

# New Convoy sushi bar Hidden Fish goes all-in on omakase



The interior of the newly opened Hidden Fish Sushi Bar, which serves an all-omakase menu, on Convoy Street in Kearny Mesa. (Courtesy photo)

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 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 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.



John "Chef Kappa" Hong, 31, who has worked at Bang Bang and Sushi Ota, has opened the omakase-only Hidden Fish sushi restaurant this week on Convoy Street. (Courtesy photo)

The 31-year-old Kearny Mesa resident has been in the sushi trade for 14 years, learning the craft in his native L.A. 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 this 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."

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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 in a fraction of the time and at a considerably lower price.

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



Local uni and caviar, a sample dish at the new omakase-only sushi bar Hidden Fish in Kearny Mesa. (Courtesy photo)

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 items like 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. The 30-minute meals include one fish of the day, the 90-minute service offers four or five.

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 at 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 Omakase Sushi Bar, 4764 Convoy St., Suite A, Kearny Mesa. (858) 210-5056. [hiddenfishsushi.com](http://hiddenfishsushi.com)*



Hidden Fish, an omakase sushi bar, is somewhat hidden behind a fast-food restaurant in a Kearny Mesa strip mall. (Courtesy photo)