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Global Sourcing and International Retail Trade
International Palette Project
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Neta Shari Omakase (Japanese)

- a. How were you addressed when you entered the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated? What did the restaurant look like on the outside? What did you see to reveal its authenticity?**

Neta Shari is a Japanese restaurant located on 86th Street in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. The restaurant requires reservations and does not take walk-ins. There was no wait time but also would not seat one before the time on the reservation. When making reservations you are immediately greeted in Japanese by a native speaker, after responding in English the host speaks English but with a heavy accent. The exterior of the restaurant is sleek and clean with a black *color* awning displaying the name of the restaurant, a red *color* icon between the words, and blackout windows. When one enters the restaurant, one immediately *smells* a clean fresh *odor* and it is very quiet as the restaurant does not play background music. Walking into the restaurant, the host immediately walks over to the customers to greet them and take one's names and number to ensure a reservation was made and verify one's scheduled time.

- b. What are the cultural differences you notice? (must use class notes) Using all five (5) senses of taste, touch, sight, smell, & sound describe some of the cultural differences that you are not accustomed to in comparison to All-American restaurants or restaurant chains. For each sense, use a separate paragraph. For example, one can describe but not limited to the sights in the restaurant décor, odors from unusual foods, and sounds from music. One should use all five senses (5) in this cultural experience.**

Japanese culture can be recognized through all five senses as soon as one walks into Neta Shari. Culture is a big part of how people learn and interact such as symbols, beliefs, ways of seeing the world, and common activities. It is shaped by factors such as; religion, ethnicity, region, gender, and social class (Adomaitis, 2023). Upon entering Neta Shari, one can sense culture through these categories with the five senses. It is an amazing experience to witness Japanese culture without leaving Brooklyn.

This traditional Japanese omakase restaurant is extremely different from the fast-paced All-American restaurant chains that are commonly seen. Major differences are noticeable across all five senses. Neta Shari showcases a minimalist and intimate setting, unlike the bright uniform setting of chain restaurants. The restaurant does not have individual tables but rather has one brown wooden counter where customers are seated, on black and grey bar chairs, where they can watch the sushi chefs prepare each of their dishes. These chefs meticulously prepare each course, delicately cutting each piece of fish to add *texture*, and then the slice of fish is placed on top of

seasoned rice with a tiny piece of homemade wasabi hidden inside. The sushi is served on elegant black and white *colored* Japanese ceramic plates with a glossy *texture* as opposed to mass-produced dishware.

At Neta Shari, one does not *smell* the heavy scents of an All-American chain restaurant such as fried food and grilled meats. The restaurant has a rather fresh scent to it, one can *smell* notes of citrus. One might also *smell* fresh ginger and wasabi because Neta Shari makes their wasabi paste as well as pickled ginger. As one goes through the different courses of omakase, one can *smell* the Japanese vinegar used in the rice. Towards the last course, one also *smells* a bit of a charred *odor* from the searing of fish, wagyu steak, and foie gras.

Neta Shari differs from American chain restaurants because there is no background music, clinking silverware, or loud conversations between customers. This authentic Japanese restaurant instead has a very quiet atmosphere and only has thirteen seats in the entire restaurant. One might *hear* the *sound* of fish being gently sliced, the slight rustle of seaweed, and a whisper between chefs and guests. Guests typically speak amongst themselves in a soft *tone*, showing respect and appreciation for the experience. Even the chefs themselves talk to customers in a quiet voice, setting the mood for the experience.

The *flavors* used at Neta Shari are very different from the bold and heavily seasoned food from American chain restaurants. The restaurant focuses on balancing and bringing out the natural *flavors* of its fish. The fresh fish gives off an umami *taste*. Through the rice, one can *taste* a mild sweetness due to the Japanese vinegar. The bit of homemade wasabi hidden in the rice gives off a sharp heat and refined *taste*. Neta Shari omakase differs from American sushi rolls because their food is not drenched in spicy mayonnaise or eel sauce. Instead, they allow the food's natural *flavors* to be *tasted* and heightened with light garnishes.

At Neta Shari, the *textures* created are delicate and precise, which differs from American restaurants that are heavily based on fried foods and bread-heavy dishes. The sushi rice is kept warm to keep its tender *texture*. Some courses of omakase feature a fish with a silky smooth texture. Occasionally, a course might be slightly seared which adds a crisp and charred layer to the top of the soft fish. The last roll of omakase was a handroll, which is soft chopped fish and tender rice wrapped in a crunchy sheet of nori. Throughout the courses, the chef adds garnishes to each piece which could add a crispy or silky *texture*. The chopsticks provided were light and smooth, rather than the pull-apart chopsticks with a rough feel that most American chains use.

- c. Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? List various food items from the menu. What menu items did you order? Is there more than one language used to describe the foods on the menu?**

The menu at Neta Shari is a simple white laminated menu showcasing its two different omakase course options, “a la carte” options, and the drinks they provide. The first option is their twelve-course omakase that includes one appetizer, nine pieces of nigiri, one handroll, and

dessert for \$75. Their second option is their eighteen-course omakase that includes two appetizers, fourteen pieces of nigiri, one handroll, and dessert for \$125. One unusual item I saw on the menu under “a la carte” was “kohada” or gizzard shad. The ingredients in the food are not described on the menu and the menu is written in both English and Japanese. The twelve-course omakase was chosen. Before preparing the first course, the chef ensured to ask if the guest had any allergies and handed out wet towels to cleanse one's hands. The appetizer course consisted of a one-ounce piece of seabass that was marinated and cooked with miso, they laid upon three slices of cucumber. The next couple of courses consisted of pieces of nigiri which were hirame (seaweed marinated fluke), Chu toro (medium fatty tuna), O toro (fatty tuna), Hokkaido (scallop), Uni (sea urchin), Ikura (marinated salmon roe), Aji (mackerel), Shima aji (striped jack), Sake (salmon). The eleventh course was an o toro handroll. The last course was dessert in which homemade blueberry cheesecake ice cream was served. If returning to Neta Shari, the eighteen-course omakase would be chosen.

d. Is a traditional salad offered? If not, describe what is offered. What types of breads are offered (flat, pita, tortilla chips)? What type of desserts (cheesecake, fortune cookie, coffee)? What are they like? Each should be in a separate paragraph.

A traditional salad is not offered at Neta Shari, as many other restaurants do. Instead, the chef starts by making a light appetizer to open the palette. According to the chef, the appetizers change daily. Some appetizers may include miso-cooked seabass and “chawanmushi” a silky steamed egg custard with rice, shrimp, and sea urchin. Pickled ginger is provided during every course as a palate cleanser to complement the delicate flavors of each course.

Similarly, bread is not a staple in traditional Japanese cuisine, therefore, Neta Shari does not provide bread. The restaurant focuses on rice-based dishes rather than baked goods. One may request nori (seaweed) to accompany the food, but it is strictly upon request. The restaurant stays true to its traditions while providing a crunchy contrast to its fish and sushi, preserving its authenticity.

Neta Shari offers a selection of traditional Japanese desserts rather than the common American sweets such as cheesecake and coffee. One might be served homemade ice cream, matcha pudding, or homemade mochi, a chewy rice cake filled with ice cream. These desserts are light, refreshing, and carefully made to enhance the dining experience. According to the chef, there is one dessert option per day, and is made daily.

e. What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant?

Neta Shari offers a wide range of beverages, both traditional Japanese drinks, alcohol, and classic American sodas like Coca-Cola to complement its omakase experience. The restaurant offers four types of traditional sake, Japanese wine, available in two different size bottles. They also offer three different types of traditional beers from Kyoto such as floral sake

ale, white yuzu ale, and roasted black bean ale. Some traditional Japanese soft drinks available are yuzu original, yuzu red shiso apple, and yuzu peach. Additionally, they allow guests to bring their own bottles, applying a corkage fee of \$30 per bottle.

- f. How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and the economic geography (Must use class lecture notes Lecture 1)? (i.e. spices are abundant in India which is rich in spices & fish (sushi) is popular in Japan & it is part of the G8). Describe approximately where in the world (continent & location) and from country, this culture's food is best known. Be sure to in-text cite in APA and find research that supports this answer.**

The food at Neta Shari reflects the cultural geography of Japan, which is known for its culinary traditions and connection to the sea. Japan is an island nation in East Asia, that is located in the Pacific Ocean, their coastline offers a big supply of seafood, making it a key ingredient in the country's cuisine (*How does geography affect Japanese culture*, 2025). Sushi originated in Japan and has evolved into culinary art that consists of freshness, precision, and seasonality. The use of high-quality seafood, like tuna, salmon, and uni (sea urchin), shows how Japan's geographical location influenced its food culture (Sternquist, 2019). Traditional ingredients used in omakase like wasabi, soy sauce, and nori (seaweed) are sourced from the country's different landscapes, showing its connection between the environment and cuisine.

Japan is a member in the G8, which is a group of major industrialized nations, which plays a role in shaping its food culture and the global popularity of sushi. The high-quality of fish and seafood is supported by Japan's advanced fishing industry and global seafood trade network (Sternquist, 2019). Their premium ingredients led Japan to the development of international markets, influencing the world with their culinary traditions. Neta Shari Omakase uses imported ingredients from Japan including their rice, fish, and special condiments, which reflects the economic connection between Japan and the United States. The pricing of omakase shows the economic factors that influence accessibility and exclusivity.

- g. Describe the dress. (Dress is inclusive of all five senses – smell perfume, hear jewelry, see make-up, etc....) What are the employees, such as hostesses or wait staff wearing? Please use the Eicher-Roach-Higgins (1992) article from SBS 3201 to define dress and answer appropriately.**

Every culture has their own unique way of dressing. *Dress* is a way of communication and how one can establish their identity (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). The way the staff at Neta Shari dress gives an understanding of their presentation. Dress is more than just *clothing* but is all *modifications* and *supplements* to oneself.

The staff are all dressed in "uniform" that aligns with the restaurant's casual dress code. The staff at Neta Shari is all male. The staff wore different variations of black, clean, well-fitted clothes to maintain a professional appearance. The host wore black jeans, a simple black t-shirt *suspended* from his shoulders, and *pre-shaped* black Nike Air Max sneakers. The chef wore

black slacks, a *pre-shaped* black button down top, a black half apron *wrapped* around his waist, a silver wedding band had been *inserted* on his ring finger, and white Reebok sneakers. The staff wore minimal jewelry, mostly just rings, which reduced any noise such as clinking of bracelets, preserving the serene dining experience. The staff members appeared to maintain their personal hygiene, using mild scented products. This is most likely due so strong cologne cannot interfere with guests sensory experience, allowing them to smell the dishes. The staff are dressed to complement the vibe of the restaurant, focusing on professionalism.

- h. Rate your experience as a food critic (as in the LA Times or Houston Chronicle). Ratings should be dependent on taste, service, décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality, and price and should range from A-F (“A” being the best). Explain why you chose this rating. Be thorough and detailed in your explanations. Be sure to write at least 2 paragraphs.**

Neta Shari, located at 1718 86th Street, Brooklyn, New York, presents an outstanding dining experience that deserves an “A” rating. The restaurant offers two omakase selections, an eighteen-course omakase for \$125, and a twelve-course omakase for \$75. Both selections showcase a diverse selection of fresh and meticulously prepared dishes, with the eighteen-course omakase including dry-aged fish and A5 Wagyu beef. One would recognize the quality and value of the omakase. Neta Shari has received a Michelin Star for three years in a row, and was celebrated for its exceptional knife skills and well-portioned pieces, shouting out its Hokkaido (scallop) nigiri (*Neta Shari – Brooklyn - a Michelin Guide Restaurant*).

The restaurant felt extremely intimate and inviting, giving off a relaxing and cozy feel to the restaurant. The staff and employees were extremely attentive and welcoming, and chefs provided explanations of each course. The cleanliness and decor add to the comfortable environment. The authenticity of the food shows a deep respect for traditional Japanese cuisine. The prices are set perfectly considering the quality and wide variety offered. Neta Shari is a must visit for authentic Japanese sushi in Brooklyn.

- i. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multi-cultural experience in a class discussion? This should be at least two (2) paragraphs that are 5-7 paragraphs each.**

From this experience at Neta Shari’s authentic omakase on 86th Street in Brooklyn, New York, one will gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culinary traditions. This restaurant differs from Americanized sushi restaurants because they emphasize on precision, seasonality, and respect for ingredients. The chef’s prepare each course meticulously, making sure the fish is sliced delicately and precisely, showing the artistic part of this experience. Their focus on freshness, high-quality items, and traditional techniques show the Japanese philosophy of balance and simplicity. Their attention to detail and respect for the natural flavors shows the culture in the preparation and presentation.

The experience at Neta Shari shows how immersive dining can be, including etiquette, service, and presentation. The chef's engage with their diners, to explain the origin of each dish, showing its importance. The aesthetic plating and ambiance created a sense of appreciation for the meal. This experience could contribute to a class discussion about how food serves as a cultural bridge, allowing one to experience and respect traditions other than their own. It also allows for discussions about globalization and how traditional foods adapt when introduced in a new place.



Miso Seabass Appetizer



Hokkaido (Scallop) Nigiri



O Toro (Fatty Tuna) Nigiri



O Toro Handroll



Homemade Blueberry Cheesecake Ice Cream

Below is a breakdown of your Feb 12 reservation. The total was \$158 before tips. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Menu Item	Modifiers	Price	Qty	Discount	Net
12 Courses Omakase		\$75.00	1	\$0.00	\$75.00
12 Courses Omakase		\$75.00	1	\$0.00	\$75.00
Yuzu White Peach Sparkling Drink		\$4.00	1	\$0.00	\$4.00
Yuzu White Peach Sparkling Drink		\$4.00	1	\$0.00	\$4.00

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Neta Shari

1718 86th Street

Neta Shari Receipt

References

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<https://guide.michelin.com/us/en/new-york-state/brooklyn/restaurant/neta-shari>

Roach-Higgins, E.M. & Eicher, J.B. (1997). “Dress and Identity.” University of Minnesota.