

## Neil Perry



(Clockwise from left)  
Spicy pork ramen at  
Ryo's Noodles; mixed  
sushi at Azuma; chef  
Kimitaka Azuma



## A taste of Tokyo

When he has a yen for yakitori, sukiyaki or ramen, Japanophile Neil Perry hits up these Sydney eating houses.

I LOVE Japanese food and often dream of Tokyo. The food there is so good that it's almost impossible to have a bad meal; each restaurant usually specialises in a certain style of dish, which means it's so disciplined.

Fortunately, we have some great Japanese restaurants in Australia. In my home town of Sydney, these are the ones that I like to visit to feel like I'm stepping out in Tokyo.

Chaco Bar ([chacobar.com.au](http://chacobar.com.au)) is a classic yakitori restaurant in Darlinghurst that feels like a little wooden Japanese den. The water is served in carafes containing charcoal to purify it, which is very cool and so Japanese.

You can start with sashimi or other nibbles – don't leave without trying the meatball with slow-cooked egg – but, for me, it's all about the yakitori, which is served Tuesday to Saturday evenings. The sticks are grilled to perfection; smoky, crisp and juicy, they're delivered on the plate with crisp cabbage dressed with black vinegar. I love the chicken thighs, skin, wings, gizzards and hearts and the Wagyu tongue



is a real winner. Be sure to wash it all down with a quality saké. Chef Keita Abe also serves ramen for lunch from Wednesday to Saturday and on Monday nights.

Azuma ([azuma.com.au](http://azuma.com.au)) is a slick restaurant in Chifley Plaza in the city. It's long been a haunt of chef Tetsuya Wakuda, who took me there many years ago and introduced me to chef Kimitaka Azuma.

It's one of my favourite restaurants and my wife, Sam, and I regularly eat there. The sashimi and sushi are standouts but we always order the Wagyu sukiyaki for two. The boiling broth is served at the table and I like cooking the ingredients myself, dipping the thin slices of beef into the broth then into beaten egg. It's so delicious, it's crazy.

We boil enoki and shiitake mushrooms, cabbage, spring onions and udon noodles, too, all eaten with rice. I never order anything else – except several carafes of chilled Masuizumi Junmai Ginjo Saké.

My favourite ramen bar is Ryo's Noodles (02 9955 0225) on Falcon Street in Crows Nest. You can't miss it – the shopfront is bright orange and people queue outside, patiently waiting for their ramen fix.

Ryo's serves five sticky-pork broths and five smooth chicken broths. They're all delicious but what differentiates them are the seasonings of miso, soy sauce, salt or a spicy soybean-based ball of heat. Most are served with roast pork and other accompaniments such as egg, bamboo shoots, shallots and nori.

What I love about Ryo's is the noodles: springy, chewy and always cooked perfectly. They're made with alkaline water, which gives them a yellow hue and ensures they don't disintegrate in the piping-hot broth.

If you have some of the delicious broth left over, order a second bowl of noodles to slurp up the rest of the soup. As I do that, I'm reminded of the great food experiences I've had. They're not all in Tokyo. ●

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