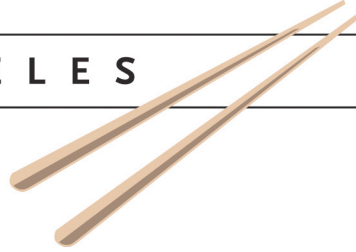


SUSHI MASTERS

LOS ANGELES

2008



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 8, 2008

CONTACT:

California Rice Commission

- Jim Morris, Communication Manager
916/387-2264; jmorris@calrice.org
- Samantha Rader
323/821-5544; srader@calrice.org

Japanese American Cultural and
Community Center

- Haruko Tanaka, Marketing Director
213/628-2725, ext 121; htanaka@jaccc.org

LOS ANGELES HAS A GREAT CULINARY SECRET

Trendsetting city's distinction as the birthplace of sushi will be celebrated on April 20

LOS ANGELES, CA – With all of the media working in Los Angeles, you might think that there are no great, untold stories left in the City of Angels.

There's at least one colorful story filled with history, perseverance and success waiting to be delivered – how sushi came and flourished in America.

In the late 1950's, American sushi was born in the face of great adversity in Little Tokyo, in the heart of Los Angeles. At that time, virtually all of the Japanese restaurants in the region were forced to close, to make way for the Los Angeles Police Department Headquarters. The lone surviving restaurant, Kawafuku's, was where owner Nakajima Tokijiro began the concept of combining raw fish with rice and seaweed, made to order, at the nation's first sushi bar.

The nation's second sushi bar, Eigiku, soon followed and continues under ownership of the Morishita family.

Tokyo Kaikan restaurant in Little Tokyo is also where the mega-popular California roll began.

These early mavericks blazed the trail for sushi to vault into the mainstream, with 10,000 Japanese restaurants operating in the U.S. today.

A handful of sushi pioneers will be honored on April 20, during the SushiMasters Los Angeles Regional Competition. This cultural celebration and culinary competition pits five of the area's top chefs, vying for honors as SushiMaster of the region and the right to compete in the State SushiMasters Finals in Sacramento later this year. The SushiMasters Regionals will be held from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Aratani/Japan America Theatre, 244 South San Pedro Street, in Los Angeles.

Tickets are on sale and are \$65 general admission and \$75 reserved seating. For event information, go to www.sushimasters.com.

A portion of the ticket sales will aid cultural programs at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), the largest Asian American cultural center in the nation and the preeminent presenter of Japanese and Japanese American arts and culture.

The California Rice Commission (CRC) established SushiMasters in 2005, to highlight the growing interest in sushi and showcase the important role of rice in this and other world cuisine. Every piece of sushi made in America comes from California rice.

Reporters seeking more information on SushiMasters, or for interviews with pioneers behind the Los Angeles sushi phenomenon, can contact Jim Morris, CRC Communications Manager at 916/387-2264 or jmorris@calrice.org, Samantha Rader at 323/821-5544 or srader@calrice.org or Haruko Tanaka of the JACCC 213/628-2725, ext. 121, or htanaka@jaccc.org.

###