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Review: San Jose's EMC Seafood & Raw Bar is near-perfect

By **JESSICA YADEGARAN** | jyadegaran@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

PUBLISHED: January 9, 2018 at 7:00 am | UPDATED: January 9, 2018 at 11:28 am

I didn't want to like EMC Seafood & Raw Bar. It's a massive new restaurant on Santana Row — a Los Angeles chain's first NorCal location — and I found the long menu, endless crowds and \$65 lobster garlic noodles a bit much.

Then I actually dined there and realized how completely fantastic it is.

EMC takes its oceanic title seriously. The seafood is top-notch and the menu leaves nothing to be desired in that area. Sushi is as dynamic and delicious as the carpaccio; grilled fish is perfectly prepared; and all of the Asian influences are executed with authority and precision.

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Service, too, is swift and exceptional, especially for a 3,000-square-foot, heavily trafficked chain restaurant that's been open only three months. My only complaint was the delayed delivery of a cocktail, but who really cares when you're eating food this good?

Start with Hamachi Onion (\$15) carpaccio, impossibly tender tiles of yellowtail drizzled with olive oil, scallions and just enough serrano chile to wake up your palate. From there, dive into the Santana Roll (\$21), a roll of crab meat and avocado topped with pillow-y baked lobster, langostino, chives and spicy mayo. If crunch is what you crave, the Spicy Tuna Crispy Rice (\$15) is pretty fun.

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The most addictive dish — the one everyone gets and comes back for — is the Uni Pasta (\$26): handmade spaghetti-style noodles swimming in an uni cream sauce with tiny fish roe and dried seaweed flakes on top. We used two forks to mix everything together, including the two slivers of uni laying on top, and ate it slowly, marveling at the balance between ocean and umami.

But it was a Charred Whole Branzino (\$36) that set our gush-o-meter reeling. The branzino was perfectly crispy on the outside, hot and fall-off-the-bone moist on the inside, and lacked even a drop of fish goo. Three thoughtful accompaniments — melted, still-warm butter; rice vinegar flecked with herbs and garlic; and a delicately crunchy medley of match-sticked apples and shallots — elevated and expanded the dish's possibilities.

There are a lot of other dishes to try at EMC Seafood & Raw Bar: Freshly shucked oysters, chowder, fish tacos, crab sliders. I'm planning to try them all because one thing's for sure: We are super lucky to have this solid, near-perfect restaurant in our midst.

EMC Seafood and Raw Bar

3.5 stars

Where: 378 Santana Row, Suite 1100, San Jose

Contact: 408-296-6048; www.emcseafood.com

Hours: Open 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; until midnight Friday-Saturday

Cuisine: Seafood with Asian flair

Prices: \$11-\$69

Vegetarian: A few options, including Garlic Noodles (\$11) and Crispy Brussels Sprouts (\$7)

Beverages: Wine, beer, sake and craft cocktails

Reservations: Not accepted

Noise level: Loud

Parking: Along street and in garages

Kids: Children will enjoy the Grilled Fish Tacos (\$9) and Zucchini Fries with yogurt ranch dressing (\$7)

Pluses: EMC Seafood & Raw Bar serves up excellent Asian-inspired seafood dishes and top-notch service in a chic and trendy environment.

Minuses: The wait time for dinner even on weeknights can be up to 45 minutes.

Date opened: October

Policy: Restaurant reviews are conducted anonymously. The Bay Area News Group pays for all meals.

Ratings: Restaurants are rated on a scale of one to four, with four representing a truly extraordinary experience for that type of restaurant.



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