

MANDARIN ORIENTAL, TOKYO SOMMELIER WINS WORLD SAKE CHAMPIONSHIP

Hong Kong, 7 November 2012 – Kaoru Izuha, Assistant Manager of [Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo](#)'s sushi restaurant [Sushi SORA](#), won this year's prestigious Kikisake-shi (sake sommelier) Category of the Third Kikisake-shi World Championship. Ms Izuha claimed the honour out of 25,000 certified sake sommelier competitors.

The Kikisake-shi World Championship, sponsored by the Sake Service Institute, selects the world's best sake sommeliers. Contestants are evaluated on their ability to introduce the taste and enjoyment of sake in a correct and easy-to-understand manner. The competition involves tests on comprehensive knowledge and skills. It requires a broad detailed knowledge of sake, tasting skills and an ability to be insightful regarding customer needs.

Kaoru gained a basic knowledge of wine from her parents. She studied and obtained a sake sommelier certification while working at her first hotel position in a Japanese restaurant, which required an extensive knowledge of Japanese beverages to be able to make recommendations to customers. To broaden her knowledge of beverages, she learned all she could about wine and became a certified wine sommelier as well. After familiarizing herself with both sake and wine, she gained an appreciation for the very wide range in variety of both drinks. She concludes sake cannot be simply expressed by terms such as 'dry' or 'dolce', but rather every sip is a unique union between sake, cuisine and environment which creates a culinary experience.

Kaoru is the Assistant Manager at Sushi SORA, at Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo which is an *Edo-mae* (traditional Tokyo style) sushi restaurant. "Many customers choose sake by brand," she says, "but in the same way as people select wine to go with different dishes, I recommend that they select sake according to the sushi items they order. That way you can fully enjoy the finest features of both the sake and the sushi. For example, for the coming season, I would

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suggest a mellow sake with a rich aroma to complement marbled bluefin tuna, or a dry and crispier sake with a refreshing aroma for winter yellowtail or halfbeak. At Sushi SORA, we make recommendations for delightful encounters that will perfectly match customers' tastes."

Sushi SORA is located on the 38th floor of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo, providing an outstanding view of the world's tallest broadcasting tower, Tokyo Skytree[®], and the breath-taking Tokyo skyline. The eight-seat sushi counter is made from high-quality Japanese cypress wood which is more than 350 years old. Yuji Imaizumi, the chef, serves selected seasonal ingredients of the highest quality for discerning diners.

Great sushi starts with great rice, and 70% of the taste is said to depend on the quality of *shari* (vinegared rice). That is why Chef Imaizumi is so particular about the rice he uses for this restaurant's *Edo-mae* sushi. His prime choice is Myoko Koshihikari from Niigata Prefecture, which is produced using pure mineral water from Mount Myoko in an environment of wide temperature variations. Chef says the best rice for the *Edo-mae* sushi comes from the harvest two years earlier, and the key is to steam it to the point where it is firm but not hard. Each grain of rice is important for creating a quality taste, and to make the vinegared rice for *nigiri-zushi* (hand-formed sushi) the chef uses his own original blend of *akasu* (red vinegar) and *kasuzu* (vinegar made from sake lees). Richly flavoured without the use of sugar, the vinegared rice is slightly reddened and provides just enough hint of sourness to complement the sweetness of the rice and the taste of the fish.

For enquiries and reservations, please call 0120 806 862 (toll free from within Japan) or +81 3 3270 8188, and email motyo-fbres@mohg.com

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Sushi SORA

Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo 38th floor

Operating hours: Lunch 11:30am - 2:30pm / Dinner 5:30 – 10pm

Prices: Lunch courses from JPY6,000

Dinner courses from JPY15,000

(Tax inclusive, 13% service charge exclusive)

About Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo

Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo's visionary design and award-winning service have been recognised as the epitome of sophisticated luxury in the city. Superbly located in the prestigious financial district within the historical and cultural centre of Tokyo, the first Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group property in Japan embodies the best of contemporary and time-honoured architectural splendour. The hotel features 178 luxuriously appointed guest rooms and suites, Michelin-starred dining, innovative bar concepts and a award-winning holistic spa all situated within the top nine floors of the soaring, Cesar Pelli-designed Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower, a site offering spectacular views of the city skyline while also providing access to stately banquet and conference facilities within the adjacent Mitsui Main Building, a Japanese cultural-heritage property.

About Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group is the award-winning owner and operator of some of the world's most prestigious hotels and resorts. The Group now operates, or has under development, 45 hotels representing 11,000 rooms in 28 countries, with 19 hotels in Asia, 13 in The Americas and 13 in Europe, Middle East and North Africa. In addition, the Group operates, or has under development, 14 *Residences at Mandarin Oriental* connected to its properties.

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