



Weekend at Daikan Izakaya, Yas Bay Waterfront, Abu Dhabi

Some restaurants are a lot more than just a place to eat...



... and the mysteriously-named Daikan Izakaya might be a case in point.

You hear of it and you think: Japanese?

And you would be right – the menu is built on swirling bowls of Japanese ramen, swiftly served platters of the freshest maki rolls, and tasty grilled skewers.

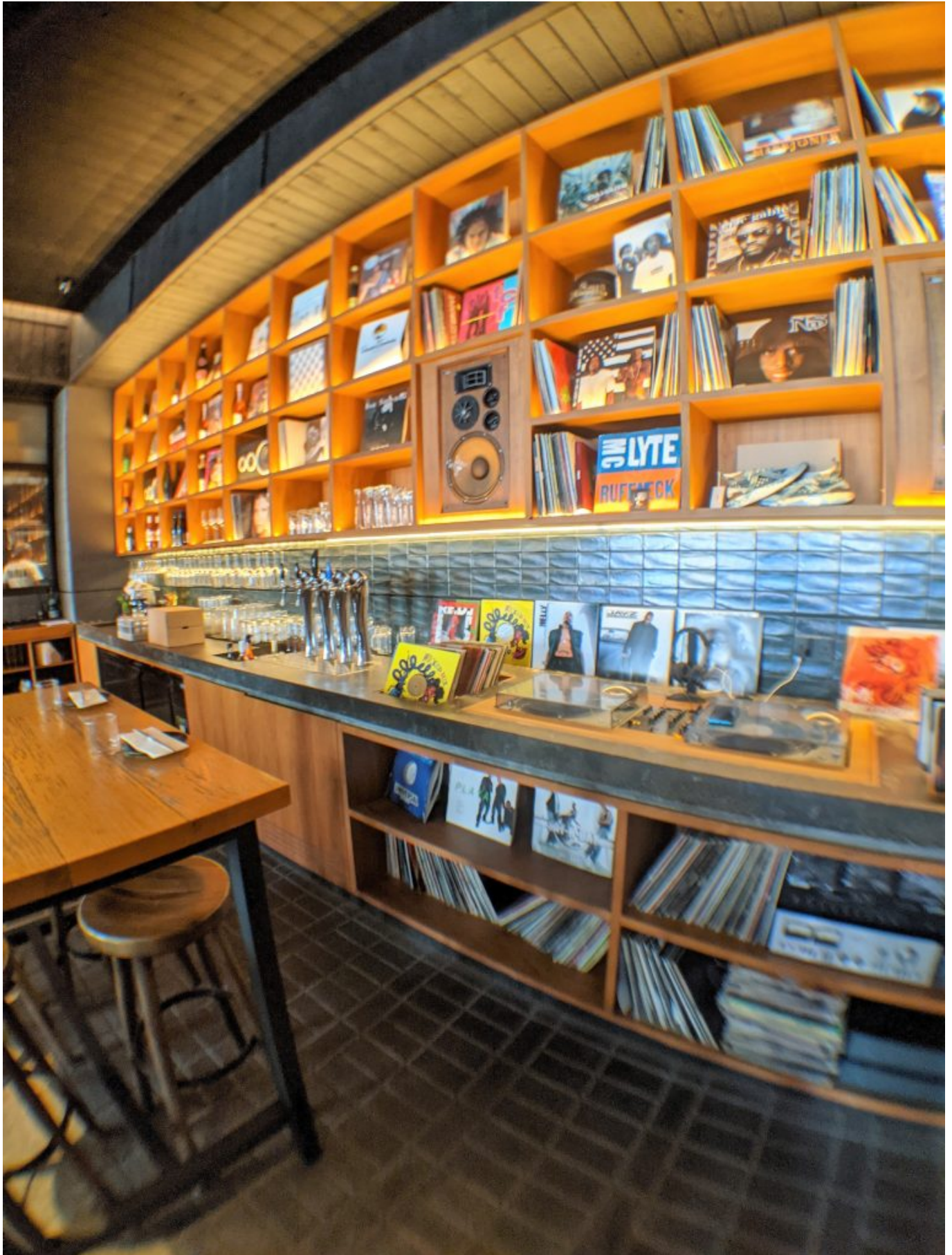
However...





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Daikan Izakaya also sports a unique collection of old-school rap and R&B vinyl records covering the entire back wall!





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And the bar is very well developed, serving an outstanding selection of wines, cocktails and spirits.





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Then there's a unique seating layout, where a bonsai-style live olive tree plays centerpiece...



So let's do a bit of research...

Yes, an “izakaya” is a traditional Japanese eatery, specializing in tasty snacks – serving as a community meeting place for friends, and neighborhood drinking focal point. Often times an *izakaya* carries a cool musical or theatrical theme – bingo!

And now Abu Dhabi has its own *izakaya* right in Yas Bay Waterfront!





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So if you were in Japan, and going out with a bunch of friends, perhaps to a club, or the theater, or even a weekend of shopping – or simply after work – you’d meet up at your favorite *izakaya*.

Have a few bites to eat, talk about the plans ahead, quench your thirst, share some laughs, and basically have a good time together...



... or, on the way home after a day out, or after attending an event, and not quite ready to say good-bye, you and your special one drop into the *izakaya* for a chat or a nightcap, sit close and whisper smiles into each other's ears, creating memories and enjoying togetherness.

Such is *izakaya* – and we've gotten used to the saying 'best of both worlds', but for Abu Dhabi's modern lifestyle, it really is the best of all worlds!

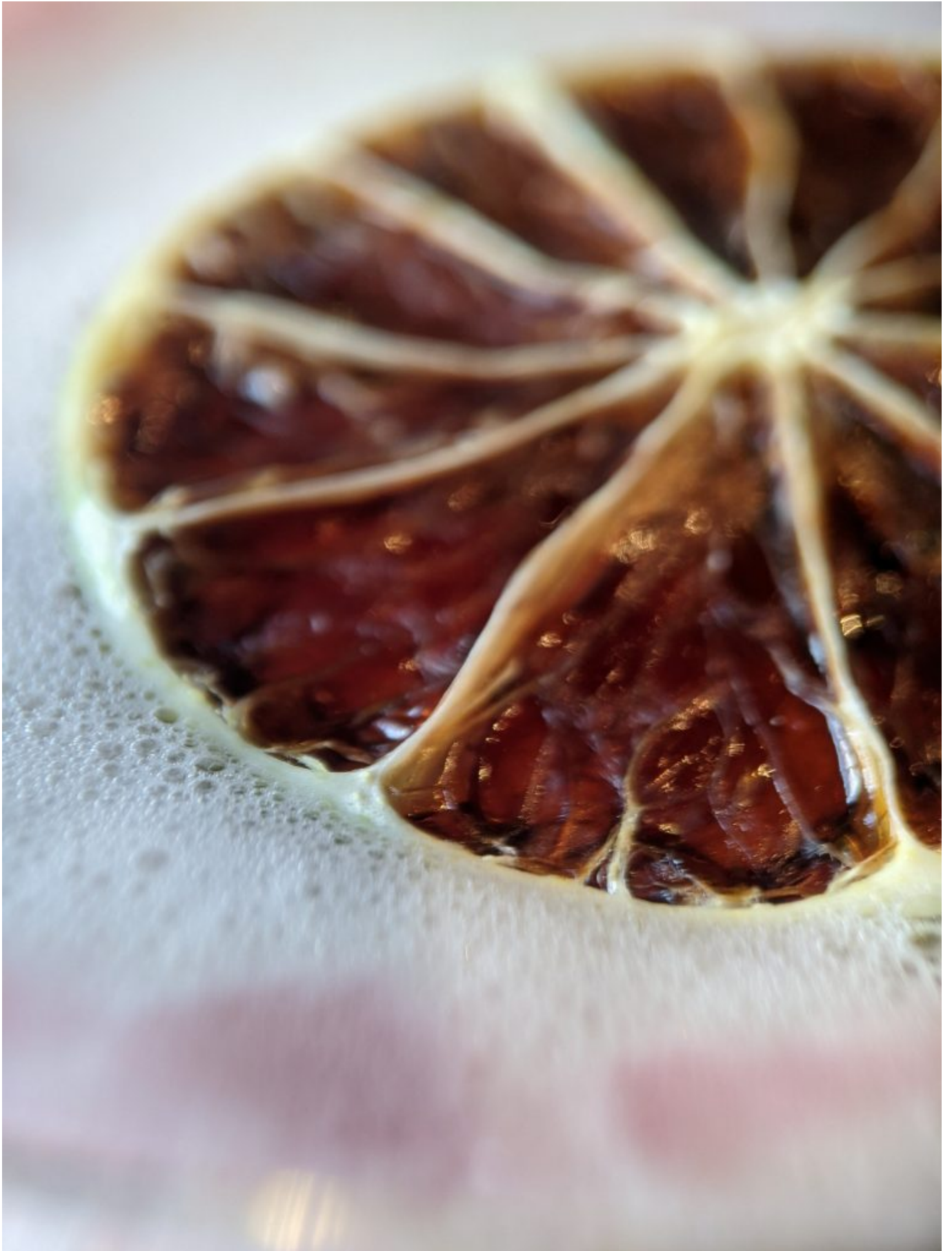
And you know that the moment your drink arrives at Daikan Izakaya, presented by the charismatic Mr Tebo...





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Expertly poured, carefully layered, and just perfect in all details.





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And if your preference is non-alcoholic, Daikan Izikaya has you covered, with exciting iced teas!



The menu is brief and to-the-point: they know what they do best, and that's what they focus on.

And indeed, every dish was a delicacy.

There is much in favor of a professional kitchen that specializes, rather than attempting to cover too many dishes and ingredients, within a loose framework of different preparations - and Daikan Izakaya has an excellent selection on a straight-forward menu.



We tried the Daikan Rolls, elegantly decorated with edible flowers, a generous slather of *tobiko* – flying fish roe – and crunchy tempura flakes. Within, a winning combination of salmon, crunchy cucumber, fried red capsicum, and cream cheese melted on the palate, while the texture playfully tickled the tongue.

The maki rolls flow in seven different options, from the more traditional Salmon Tataki (with ponzu dressing!), to the modern California and Dragon Rolls, as well as the more experimental Volcano and Nori Tacos!



Encouraged by the appetizing sushi, the concept of delicious small bites made sense, and the good folk in the Daikan Izakaya kitchens delighted in churning out surprise after yummy surprise!

The above miso aubergine not only came with the expected flavorsome topping of sweet miso, but the flakes of smoked bonito were such a clever addition – and not only in terms of flavor, but because they danced and bobbed before our very eyes!

Maybe it was inspired by the unique beats piped out of those collectible vinyl records?

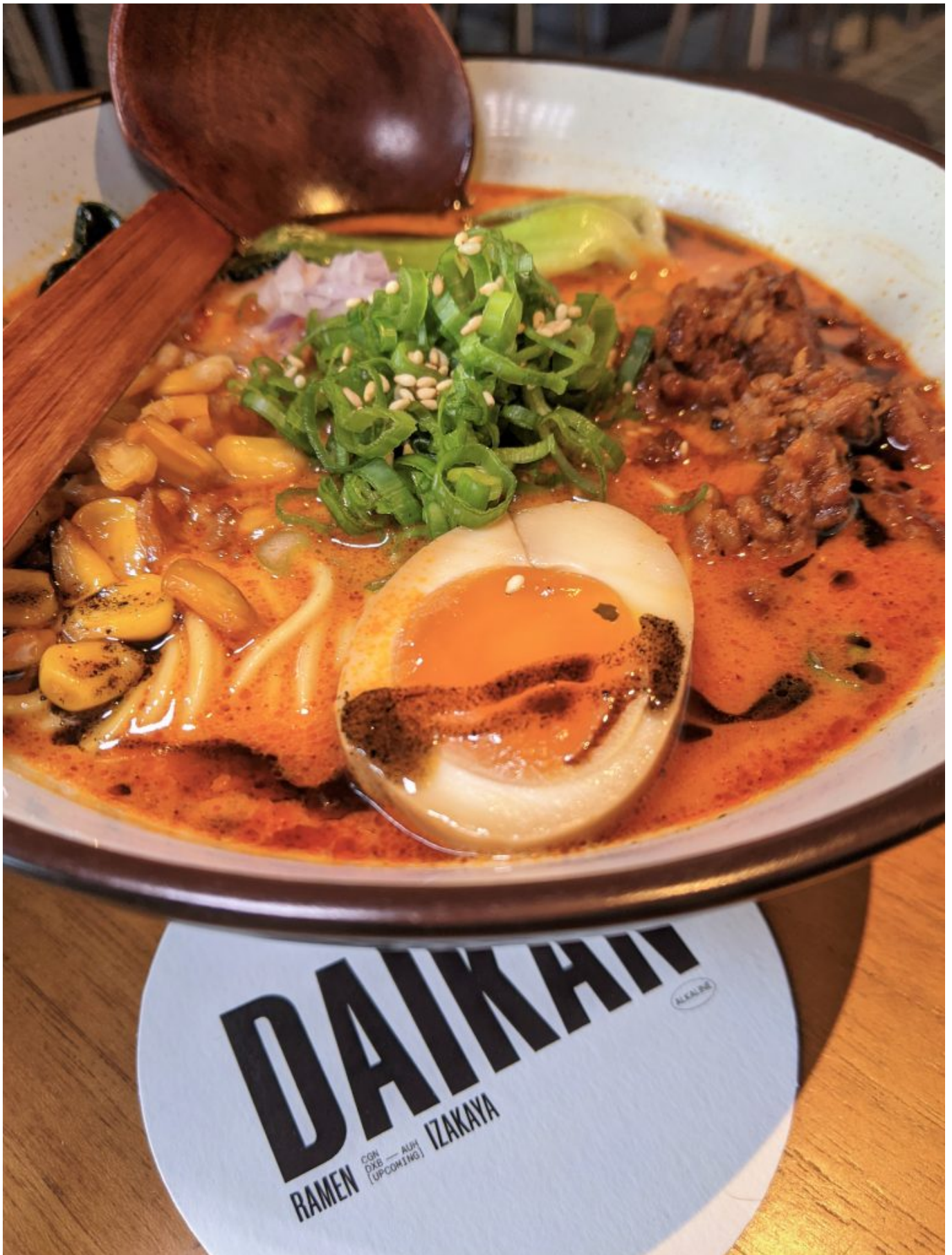




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But Daikan Izakaya actually goes beyond the “small bites” concept – even if marvelously executed, including grilled skewers of richly marinated meats.

The beating heart of Daikan Izakaya is actually their ramen bowls!



A thick and earthy broth, recipe of which must be a guarded secret in that it was so rich in taste, leads the nom-nom charge, and deep umami flavors provide the structure – a fantastic noodle soup, with no peers.

Floating within you'll find *ajitama* eggs, marinated in soy overnight, and other wonders of Japanese cuisine.

Indeed, you will even have a choice of broths!





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The ramen bowl was so good that a trip to Daikan Izakaya is worth it just to sip that soup!

However, the surprises were still not over...



Wagyu beef is prominent in several dishes, and the Yakiniku Sliders hit my taste buds so true that they have now set the standard for the most delicious wagyu burger I've tasted in a long time!

A real masterpiece of a little burger - two of them! - with the softest bun, and a magical combination of toppings that elevated the top-quality wagyu patties to fine-dining level of sophistication.



Desserts also shined, with an eclectic offering spanning from Yuzu Cheesecake to a gorgeous Matcha Crème Brûlée, and back again via a luscious chocolate lava cake – oh! Nutella Gyozas!!!

Well, there's always next time...



Overall, Daikan Izakaya impressed on many fronts – the synergy of exceptionally delicious bite-size dishes, massive bowls of ramen, creative and well-executed drinks, within a pleasing atmosphere of an open seating layout, still with nooks for private conversation, and the playlists of collector-quality music, makes Daikan Izakaya a top contender to go from weekend out to favorite hangout on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi.