

# BANZAI BURGER

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## THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

### East End Eats: Banzai Burger

*Simple, Delicious*

By Laura Donnelly | August 17, 2011 - 5:18pm

I believe I have eaten at Banzai Burger more times than any other restaurant I've tried this summer. It is not grand, fancy, expensive, or trendy. It is whatever you want it to be.

Looking for a casual spot to take the kids for a burger after the beach? Banzai has one with a special blend of beef, topped with local Mecox Bay Dairy's Sigit cheese. Want sushi? Banzai has a sushi chef, Isao Yoshimura, who goes

fishing for his own menu specials. Like desserts? In spite of the deceptively simple menu, all desserts are made in-house and they are delicious.

Banzai Burger is casual and fun. You can dine outdoors in a pretty garden with a view of the harbor in the distance, in the more formal dining room, creamy beige with black floors and seashell light fixtures, or in the glossy white, opened-to-the-elements bar area.



Burger after the beach? Sushi? Banzai Burger is anything you want it to be.

*Morgan McGivern*

On the Napeague stretch between the Clam Bar and Cyril's, where you can get all manner of fried fish bits and every form of rummy fruity drinks, respectively, it is the building that formerly housed . . . oh, forget it. Nobody remembers and nobody cares; this location changes names every season.

On our first visit, we tried the Prince Edward Island mussels, the yellowtail jalapeno, and the Banzai wasabi ceviche. The mussels are excellent, served in a briny, garlicky broth, flecked with fresh parsley and topped with long strips of grilled ciabatta bread. The yellowtail jalapeno is so good, I order it every time I visit. It is a generous portion of slices of rich yellowtail topped with little bits of chopped, pickled jalapenos and carrots, slivers of sliced onion, tiny dabs of wasabi on each piece of fish, and served in a pool of a soy, vinegar, and yuzu dressing. The Banzai wasabi ceviche, served in a martini glass, is a combination of tuna, fluke, salmon, and octopus in a tart, spicy dressing with bits of spring onion throughout. Super fresh.

On the regular menu, we have tried the classic burger, lamb burger, burger with foie gras, mako shark "burger," tuna "burger," and vegan burger, basically everything offered on that menu. All are good, some outstanding. The classic burger is served with Vermont cheddar and excellent applewood smoked bacon. It's the little things, folks, that make certain dishes shine! Spend a little more on each ingredient and you get a fine meal. The lamb burger, served with goat cheese, cucumbers and radishes is a nice change, the goat cheese adding a creamy, less-salty flavor than traditional feta cheese. The burger with foie gras was over the top. Besides a generous slab of foie, it had Mecox Bay Dairy Sigit cheese and a pile of truffled fries — more on the fries later.

The mako shark and tuna "burgers" are not burgers at all, simply fish steaks, well seasoned and grilled. The mako is served with a savory sun-dried tomato confit and tapenade smeared on the fresh brioche bun. The tuna is served with grilled red onions, arugula, avocado, and a garlic aioli that is perfect on rare tuna. The vegan burger was enjoyed by my guest who ordered it. It is comprised of quinoa, barley, and pinto beans, served on a seven-grain bun with vegan mayonnaise and a salad.

Back to the fries. Each burger is served with a huge pile of crispy fries, cooked with sprigs of rosemary, sage, and thyme. There are also truffle fries, another tangle of potato perfection, lightly sprinkled with truffle salt. As a side order (for \$7) they come in ancient aluminum measuring cups, wrapped in parchment.

Alan Hughes, the executive chef, fresh from Miami for the season, has said he is inspired by the local produce and fish available on Long Island. "I've picked up influences all over the world, but as time goes by, my food gets simpler and simpler. I like textures and maximizing flavors." His philosophy suits Banzai Burger's menu perfectly. Simple, fresh, and delicious. The sushi chef, Isao Yoshimura, spends his day off fishing for all things piscine to put on the menu. One night we had the freshly caught fluke sashimi special. It was a lovely presentation of thin slices of fish, lightly dressed with a tart soy citrus drizzle. Perfect. In addition, all of the sushi and sashimi items are served at room temperature, as they should be. They are not served ice cold, dulling the delicate flavors.

On other visits, we have tried the eel dragon roll, the yellowtail avocado roll, and spicy tuna roll, and all have been delicious, especially the eel dragon roll, artfully arranged with paper thin slices of ripe avocado adorning the top.

On all of our visits, the service had been charming and friendly. The waitresses, all Irish lasses, are dressed in pretty blue and gold silk Cynthia Rowley dresses. The owner, Alex Duff, is always on the premises, greeting guests and stepping in to help when needed.

Prices are \$9 to \$19 for appetizers and salads, \$11 to \$25 for entrees, \$7 and \$8 for sides, \$8 to \$20 for sushi and sashimi items, and \$7 for desserts. There is a good variety of sakes and a simple selection of wines, heavy on locals like Wolffer and Channing Daughters.

For desserts we tried the peach and blueberry cobbler, chocolate bourbon ganache tarte, strawberry rhubarb tarte, and the lime cheesecake. All were good, with the peach and blueberry cobbler and chocolate bourbon ganache tarte being the best. The dough used for the cobbler and tarts is excellent, not flaky like pie dough, more like a French sablé cookie crust. The strawberry rhubarb tarte tasted like it was filled with strawberry jam rather than fresh fruit. The lime cheesecake filling was rich like cheesecake, but also lighter like a Key lime pie.

As I said before, Banzai Burger can be anything you want it to be. An affordable place to take the family for burgers or a fun apres-beach place for the freshest sushi on the East End. For me, it is simply a hangout where I know I can get a nice, cold glass of local rosé, chat with the funny bartender, (another Alex), and indulge in some truffled fries while awaiting Isao's catch of the day.

<http://www.easthamptonstar.com/Lead-Food/2011817/East-End-Eats-Banzai-Burger>