





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Chefs Junho 'Luffy' Koh and Jun Kim lead the kitchen; Interiors offer warm lights and silk banners; Try the lobster dumplings; The restaurant has already gained popularity among Canberra locals.*

FIRE AND FLAVOUR

Built around FLAMES, ferments and a spirit of *SHARING*, Azuma Den is a contemporary Asian restaurant finding its RHYTHM in Canberra's dining scene, writes Christine Aldred.

THERE'S AN EASY CONFIDENCE to Azuma Den – a modern Asian diner in Canberra's inner south where Japanese technique and Korean flavours meet over a hibachi grill. Since opening in August 2025 at East Hotel, this vibrant neighbourhood restaurant has created quite a buzz, drawing crowds lured by bold flavours, ferments and fire-led cooking.

Formerly home to the popular Muse cafe and bookshop, the two-level site has been reworked into a warm dining hangout layered with Asian touches. Silk banners and a canopy of hanging lanterns soften the space, while handsome Korean crockery and whimsical details – such as fish-shaped water bottles – keep things light. Choose a table or cosy booth, take a seat at the bar to watch hibachi flames in action, or head outdoors.

Led by executive chef Junho 'Luffy' Koh and sous chef Jun Kim, the kitchen aims to balance hibachi-led dishes with Korean culinary traditions, a philosophy reflected across the broad, share-friendly menu. Familiar favourites including Korean fried chicken sit alongside build-your-own *ssam* pork belly wraps, wagyu tartare tacos and beef short ribs, all served with contemporary flair.

A tea, strawberry and mint-spiked G&T is an excellent start from an interesting drinks list that tilts Asian, alongside a good wine selection and solid sake section. Dietary needs are thoughtfully handled (they use gluten-free soy) with plenty of vegetarian and vegan options, and chilli icons warn of incoming heat levels.

Firm pork and ginger dumplings – beautifully presented and sprinkled with diced peanuts in a delicate soy sauce – are an early standout, and the lobster, prawn and scallop combo equally tempting. Flamed scallops on shells arrive soft and sweet in a buttery yuzu sauce, punctuated by pops of orange salmon roe. Less successful are the grilled snapper tails, the yuzu sauce overpowered by wasabi, but the charred yet succulent chicken yakitori is cooked to perfection.

Desserts lean into Asian flavours, from mochi-wrapped matcha ice cream to brûlée with ginger notes. I choose the sunrise-hued coconut meringue dessert with miso caramel custard. While others have applauded its balance, I found it overly cloying, the tang of mandarin not quite enough to cut through the sweetness.

A warm welcome and a handwritten note acknowledging an anniversary set a promising tone on the service front, but attention waned as the evening progressed, despite adequate staffing. Given the restaurant's evident mid-week popularity, the service lapse may have been an outlier, and I'll happily return to graze more of the menu. AT

All AT *reviews are conducted anonymously and our writers pay their own way – so we experience exactly what you would.*

Details

AZUMA DEN

East Hotel, 69 Canberra Avenue, Kingston, ACT; *azumaden.com.au*

Verdict: A casual local boasting bold Asian flavours and a great place to share elevated bites with family and friends.
We rated: The inventive, share-friendly menu choices and perfectly cooked yakitori.
We'd change: Sharper service would make Azuma Den shine.
Accessibility: The downstairs section is fully accessible from either the street or hotel lobby. Dietaries are managed effectively.
Notes: The restaurant is open for lunch Wednesday to Saturday and dinner Tuesday to Saturday. A bar seat offers culinary action.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ADAM MCGRATH