chef Kamimura, formerly of Tetsuya in Sydney, *nuf said*, creates *haute cuisine* from the top-of-the-top of local Hokkaido produce. Every dish is a beautiful local story and Chef Kamimura is now becoming a celebrity in his own right...but not so much so that he isn't in the kitchen every single night weaving his magic. *Maitre d'Restaurant* Michael Phipps, presides over the dining room like a telepathic Jude Law, anticipating your every need. This is the kind of place that would be packed in Paris or Courchevel, so being able to eat like this in Hirafu is an obscenely indulgent privilege...not to be missed. **Seats are like gold dust in the high season....so make your move now.** Whilst kids will love it, we'd recommend this as an explosive adults-only culinary catharsism, so best to send the kids to Niseko Pizza or J-Sekka Deli and Café that night. Bookings for Kamimura can be made by telephone on +81-136-21-2288, local number 0136-21-2288 (ask for *Michael Phipps*, or email him at mphipps@kamimura-niseko.com) or contact them via the Kamimura website at

www.kamimura-niseko.com. Or, ask the **Suiboku Concierge** to organize it for you by emailing concierge@suibokuhirafu.com. Kamimura will have special Christmas, New Year's and Chinese New Year's menus. **TOP HIGH-END HAUTE CUISINE SPECIAL OCCASION RESTAURANT.**

THE BARN. This barn-shaped restaurant sits like a beautiful star in the snow-filled night. After a fantastically successful year in 2010-2011 the Barn is now going from strength to strength under the guidance of the indefatigable master-of-ceremonies Brett (formerly of Wild Bill's Bar) and his wife Takayo and the master-French-chef Kazu from Le Cochon in Kutchan (formerly the top French restaurant in Niseko) and is this year serving **absolutely perfect French brasserie food** such as duck confit, onion soup, country pate and other dishes you'll love. It is expected that this place will be packed for dinner every night during the season, so you must book ahead. The Barn will have a special Christmas, New Year's and Chinese New Year menu. Please contact the **Suiboku Concierge** if you wish to book or contact the restaurant directly at +81 136 23 0888 (local number 0136 22 0888) or email at nisekobarn@gmail.com.

TOP PICK FOR PERFECT FRENCH.

BANG BANG. Hirafu's top *yakitori* restaurant (grilled food on wooden skewers) presided over by the bandannaed owner, Massa-san, who man-handles the grill in this extremely cosy, local, authentic restaurant located just three buildings up the main *Hirafu-Zaka* road from *Suiboku*. Given the cosiness, we would recommend this as an adults-only restaurant unless you go very early with well-behaved children. It is often nice to go early, say 5-5:30 to better hear some of Massa-san's vintage jazz recordings. Recommended dishes are (i) king crab legs, (ii) asparagus and bacon and (iii) local Hokkaido sausages. The *yakitori* is generally good value but be sure to check the prices on some of the whole-fish specials (where the fish sometimes are really "special") and on the huge grilled wagyu steaks, to make sure the best surprise is no surprise. For bookings call Bang Bang directly at +81 136 22 4292 (local number 0136 22 4292). Or, you can ask the **Suiboku Concierge** to organize the booking for you by emailing concierge@suibokuhirafu.com. **TOP HIRAFU YAKITORI RESTAURANT.**

RAKUICHI SOBA. Tucked into the forest of Anuppuri, Rakuichi Soba is run by the ever-charming Midori and her soba master husband Tsutsuru Rai. Hand-made, cut-before-your-eyes soba is what they are most famous for, yet it is the supreme delicacy of each hand-crafted traditional Japanese dish that will really take your breath away. The menu evolves with the season, with nightly preparations of a seven-course *kaiseki* meal that features, literally, the catch of the day, exquisite house-made dressings and salts, and fantastically light and crispy vegetable tempura. With a finale involving a heaping serving of the freshest soba you could possibly be treated to, you leave Rakuichi's log cabin in the woods without any doubt that you have experienced something. This small place was for many years thought to exist only mythologically but, it turns out, it really is here, in Anuppuri. But don't take our word for it, listen to super-chef Neil Perry who has been spreading the legend of Rakuichi in his Rockpool blog: <http://www.rockpool.com.au/blog/2010/03/rakuichi-soba/>. **THIS IS WHERE FRODO GOES FOR SOBA.** Check our **Rakuichi on YouTube** at "[No Reservations Anthony Bourdain Niseko](#)". It is ironic that this restaurant was featured in a TV program called "No Reservations" because without a reservation you would have zero chance of getting in.

ALSO NOTABLE AND FUNKY IN HIRAFU:

NISEKO PIZZA. This top pizzeria in town has **just moved** to a larger space in the downstairs wine cellar of the J-Sekka Building. The place serves up genuine Italian fare, no surprise for a place owned by Cezar Constantin, a snowboarding Greco-Italian of world culinary renown. Pizzas are excellent (albeit not the cheapest in the world). The

Pizza Bianco, with prosciutto & olives is a winner, as are the daily baked foccacia you will find on the antipasto plate to dip into the superb eggplant dip. The kids will enjoy the extreme skiing being shown on video and the occasional local troubadour performing in the corner. It is quite possible that the new location is going to spark a massive amount of new business for Niseko Pizza, so it might not hurt to book ahead if you are bringing along a large crew. Open for lunch and dinner. Call them at 0136 55 5553. **They also deliver to Suiboku.** Their information will be in the Local Knowledge box on the long concrete table. **BUZZY PIZZA JOINT IN THE HEART OF HIRAFU.**

RIN is an intimate *izakaya* restaurant in the lower portion of the middle Hirafu Village featuring a wide variety of grilled bar/grill food and some interesting specialities like horse sashimi and Camembert Yaki – a whole wheel of cheese served sizzling, topped with a little soy sauce and eaten with salted crackers. The place is small and gets packed, but if you are at the Yukoro Onsen (right next to the restaurant) this would be a good early-meal pick. Bookings are recommended for large groups (6 or more). You can call them for a booking at +81 136-22-1444 Int'l/ 0136-22-1444 local, or ask the **Suiboku Concierge** to help you with your booking. **PLACE TO MEET SEXY SNOWBOARDERS.**

YOSAKU is a funky, smoke-filled yakitori emporium that screams bohemian snow-boarder at its best, and most original, with long log tables and a dart board in the back. Perhaps not as haute-yakitori as Bang Bang this place explodes with local color and delicious yakitori and represents extremely good value if you have a load of kids who are desperate for the stuff-on-a-stick but who don't have the patience or pocket-book for Bang Bang. Just up the street from The Barn. Ask the concierge for directions to walk there from Suiboku. Two minute walk! **BOOGIE ON REGGAE YAKITORAE.**

A FEW MINUTES OUT-OF-TOWN AND WORTH THE TRIP.

The following superb restaurants are within twenty minutes of downtown Hirafu and most will send a car to pick you up and bring you back. The Suiboku Concierge can help you arrange transport. Or, you can take a taxi from Seicomart on the corner.

LUPICIA. It took us a while to figure out what this place is, high-end tea shop branch of the famous Tokyo tea company Lupicia or high-end haute cuisine restaurant in a large, beautiful space offering incredible value but sometimes slow service. The answer is now clear: all of the above. Situated a five minute cab ride outside Hirafu Village in the Higashiyama direction, this restaurant offers exceptional value and can accommodate several large groups simultaneously. Another fabulous addition to the Niseko dining scene. Please contact the Suiboku Concierge if you wish to book or contact the restaurant directly at +81 21 7780 (local number 0136 21 7780).

NISEKO RAMEN MOUNT RAMEN NOODLES. This quintessential ramen noodle shop on the main highway in Kutchan (across the street from HOMAC) is run by husband and wife dynamos Kazuhiro and Hiromi Sagara. They serve up arguably the best bowl of ramen noodles in the Niseko area. If you go you cannot miss the special vichyssoise Hokkaido jagaimo potato cream ramen...with extra roast pork, dontcha know!! Get as spicy as you like. This place is a fifteen minute cab ride from central Hirafu. Inexpensive and delicious. No bookings taken, first come-first served, so you might need to wait for a few minutes for a table. This amazing shop has already opened up a sister-shop in Tokyo. Call to confirm they are open on any given day at local number: 0136 23 3444). **TOP DESTINATION RAMEN NOODLES.**

OKONOMAYAKI JYUU JAPANESE PANCAKE RESTAURANT. Thick and thin savoury Japanese (Osaka-style) pancakes with cabbage, spring onion, *kim chee*, beef, pork, you name it. A divine combination - the Pokka NegiYaki, which is kim chee and braised beef tendon served in a thinner style spring onion pancake with tempura bits, pickled ginger and lemon. A decadent option, to be sure, and not to be outdone by the *jaga*

cheese “pancake” - crispy melted cheese with potato. Cozy, local authentic place 15 minutes outside town at the “T” junction in the road on Route 343 past the Hilton turn-off. Directions: drive toward the Hilton in Higashiyama and keep going straight until you can’t go straight anymore. Look straight and there it is. Booking is advised +81 136-44-2336 Int’l/ 0136-44-2336 within Japan. **CLASSIC OSAKA-STYLE SAVOURY PANCAKES.**

TORIMATSU TRADITIONAL YAKITORI RESTAURANT. This small traditional yakitori restaurant is the Kutchan version of Bang Bang, and in the view of some just as good but better value. It is small, so a large group could not be accommodated. It is on the main Kutchan Road leading to the Kutchan Train Station. Important to make a booking (locals flock here) and either take a taxi (easy) or ask the **Suiboku Minivan** to give you a lift into town. 15 minutes from Hirafu. Booking is essential. +81 136-23-2893 Int’l/ 0136-23-2893 within Japan. **STUFF ON A STICK, VERY LOCAL TRADITIONAL, VERY COOL.** Torimatsu was also featured in Anthony Bourdain’s No Reservations episode shot in Niseko. You can YouTube it.

ENYA FUNKY YAKITORI RESTAURANT. Although there is always Bang Bang for haute-yakitori, when the super-funky reggae version moved out of Hirafu a few years ago to make room for...eh, Paddy McGinty’s Irish Pub (no comment), we were at a temporary loss for expletives, but we are pleased to report that the Big Cliff team under the guidance of Yamamoto-san has reconstituted themselves in Kutchan Town in a funky and sexy duplex restaurant called ENYA where they serve up the same local, authentic reggae-inspired goodies as before at Big Cliff. This place is as super-chilled as their Sapporo draft beers and the food is delicious – so you had better book ahead by contacting the **Suiboku Concierge** or calling them directly at 0136 22 3438. **BOB MARLEY MEETS STUFF ON A STICK, FUNKY AUTHENTIC LOCAL VIBE.**

SHUNSAI VENISON RESTAURANT. A small family run venison restaurant featuring a nightly special set to die for. Not known by many outside the area this restaurant is owned by a hunter and his family and is located just three shops down the street facing the Kutchan Train Station (on the left). Charming place with great ambience, and you can try the amazing venison in an un-beatable value lunch set including soup, salad, rice & drink for about 1,000yen. Not for large groups or loud children. 15 minutes from Hirafu. Booking is essential. +81 136-23-1882 Int’l/ 0136-23-1882 local. **STRAIGHT FROM THE HUNTER TO THE TABLE.**

TSUBARATSUBARA SOUP CURRY RESTAURANT. Some like it hot, and some like it obscenely hot. Just outside Hirafu (in Izumikyo Village on the way to Kutchan – a few minutes walk outside of town on a nice day) this restaurant (which has just moved to the site of the old Maru Maru restaurant) has about ten different styles of curry soup (all delicious) with a system that allows you to choose your heat, from zero to 22. Most people who have a high heat threshold settle in at around a 9. We have seen a few try 12....and fail. Small place, but great food, and we understand that their menu will expand this winter to include tempura and grilled items. No bookings required. **WHEN SOUP CURRY IS WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED.**

ICHIMURA HOME-MADE SOBA NOODLE RESTAURANT. And if you haven’t had enough soba or if you haven’t been able to get a table at Rakuichi Soba, check out the all homemade noodles at this classic and also exceptionally good soba and tempura restaurant right at the Izumikoyo 1 T-junction before you turn off to Kutchan Town (directly across the street from the Niseko Paint Ball Field). This place is the real thing and it gets full every single day with local Japanese business and tradesmen and visiting Japanese tourists. Not many out-of-towners go there, but it is well worth the visit. Whilst no table bookings will be taken (as they do a phenomenal walk-in business) you should call ahead before going over to the shop to “book your soba” to ensure that they have remaining home-made stock when you arrive. The local number is 0136-23-0603. **TRADITIONAL SOBA HOUSE WITH PERFECT TEMPURA.**

GRAUBUNDEN SANDWICH AND CAKE SHOP has quite astoundingly delicious sandwiches, some would say the best sandwiches in the Niseko if not the world at large, and is located a manageable walk out of Hirafu village (20 minutes from the main intersection of Hirafu) in *Izumikyo Village 1*, the little town that you see just before you enter Hirafu coming from the airport. Graubunden has been open for 19 years and had a face-lift last summer. The shop has expanded and there is more seating inside by the wood-burning stove. Sandwiches range from the simple ham & cheese to delicacies like cream cheese and onions stir-fried with walnuts – and everything in between. You even get to choose the bread, from soft baguette, baguette, bagel and rye. A great place for hot chocolate and a slice of home-baked cake – if you order in advance you can even take a whole cake home. Happy birthday to you. Call +81 136-23-3371 Int'l/ 0136-23-3371 in Japan. **MEGA SANDWICHES AND CAKEZE.**

DEL SOLE Sicilian Pizza is located in the Annupuri village, just down from the Annupuri gondola and serves traditional Naples style pizza with a thick, chewy base. It is all baked in a wood-fired stone oven, and the menu is written in Italian and Japanese. Enjoy a glass of Italian red with your pizza, and then be sure to finish with a coffee, made on an impressive La Pevoni shining silver coffee machine, with an eagle perched on top. You will need to organize the Suiboku mini-van or a cab to take you here, but well worth the trip – and a great place to stop for lunch if you are skiing the Annupuri slopes around lunchtime. **UNA PIZZERIA FANTASTICO E MOLTO SUPER-COZIO.** You can call them at 0136 28 3535.

Enjoy your meal(s)!!

THE SUIBOKU CONCIERGE TEAM 2011-2012