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**30 Best Meals: Top N.J. places to dine for special occasions**

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**By**[**Teresa Politano | For Inside Jersey**](http://connect.nj.com/staff/njotpolitano/posts.html)

The mystical taste of black cod, fat and sweet. The brine of black seaweed. For $16, one of the state's best dishes. It's worth the menu search to find it. You'll know you're right by the smile your choice elicits. The miso black cod is simply transcendent. Yumi, a small storefront across the street from the imposing seawall in Sea Bright, is warm and inviting -- red walls, gleaming wood, a sushi bar. The restaurant has its own story, how it was rebuilt after Hurricane Sandy, grateful for the support of the neighborhood. It's an uplifting tale, to be sure, but we can't help but think the neighbors were also acting in self-interest. Would that we all had such a restaurant in our town. Yumi has a well-deserved reputation as one of most discerning sushi restaurants in New Jersey, earning high praise, as well, for its artful Asian-fusion presentations. Among the choices are spicy coconut seafood soup and signature rolls, such as the Sandy Hook, made with spicy tuna and lobster salad, in white seaweed with a wasabi-pepper sauce. Chef Shuenn Yang, humble and disciplined, has his stories, too -- those annual trips to a variety of locations in Asia for inspiration (from fine dining to street food, from Tokyo to Thailand), how the broth for the pork belly ramen is a process that takes several days, his quest for the perfect noodle. We'd advise that you skip the Americanized dishes (tuna pizza) and choose the more ambitious (a tartare trio, featuring tuna, yellowtail, salmon). Yang's steamed buns and ramen soup may also be the best in the state. Certainly, you'll have zero interest in sampling others.

**Yumi** | 1120 Ocean Ave., Sea Bright; (732) 212-0881; [yumirestaurant.com](http://www.yumirestaurant.com/)