

BANZAI BURGER

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HAMPTONS

OPEN KITCHEN TASTEMAKERS

Banzai High

Beachside dining gets a gourmet overhaul at this new Napeague destination.

BY LAURA DONNELLY

It is a brave and bold move to take over an empty shell of a restaurant on an empty stretch of highway leading east to Montauk, but restaurateur Alex Duff and public relations

whiz Steve Kasuba clearly knew what they were doing. Opened at the height of the Hamptons' summer frenzy—July Fourth weekend, to be precise—Banzai Burger, with its menu of sushi and sliders, has taken off.

Duff, who has a lifetime of experience working in and owning restaurants in New York City, Miami and the Hamptons, was ready to open a more casual, beachy restaurant and bar. "I have always liked the Napeague Stretch—there is something magical about it, unlike any other areas of the South Fork," he says. "I wanted to do something different from the other seafood shacks along the stretch and in Montauk, so the burger concept came out of that."

At first the menus appear simple, but there is a great deal of sophistication in the dishes' execution. One burger is topped with foie gras and local Mecox Bay Dairy Sigit cheese and served with truffle fries. The mussels in



Burger with foie gras and truffle fries

flavors." Flavors, indeed: The mako shark "burger" served with tomato confit, tapenade and herbed fries is outstanding.

The separate sushi menu is the domain of chef Isao Yoshimura, fresh from East, a hot spot in New York City. He fishes in Montauk and transforms his catches into beautiful, delicate sushi and sashimi dishes like the Banzai wasabi ceviche and eel dragon roll.

Inside the décor is casual and chic. Glossy white walls with touches of royal blue, Adirondack chairs, a Ping-Pong table and an outdoor patio that offers a view of Napeague Harbor all add to the allure. Waitresses clad in silky blue and gold Cynthia Rowley frocks serve everything from the Hana Fuga sparkling sakes to go with the spicy tuna carpaccio to casual dishes like a burger and a Pabst Blue Ribbon. Such variety begs for repeat visits. 2095 Montauk Hwy., Amagasset, 267-3175; banzaiburger.com



Pom martini and spicy margarita



Sushi chef Isao Yoshimura

shallot and white-wine broth show finesse. Even the desserts, such as peach and blueberry cobbler and chocolate bourbon ganache, are made in house.

At Banzai Burger, two chefs oversee two menus. Argentine chef Alan Hughes, who has honed his craft at numerous restaurants in Miami over the past 20 years, is known for hosting some wild guerrilla dinners. How does a white party in a tire shop sound? An evening on the railroad tracks? "I like challenges," says Hughes. "I've picked up influences all over the world, but as time goes by, I get simpler and simpler. I like textures and maximizing



The casual dining room's décor features glossy white walls and pops of royal blue.

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