



Fred Lee's social network

© yffireeb@hotmail.com
twitter.com/FredAboutTown
fredabouttown.tumblr.com

SPRING AWAKENING: Each spring, Vancouver wakes up to an explosion of cherry blossoms. And each spring since 2005, more than 40,000 ornamental cherry trees — many originating as gifts from Japan — inspire the annual Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival. Founded by Linda Poole, through the generosity of benefactor David C. Lam, the festival celebrates the beauty and cultural significance of the pink blossoms. The VCBF society kicked off the month-long celebrations of music, haiku and tree talks and walks with the first-ever Sakura Night, a standup soiree of fine Japanese cuisine at Tojo's restaurant.

Hidekazu Tojo welcomed top chefs Masahito Iwamoto (Zakusaiji), Kazuya Matsuo (Miku), Daryle Nagata (Seventeen89), Nobu Ochi (Zen) and Takayuki Onai (Raw Bar at the Fairmont Pacific) into his Broadway kitchen for the swish reception. Rounding out the team was master mixologist Jay Jones, who wet whistles with a Russian vodka-based cherry blossom martini, and World Gelato Master of the Year James Coleridge of Bella Gelateria, who provided the sweet finish.

As the 150 pretty-in-pink guests filed into Tojo's palace for the Sunday night soiree, Sakura started with a bang, literally, courtesy of drum group Chibi Taiko's Shinobu Henma, who chattered the \$150-a-ticket affair with a traditional song that resonated around the block and had a few attendees adjusting their hearing aids. Among the supporters spotted: Festival chair Peter Krauk, Vancouver city councillor Elizabeth Ball and Glacier Media publisher Dee Dhallal. Reportedly, \$20,000 was netted to support the annual spring festival. For more bloom'n' details, see V1.ca.



Makin' noise

Chibi Taiko's Shinobu Homma got the party started with a traditional drum song.



More than 40,000 cherry blossom trees line the streets of Vancouver.



Tracy Hon's 18-month-old daughter Joelle Lee didn't seem to be too fussed with all the party noise at the Sakura Night.



Chefs Nobu Ochi (Zen) and Daryle Nagata (Seventeen89) were among Vancouver's top Japanese chefs who joined forces to support the cherry blossom festival.



Guests were greeted with Jay Jones' Sakura martini, a vodka-based cocktail with Tojo sake, fresh grapefruit, Giffard Mirabelle plum syrup and Lauren Mote's cherry bitters.



Cherry Blossom Festival founder Linda Poole and chair Peter Krauk, right, fronted the first-ever Sakura Night with chef Hidekazu Tojo, centre, to support the annual spring festival.

PHOTOS BY [unreadable]