

Famed cuisine

享譽佳饌

Executive chef and owner of Nobu, Nobuyuki Matsuhisa, began his hugely successful culinary empire from humble beginnings. Chef Nobu himself, and indeed his eponymous restaurants have earned a reputation for shifting diners' collective attitude towards fusion menus. His motivation to create a union of Japanese fundamentals, matched with South American and Western influences, has seen Nobu's success expand to 21 restaurants in more than 20 cities worldwide. Chef Nobu's success has been so far reaching, that there is now a Nobu restaurant located at Crown in Melbourne, which has been widely recognised for its spectacular design, boasting a richly dark and decadent décor - the perfect juxtaposition against Nobu's fresh and colourfully plated dishes.

You could argue that Nobu has somewhat of a cult status. Celebrities and royalty are always being photographed leaving Nobu restaurants that are scattered all over the globe. In Australia, Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes have been known to dine at Nobu in Melbourne, yet it is chef Nobu's skills and genuine interest in creating innovative and intricate dishes that continue to solidify Nobu's lasting excellence and unwavering reputation. While extremely modest, chef Nobu took time out of his busy schedule to speak with CRYSTAL about his remarkable passion and determination.

You started out working in a sushi restaurant in Tokyo, and then by chance a customer offered you the opportunity to work and live in Lima, Peru. Did you ever think that this invitation would amount to all of the success that your restaurants now have?

When I was in Tokyo, I wasn't expecting to be able to work in foreign countries, but I always had a dream to go to other countries to live.

Nobu's style of dining heralds a shift in epicurean mindset, moving away from traditional cuisine towards a more contemporary health-conscious gastronomy.

WORDS: JACKLYN LLOYD

Nobu是一個美食殿堂。這家餐廳的烹飪風格宣揚一種與眾不同的美食心態，從傳統菜系轉向更加注重健康的佳餚。

Nobu 餐廳的主人兼行政主廚松久信幸 Nobuyuki Matsuhisa 白手起家，建立了極其成功的美食王國。名廚 Nobu 本人和他的同名餐廳改變了食客的群體態度，使他們接受了融合菜系，並以此著名。他意圖創造以日餐為基礎，融合南美洲及西餐風格的融合菜系，這一努力使得他在世界 20 多個城市中成功拓展出擁有 21 間餐廳的王國。他的成功覆蓋如此大的範圍，現在墨爾本的皇冠酒店也有一間 Nobu 餐廳。這家餐廳以其美妙的設計而著稱，擁有豐潤的暗色奢靡裝飾—與 Nobu 新鮮而色彩豐富的擺盤相映成趣。

可以說，Nobu 幾乎是具有宗主般的地位。在世界各地，名流貴冑美餐之後離開 Nobu 的照片比比皆是。在澳大利亞，湯姆·克魯斯 Tom Cruise 和凱蒂·霍姆斯 Katie Holmes 是墨爾本 Nobu 眾所周知的常客。但是，真正使 Nobu 餐廳的不變盛譽和卓越實力發揚光大的，是名廚 Nobu 的精湛技藝和創新精美菜式的熱忱。名廚 Nobu 為人十分謙遜，但他還是百忙中撥冗與《水晶》暢談他對美食事業的不懈熱誠與決心。

你起初是在東京一家壽司餐廳開始工作的，然後有一次偶然的機會，一位顧客向你提供了一個在秘魯利馬工作和生活的機會。你是否曾想過這一邀請會帶來現在你的餐廳所獲得的這種成功？

我在東京時，並沒有想過今後能在國外工作，但是我一直有種去異國生活的夢想。

你與羅伯特·德尼羅 Robert De Niro 的關係對於你開第一家 Nobu 餐廳有多大的影響？

羅伯特·德尼羅是我的合作夥伴，他信任我的廚藝。我們並不討論食經，但會討論經營事務。我們時常會出去喝上一杯。紐約 Nobu 是我的第一家同名餐廳，如果沒有他的幫助，這家店是開不起來的。

Celebrities and royalty are always being photographed leaving Nobu restaurants that are scattered all over the globe.

How influential was your relationship with Robert De Niro in helping get your first Nobu restaurant off the ground?

Robert De Niro is my partner and he trusts my cooking. We do not discuss food, but we talk about the business. We do go out for a drink sometimes. Nobu New York was my first Nobu restaurant, and I couldn't have opened it without his support.

Nobu was voted the best sushi restaurant in Los Angeles by Bon Appetit magazine and also won a Michelin star in 2007; how do you think Nobu raises the bar and outshines other Japanese restaurants?

I offer good food, good service and the customers leave fulfilled and happy. I was not thinking about receiving any titles, but I feel honoured to have received a Michelin star.

Nobu is known for its signature dishes such as Yellowtail sashimi with jalapeño; which dish do you think truly reflects the essence of your creativity and culinary technique?

It has to be my black cod with miso dish – one of Robert De Niro's favourites; it remains one of Nobu's most popular dishes. This is a sweet and silky fish dish that is simple, elegant and always impressive. [Jade Burtenshaw, restaurant manager at Nobu in Melbourne, adds, "[Nobu's] black cod with miso is a taste sensation that is renowned around the world for its melt in the mouth texture and a mix of sweet and savoury flavours. The dish is served with den miso, which is a sweet miso and a stick of hajikami, a pickled ginger that is known for its palate cleansing characteristics. Many chefs around the world have tried to replicate Nobu's signature dish."]

You are based in Beverly Hills, but what is your favourite Nobu location to visit?

All of my restaurants are my favourite, but I feel most comfortable in my hometown restaurant in Beverly Hills. There are also Nobu restaurants in the United Kingdom, Australia, Europe, the Bahamas, South Africa, and even Hawaii and Russia.

How important is the architecture and design of your restaurants in creating an overall fine dining experience?

It is very important that an impression is formed when you walk into a restaurant and sit down at a table. You have to feel relaxed in the space.

These days, how involved are you in the day to day operations of your restaurants?

Most of my time spent in my restaurants is spent communicating with my staff, especially chefs, and greeting my customers.

Nobu is an institution; it has appeared in films like Casino and Memoirs of a Geisha, and for Gap and Rado advertising campaigns. What is your opinion on the celebrity status of Nobu and your celebrity clientele?

I'm a chef, and my life is cooking. Personally, I don't feel like a celebrity. I'm very happy as a chef and that people from all over the world enjoy my food. C



Chef Nobu

"Robert De Niro is my partner and he trusts my cooking. I couldn't have opened Nobu New York without his support." Chef Nobu

Nobu 被《食指大動》Bon Appetit 雜誌評為洛杉磯最好的壽司餐廳，而且還在2007年獲得了米芝蓮一星的級別。你認為是什麼使 Nobu 獨樹一幟，超越其它日本餐廳的呢？

我為客人提供美食和妥帖的服務，讓他們飽餐一頓，愉快地離開。我並不是為了獲得任何稱號才這樣做的。但是能夠獲得米芝蓮一星，我感到很榮幸。

Nobu 以像墨西哥哈拉皮諾辣椒配南非大鱈刺身這類招牌菜而著名。你認為哪道菜最能反映出你的創造力與烹調技藝的精髓呢？

我覺得這一定首推我們的味噌銀鱈魚——這是羅伯特·德尼羅最喜歡的菜之一——也一直位列Nobu最受歡迎的美食。這道菜具有甜美絲滑的魚肉味道，簡單、優雅、總是令人驚歎。【墨爾本 Nobu 餐廳的經理婕德·伯頓蕭 Jade Burtenshaw 對 Nobu 的這道菜補充道，『味噌銀鱈魚這道菜是味覺的驚豔體會，以其入口即融的質地和鮮甜得宜的口味享譽世界。這道菜是配以甘味噌的，這是一種甜味的味噌，還有一片脆薑片。薑片具有清潔味蕾的特點。世界各地有很多廚師都想要模仿 Nobu 這道標誌菜肴。』】

你的總部在比華利山，但是你最喜歡去哪一家Nobu巡視？

我喜歡自己的每一家餐廳，但是我在主場餐廳比華利山的Nobu餐廳感到最為愜意。在英國、澳洲、歐洲、巴哈馬群島、南非、甚至夏威夷和俄羅斯都有 Nobu 餐廳。

在你的餐廳中用餐的整體體驗中，你認為建築特色與裝潢設計有多大的重要性？

客人走進一家餐廳，在餐桌前落座的時候，讓他們產生一個最初印象是很重要的。這個空間必須能讓客人感到輕鬆。

目前你在多大程度上參與餐廳的日常運營？

我花在餐廳里的大部份時間，是花在與我的員工溝通上，尤其是和廚師們溝通。另外我也花時間招呼客人。

Nobu可說是一個美食殿堂，在《賭國風雲》Casino 和《藝妓回憶錄》Memoirs of a Geisha 這樣的電影中，以及在 Gap 和雷達表的廣告中都出過鏡。你對 Nobu 的明星地位和你的名流貴賓有什麼看法？

我是一個廚師。烹飪是我的生命。在我個人看來，我並不覺得自己是名人。我身為廚師，能夠看到世界各地的人享用我的菜肴，感到十分開心。水晶