

# ACCENT + FOOD & DINING



# OMAKASE

Multi course Japanese prix-fixe dining is making PBC inroads

**Diana Biederman** Palm Beach Post | USA TODAY NETWORK

Omakase is having a moment. ● Omawhat? ● It’s the Japanese term loosely translating to “I leave it up to you.” ● In the context of dining, it refers to a meal where the chef selects and prepares a series of dishes for the guest, often based on seasonal ingredients, the chef’s creativity and a patron’s preferences. ● One of omakase’s most notable newbies in West Palm Beach is Moody Tongue Sushi, which opened in January and is a recent Michelin Guide recommended restaurant under the Select category. ● Sushi By Bou (the Bou being chef David Bouhadana), a chain of 23 omakase restaurants spanning six states and Puerto Rico, opened its fifth Florida location in Lake Worth Beach in February. **See OMAKASE, Page 2D**



**ABOVE:** Ora King Salmon with mushroom duxelle and black truffle at Moody Tongue Sushi in West Palm Beach. PROVIDED BY MOODY TONGUE SUSHI  
**TOP:** Diners are paying big bucks for meals specially put together for them by chefs at Japanese restaurants. CONTRIBUTED BY ROCK N' ROLL SUSHI

# This summer, use a propane grill for the juiciest burgers

**Joe Difazio and Cody Godwin**  
USA TODAY

When the weather starts warming up, people across the country start busting out their grills. Whether you call it “barbecuing,” “grilling,” “cooking out,” or something else, one thing remains the same: it is an American pastime and synonymous with summer.

But with great power comes great responsibility, and not everyone is worthy of the grill master title. Nothing can ruin a cookout like charred burgers that are more like hockey pucks than a tasty dinner. So, avoid messing things up with these simple tips for cooking delicious, juicy cheeseburgers on a propane grill.

### Preparing burgers

Start by forming your hamburger patties ahead of time and letting them chill in the fridge for at least 30 minutes. The fridge time will help the burger cook more evenly and trap the juices inside.

Preheat the grill while the burgers are



**Get delicious, juicy burgers without burning them on a propane grill.**  
PROBLEM SOLVED/USA TODAY NETWORK

in the fridge.

Before throwing the burgers on the hot grill, brush them with a high-heat oil, like grapeseed oil or vegetable oil. These oils can withstand higher temperatures better than butter or olive oil and reduce the risk of burning. After brushing oil on the burgers, you can add salt, pepper and any other spices you want.

### Grilling burgers on propane

After the grill and its grates are hot, turn a section off and put your burgers there, avoiding direct flame under the patty. This helps avoid flare-ups.

You can add an ice cube to the top of the patty to even out the cook. Then, close the grill and let it do its thing. The time it will take to cook the burgers varies by how hot the grill is, how big the burgers are and how you want them cooked. Usually, burgers take between two and five minutes per side to cook. The less time, the rarer the meat.

When they are about halfway done, flip them and close the lid again.

When the juices of the burger are running clear, that’s when you know they are done. Note: if you’re adding cheese, put it on when the burger juices still have some red in them.

Once you pull the burgers off the grill, let them sit for about 10 minutes before assembling the perfect burger and digging in. Yum, no burnt hockey puck burgers at this cookout!

### Building the perfect burger

Assembling burgers can be really messy. Tomato slices are slipping out, pickles are disappearing and the bread can get soggy.

Build a better burger like this:

1. Toast the bun.
2. Spread your preferred condiments on the bottom bun.
3. Add lettuce and tomato.
4. Top with the burger patty.
5. If you’re opting for a cheeseburger with bacon, melt the cheese over the top of the bacon.
6. Add pickles into the sticky cheese.
7. Top with onions and any other topping you enjoy.
8. Add another smear of your favorite condiments on the top bun and enjoy!





Sushi by Bou at PGA Resort feels like an intimate dinner party. DIANA BIEDERMAN/PALM BEACH POST

# Omakase

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Coming soon: Midorie in West Palm Beach. It arrives courtesy of the Miami-based APM Restaurant Group (the team behind Ogawa, a new omakase restaurant awarded a Michelin star). This is the second Midorie — the first is in Coconut Grove. The concept: a casual donburi (protein-topped rice bowl dishes) and sushi spot with a \$100 omakase that’s served all at once.

## Why is omakase trending?

Although the experience reflects Japanese aesthetics — simplicity, balance, and attention to detail — when a personable chef leads the evening, it’s also super fun.

“Omakase in particular provides a more intimate environment where guests can enjoy both interacting with the chef and a little culinary theater. These are special and often celebratory experiences which can be a wonderful alternative to the traditional a la carte dining format,” said Jared Rouben, Moody Tongue Sushi’s co-founder and brewmaster.

Sunset Sushi at AlleyCat’s co-founder Eric Baker echoed this sentiment, saying his patrons appreciate a “performative dining experience.”

At the ever-expanding Sushi By Bou, CEO Erika London believes the increased affinity for omakase can be attributed to “a community that appreciates the artistry of Japanese cuisine as well as the opportunity to explore sophisticated dining in an intimate and personal setting.”

## Ka-ching

Around town, most omakase offerings are prix-fixe tasting menus with a set number of sushi pieces often described as courses. Cooked dishes here and there also can be part of the experience.

Chef Clay Conley, famous for Buccan but also part of the team behind Imoto in Palm Beach, said, “From the operator’s perspective, sushi makes a lot of sense; it’s a high-ticket item, especially in the omakase world. The demand for sushi is very strong and people seem more apt to spend for quality fish.”

And spend they do. America’s two most expensive Michelin Guide restaurants are omakase style: Masa has three stars and the menu is \$750 per person. Second is the two-starred Sushi Noz, which requires a \$550 pre-payment on OpenTable for food alone. Both are in New York City. Those prices don’t include beverages, tip or tax.

## What ‘The Breakfast Club’ has to do with omakase: A history

Omakase has its roots in Edo-style sushi (Edomae-zushi), which originated in Tokyo, then called Edo. Sushi was originally fast food sold at stalls using preserved fish before refrigeration was a thing. Over time, as sushi chefs refined their craft, the experience became more intimate and artistic.

After World War II, sushi counters became more formal, and chefs began offering omakase-style meals to regulars who trusted their skill. It was a way to showcase the chef’s expertise and the day’s best ingredients.

As Japan’s economy boomed in the 1980s, omakase became a symbol of luxury and exclusivity. High-end sushi restaurants in Tokyo and Osaka began



Salmon is an omakase offering at Sunset Sushi at Alley Cat. PROVIDED BY SUNSET SUSHI AT ALLEY CAT



A rendering of Midorie, which is slated for a late 2025 opening in West Palm Beach. PROVIDED BY APM RESTAURANT GROUP

offering omakase, an experience emphasizing seasonality, craftsmanship and trust.

Credit Molly Ringwald’s Claire in “The Breakfast Club” for introducing sushi to moviegoers in 1985 when she brought it for lunch during that famous Saturday detention. Let’s hope she was only pretending to eat it after hours under hot lights.

## Where to eat, experience omakase

My most memorable omakase experience was 20 years ago, when the sushi chef’s first question was, “Are you flying first or business class tonight?”

It was a gauge of how much I wanted to spend, though today, that question could be updated with a “flying private” option.

Listed alphabetically, check out our guide for where to experience omakase and the other Japanese restaurants mentioned in this story. Starting prices where noted are per person for food only.

- **Imoto:** 350 S. County Road, Palm Beach, imotopalmbeach.com
- **Moody Tongue Sushi:** Prix-fixe \$145. 600 Okeechobee Blvd. at the Hilton West Palm Beach, moodytongue.com
- **Sunset Sushi at AlleyCat:** Prices start at \$160. 297 E. Palmetto Park Road, Boca Raton, 561-353-5888, www.sunsetsushiomakase.com
- **Sushi By Bou** prices usually start at \$65 but it’s worth a search for the occa-



Diners are paying big bucks for meals specially put together for them by chefs at Japanese restaurants. KEITH PANDOLFI/CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

sional Facebook deal. Three locations: 400 Ave. of the Champions at PGA Resort, Palm Beach Gardens; 10 S. Ocean Blvd., Lake Worth Beach; 409 SE Mizner Blvd., Boca Raton; sushibybou.com

● **Taki Omakase** has two locations: 632 E. Atlantic Ave., Delray Beach and 1658 N. Federal Highway, Boca Raton; takiomakase.com. \$90 for lunch at both; dinner is \$170 in Delray Beach, \$200 in Boca Raton.

● **Midorie** is set to open at 500 Palm St. in West Palm Beach.



Madai (aka sea bream) with Florida orange zest and sea salt paired with Orange Blossom Belgian Blonde ale at Moody Tongue Sushi in West Palm Beach. PROVIDED BY MOODY TONGUE SUSHI

Diana Biederman is the Palm Beach Post’s food and restaurant writer who was an exchange student in in Sendai, Japan in 1980. She had sushi there once with her host family because it was super expensive. She also prefers her fish served as chirashi v. omakase service. If you have any news tips about the local dining scene, please send them to dbiederman@pbpost.com . Help support our journalism. Subscribe today.