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ACTRESS URGES AID FOR IMMIGRANTS NEEDING LEGAL HELP

Alyssa Milano announces SAFE Families Fund

BY KRISTINA DAVIS

Identifying only as Wendy B., the teenage girl described escaping a childhood of sexual and physical abuse at the hands of caretakers in her homeland of El Salvador, only to enter a complicated legal system in

the U.S. that she could not comprehend.

At first, she was like most in the U.S. immigration system: She could not afford legal representation, so she had none.

"I remember how scared I was when I first arrived in the United States. I remember not understanding anything," the girl said. "I remember being given documents and papers in English. People asked me to

SEE AID • A6

MIGRANT FAMILY ARRESTS INCREASED 38% IN AUGUST

Administration officials say situation at U.S.-Mexico border is 'crisis'

BY NICK MIROFF

WASHINGTON

The number of migrant family members arrested for illegally entering the United States shot up 38 percent in August, according to statistics released Wednesday, a surge homeland security officials characterized as a "crisis."

Border Patrol agents apprehended nearly 13,000

members of "family units" last month, the latest data shows, the highest August total ever recorded. The increase followed President Donald Trump's decision to back off the provision of his "zero tolerance" crackdown that separated children from parents in an attempt to deter illegal migration.

Migration numbers typically rebound in August after a summer lull. Overall,

DETENTION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN ON THE RISE

■ A5 • The number of children being detained by the government reaches 12,800.

the number of foreigners apprehended or deemed "inadmissible" at border crossings rose to 46,560 in August, up from 40,011 in July.

In the San Diego sector — which stretches the

length of California's southern border — 2,514 adult unauthorized immigrants were apprehended in August, as well as 704 parents and children who crossed as part of a family unit, and 291 unaccompanied minors.

Like other regions along the border, August's uptick in illegal crossings in California can be attributed to a rise in families coming to

SEE BORDER • A7



FDA MOVES TO CRACK DOWN ON MAKERS OF E-CIGS

Agency chief seeks to stem 'epidemic' of youth addiction

BY MELISSA HEALY

Responding to an "epidemic of nicotine addiction" among young Americans, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday announced a comprehensive crackdown on e-cigarette manufacturers, directing the



HIDDEN FISH PHOTOS

John "Chef Kappa" Hong, 31, has opened the omakase-only Hidden Fish sushi restaurant, which has just 13 bar seats.

DINING

NEW SUSHI BAR GOES ALL-IN ON 'OMAKASE'

HIDDEN FISH IN KEARNY MESA EMBRACES ADVENTUROUS CHEF'S-CHOICE TREND

BY PAM KRAGEN

Most San Diego sushi restaurants offer an "omakase" option, a phrase meaning the diner entrusts the chef to choose his or her best dishes to send to the table.

Some spots offer the service daily; some are by reservation only; and some have chefs so respected that most customers prefer the omakase option. These meals can cost as much as \$300 and stretch

HIDDEN FISH

Address: 4764 Convoy St., Suite A, Kearny Mesa

Phone: (858) 210-5056

Online: hiddenfishsushi.com

over three hours.

Now comes Hidden Fish, San Diego's first omakase-only sushi bar, which held its soft opening Tuesday on Convoy Street in Kearny Mesa.

Owner John Hong, who works

under the name "Chef Kappa," said his sleek and industrial/modern 13-seat sushi bar is an idea many years in the making.

The 31-year-old Kearny Mesa resident has been in the sushi trade for 14 years, learning the craft in his native Los Angeles from sushi master Yukio Sakai. Most recently he worked at Sushi Ota in Pacific Beach, and before that spent four years leading the kitchen at Bang Bang in the Gaslamp Quarter.

"This is my dream," Hong of his restaurant, which offers only bar

seating, no tables. "I love the idea of interacting one on one with customers. Seeing people happy makes me feel very satisfied."

Omakase-only restaurants have been a hot dining trend in Washington, D.C., and New York City, where Hong said he was inspired by a visit last winter to Sushi by Bou.

These eateries offer what's known as speed omakase, serving multiple courses chosen by the chef, faster and at a considerably lower price than high-end omakase restaurants.

Hidden Fish offers two dining options: a 12-course, 30-minute meal for \$50 or an 18-course, 90-minute meal for \$90.

As Hong works out the service kinks this week, only the 30-minute option is being offered, with seatings on the hour at 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 p.m. The 18-course service will kick off on Tuesday.

Eight seats are set aside for the 30-minute service, which is staffed by two sushi chefs. Five seats are reserved for the 90-minute option, which Hong will prepare and serve himself.

Diners check in and choose their beverage in the small venue's lounge, where he's serving Shimizu No-Mai sake in Champagne glasses, bottled Kagua blonde Belgian ale and Asahi beer dispensed from a custom pouring machine. Then they take a seat at the bar and service begins.

Hidden Fish is an all-nigiri joint. There are no sushi rolls, no cooked items, no miso soup and no dessert.

Seafood varies by seasonality and catch, but a sample menu on the chalkboard at the door lists Japanese sea bream, yellowtail, salmon, shrimp, local uni, Spanish bluefin tuna, scallop, toro tartare and cured mackerel. There are always surprise "fish of the day" courses as well, since Hong said he never knows what's going to arrive by air shipment from the Tsukiji fish market in Japan.

Meals always end with a handroll, but for big eaters, Hong has added an a la carte menu. The priciest item is the \$19 bluefin toro topped with local uni, sturgeon caviar and black truffle.

Hong said he and his chefs have been in training since June to fine-tune the service, which will be quick and precise, but not rushed. He admits to being nervous about being the first to test the local waters with the unusual concept.

"Some people will eat a California roll for 20 years and never try anything else. But Convoy is moving fast as a hot culinary zone filled with new concepts... and other cultures have embraced the Asian community here," he said.



HIDDEN FISH PHOTOS

From top: tuna belly, uni and truffle; black tiger shrimp and shaved Parmesan; San Diego uni and caviar.

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A FEW OTHER SAN DIEGO SUSHI RESTAURANTS THAT OFFER OMAKASE OPTIONS

Wrench & Rodent Seabastropub, Oceanside

When sushi chef Davin Waite and his wife, Jessica, opened this amusingly named restaurant five years ago, omakase service was only served off-menu to people in the know.

But as Waite's reputation as an ultra-creative, nose-to-tailfin sushi master grew, omakase became customers' most popular choice. Diners come from as far away as L.A. to dine at "the Rodent," which Waite named after the whimsically named pubs in his parents' native England.

"Omakase is something we are known for," he said. "It's a great way for adventurous diners to experience a wide range of our team's creative offerings. There really isn't a set menu. It's more off the cuff, and food is served until the guests surrender," Waite said.

Some recent dishes offered on the omakase menu include seared Baja amberjack with red wine miso reduced over smoldering plum wood and pickled kale; seared opah cheek with whiskey strawberries and black garlic purée; fish rib karaage; and swordfish bone marrow and hirmasa sashimi with tangerine salsa and sweet lemon koji.

Diners at Waite's sushi bar get a guided experience, while diners at tables get a la carte dishes that can be shared family-style.

"Our omakase is the best way for our guests to taste the products and preparations that our chefs are most excited about at the moment, as well as some of the classic servings that we are known for," he said.

Pricing is based on the number of courses the diner consumes, but the average range is \$45 to \$70. There's also a plant-based omakase service. The Waites recommend making a reservation and planning a two-hour visit.

1815 S. Coast Highway, Oceanside. (760) 271-0531. seabastropub.com

Sushi Ota, Pacific Beach

One of San Diego's most beloved sushi restaurants is Sushi Ota on Mission Bay, where many diners pick some form of the chef's choice menu.

Born in Kumamoto, Japan, chef Yukita Ota worked in sushi restaurants in Kobe, Tokyo and



K.C. ALFRED U-T

Seared ono by chef Davin Waite of Wrench & Rodent Seabastropub in Oceanside.

Osaka before visiting San Diego in 1982. During a fateful meal here, he order local uni and found it to be the best sea urchin in the world, so he moved here and opened his restaurant in 1990.

Because of Ota's reputation, which draws diners from all over the country, his omakase service is a popular choice. The deluxe omakase service costs \$120 and lasts about 90 minutes. Diners receive an extended chef's choice of nigiri, sushi, uni, octopus, Wagyu beef and other cooked dishes.

There's also the popular Chef Choice Combo C, where the chef sends out his choice of 12 courses of nigiri, plus miso soup and ice cream, for \$50.

4529 Mission Bay Drive, San Diego. (858) 270-5670. sushiota.com

Sushi Tadokoro, Old Town

Last year, the small strip mall venue was named to Timeout.com's list of the 22 best sushi restaurants in America. It specializes in "edomae-style," or Tokyo-style, sushi. The omakase service is \$85 for 9 to 11 dishes plus ice cream.

2244 San Diego Ave., Old Town. (619) 297-0298. sushitadokoro.com

Nobu, downtown

The global Japanese fine-dining restaurant chain offers multi-course tasting menus designed by founding chef Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa priced at \$100, \$150 and more.

207 Fifth Ave., downtown. (619) 814-4124. noburestaurants.com/sandiego