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A Taste of Asia At Grand Central

By [ADRIENNE GAFFNEY](#)

Cherry blossoms bloomed early this year as a taste of Asia came to Grand Central. The terminal's Vanderbilt space was the setting of last week's kickoff of New York's Japan Week.

Designed to highlight the cultural contributions of Japan, the opening gala had a crowd prowling the space in pursuit of the nation's culinary delights. Lanterns and ice sculptures decorated the hall, and restaurants and their chefs displayed offerings running the gamut from cocktails to desserts. Highlights included a specialty drink combining Yamazaki whiskey with pomelo fruit and green tea infusion, created by Gen Yamamoto of TriBeCa's Brushstroke, and a fluke with shiso bavarois dish made by chef Roger Ma of Restaurant Daniel.



[Enlarge Image](#)

Hanna Lee Communications

Mixologist Gen Yamamoto

Chef David Bouley's passion for Japanese cooking inspired him to open Brushstroke last year. For him, the health benefits of Japanese cooking fit into New York diners' desire to find healthier options. Mr. Bouley often cooks for his friend Lou Reed, a diabetic, and described an instance where he created a new dessert for him using kuzu, a root that is hailed as a miracle ingredient in many Japanese dishes. When Mr. Reed reported back that his blood sugar numbers were remarkably good, Mr. Bouley knew it could only have been one thing.



Hanna Lee Communications

Green tea soba sushi rolls

Ambassador Shigeyuki Hiroki's got caught in traffic on his way to Grand Central as a result of President Barack Obama's Manhattan visit. "Potus? Is that running on Broadway?" he quipped, relating to fellow guests his confusion when his cabdriver explained the root of the gridlock. Mr. Hiroki did manage to arrive on time to take part in the Kagamiwari ceremony, in which a large bottle of sake is cracked open in celebration.

After reeling from the effects of last year's earthquake and tsunami, this year's celebration of Japan's relationship with the

U.S. was even more poignant. "This year's programs hold very deep meaning for the people of Japan," he explained. "In such a trying time, the Japanese people knew that we were not alone."

Between March 7 and March 11, restaurants will be participating in Dine Out for Japan, a portion of profits from which will go to relief efforts.

