

FEATURE



ROASTED FRENCH SQUAB, SHIITAKE WITH PIQUILLOS AT ST GEORGE. PHOTO: NORA TAM

seaweed broth, black beer braised artichoke and mini-fried potato dish, and the soy in the grilled red tuna, braised bell pepper and tomato, caramelised pineapple, soy vinaigrette dish, add a salty, umami note without making the dish taste Japanese.

“I never use Japanese presentation or techniques and I also avoid clichés, such as wasabi, to avoid confusion,” Kaji says.

When it is a more distinct element, such as eel in the dish cucumber gazpacho and summer vegetables, eel kabayaki and red tuna tartare, it is done for complementary reasons. “Eel and tuna work together; it is still a Spanish dish with Spanish cooking techniques but with my essence,” the chef says.

Kaji is going beyond Japan in the new menu with borrowed ingredients coming from around the world, such as Tunisian harissa.

“The taste balance is important. Lots of tasting takes place when I am developing dishes, so if the dish does not taste European, it is adjusted by adding quintessential ingredients of the cuisine, for example butter,” Kaji says.

While all three chefs are adamant that the cuisines they serve are not fusion, Friendly Cheung Sze-fat, owner and executive chef of



POACHED FOIE GRAS WITH SOYA GLAZED AND FOIE GRAS SAUCE AT FUSION 5TH FLOOR. PHOTO: EDWARD WONG

Fusion 5th Floor and Fusion Gourmet embraces it. He says: “I am proud to call my cuisine fusion.”

Cheung’s fusion cuisine happened naturally as a result of his past experience cooking Asian and Western dishes. His immersive travels (spending up to three months at a time in places such as Italy), and as his own boss, developed the drive to only use premium seasonal ingredients from around the world.

“I don’t want to lock myself into one cuisine type as boundaries block the mind to inspiration,” Cheung says.

Cuisine combinations are present in all his dishes, including poached foie gras with soy glaze and foie gras sauce, slow-cooked organic lamb rack with vegetables in a Vietnamese broth, and stir-fried oyster with ginger and green onion risotto.

“My cuisine is a crossover of cooking techniques and understanding the intricacies and characteristics of many cuisines,” he says. Stolen, borrowed, fusion, crossover, regardless of the semantics; ultimately the success of the dish comes down to whether it tastes of the cuisine the chef intended.

