



The House with a Heart

If home is where the heart is, then The Sayan House is where travellers come to feel right at home.

by Meliana Salim

The story behind The Sayan House is a romantic Bali classic: a young, passionate couple arrived in paradise, visited Sayan just outside the lively centre of Ubud, the island's cultural heartland, and fell in love with it. They built their dream house right where The Sayan House stands today and spent their evenings hosting friends, neighbours and wanderers, sharing their penchant for adventures, cultures and

cuisines. The globetrotting couple moved on and their beautiful love nest has been converted to a newly opened fine dining restaurant with character and charisma.

Upon arrival at The Sayan House, one cannot help but feel a tad voyeuristic, as if we were intruding on a private residence. As we walked past the kitchen and the bar, our apprehension was promptly put to rest by the ubiquitous Japanese humility of

Executive Chef Yuki Tagami and the warm smiles of his Balinese team. It was a pity that we came just after sunset as our reserved seat on the cosy veranda—one of the two main dining areas—would have granted us the perfect vantage point for a breath-taking view of the lush valley, overlooking the sacred Ayung River. We settled for the subtly lit, seemingly floating, circular lotus pond of a neighbouring luxury resort in the distance.



Sautéed Foie Gras Nigiri



Organic Spaghetti with Homemade Pancetta



Grilled Lamb Chops Rolled in Spiced Bread Crumbs



Porcini Royale Soup Consommé

Inspired by the late Geoffrey Manning Bawa, Sri Lanka's great master architect and pioneer of a distinct style known as "tropical modernism", The Sayan House's architect, Takayuki Sasaki, has seamlessly fused colonial chic with modern Japanese aesthetics, integrating structure and landscape with clean lines and flowing spaces. There is an aura of openness here, a touch of understated opulence and old-world romance from a bygone era.

Grateful to be sheltered from the tropical rain, we cosied up in candlelit elegance with a round of the House's specialty cocktails—a yummy Death by Chocolate and an exotic Sayan's Squash—while Chef Yuki sent out a series of delectable appetizers. The chef's trademark porcini royal soup consommé is a culinary show not to be missed, a treat for all senses. Inspired by the Japanese dish chawanmushi (savory egg custard), the soup was artfully prepared in a syphon directly on our table. The green seaweed and clam risotto with fresh wasabi may not be the prettiest dish on the menu, but it certainly showcases the chef's talent in marrying delicate Japanese flavours with the finesse of Italian cuisine.

Sushi lovers must try the delicious sautéed foie gras nigiri—rich, buttery foie gras resting on a pillow of sushi rice with a light brush of soya sauce on top—and the creative crispy king prawn and avocado rolled sushi served with Bali's favourite raw and fiery sambal matah and Mexican chilli cream sauce.

Specializing in refined home-style cooking, Chef Yuki presents a thoughtfully curated menu of contemporary Asian cuisine reflective of his international experiences, adding innovative twists to old-time favourites. Sourcing most of the produce locally, the flavours are unique—a juxtaposition of the subtle and delicate with the fresh, fiery spices of the region. Mains include The Sayan House signature grilled New Zealand lamb chops rolled in breadcrumbs seasoned with Balinese and Caribbean spices, organic spaghetti with homemade pancetta and local sweet corn and a decadent Australian Wagyu sirloin steak with freshly grated wasabi and aged soya sauce.

If you still have room for dessert, The Sayan House offers a selection of sweet comforts such as the classic apple pie and pecan

tartlet, both served with homemade gelato, chocolate banana fritters (a much-loved national snack), lemongrass panna cotta and chocolate semi-freddo with coconut milk and almond essence.

A post-dinner stroll will do everyone good at this point. Explore The Sayan House's stunning premises, check out the action at the teppanyaki grill table, or make yourself at home in the living room on the second-floor mezzanine with a glass of whiskey.

At The Sayan House, every bit of the magic of its original owners lives on, reminding visitors to celebrate their senses, allowing their zeal for life to lead them and to fully embrace the special pull of home. ☺

(www.thesayanhouse.com)

