

FOOD & BEER

Words by Claire Henderson / Pics by Emily Day

AJITOYA

82 CHARLES STREET, SEDDON

There is never a greater calling for a teleportation machine and/or a good, strong beer after running headfirst into an unexpected awkward encounter. I don't know about you, but when I'm put on the spot, I go a wee bit weird and doolally things start spurting out of my mouth (I'm pretty much the same after a few too many glasses of bubbles too ... for some, the lovely liquid helps relieve social anxiety, but I turn into David Brent's hawering twin sister).

So after travelling out West and bumping into someone from the deep, dark past, me and my beamer headed straight for Ajitoya in Seddon to combine the two – ie let some Japanese beer take my mind to another place. Luckily, I also had some bonnie company on the way, in the form of Emily Day aka Mrs Froth.

Ajitoya, which translates as “secret shop”, is typically Japanese in that it is totty, compact and very, very cute. The owners of the cafe (which is also a grocery store and takeaway), love beer, especially Japanese beer, and pay homage to the nation's fast-growing microbrew culture with a substantial array of styles and flavours from different parts of the country – at least three on tap, and 16 by the bottle. The food menu is darn impressive too, with plenty of tasty wee bits and pieces to share or solid dishes to choose from, as well as a make-your-own bento box option.

Nothing quite gets the tastebuds ready for a scoosh of beer than a salty snack so, as we basked in the sunshine at our street-side table, we kicked off with edamame beans. I heard Victoria Beckham lives on these yummy little pods of joy but I'll bet everything I own in the world she doesn't wash them down with a craft beer.



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First up for me was Baird Beer's Rising Sun Pale Ale from Shizouka. A dark amber colour, it came out with a big, fluffy, white head. Smooth and crisp on the palette, it's light and citrusy but not too light or too fruity. In fact, for this Scottish beer-swilling Goldilocks, it was just right.

Meanwhile, Em had a Coedo Ruri Pilsner from Kawagoe on tap, and her simple yet effective verdict was: “Oh yummy, I love Japanese beer and this is super tasty.” Next came some big, juicy prawn gyozas, sitting in a puddle of vinegary soy sauce. Bursting with flavour, they were the perfect mix of crispyness and squishyness.

You can tell exactly how good food is by the amount of blethering being done as you eat, silence being the highest mark of deliciousness. And our table was very quiet as we munched through our mains. I went straight for the deep-fried option (naturally) and had Ten Don – a big bowl of crispy tempura prawn, white fish and veggies, nestled on top of sticky white rice and thickened soy sauce. Thankfully the complete opposite on the grease-o-meter to a battered pizza, the tempura was fresh, light and very more-ish. Em had Cool Foxy Soba – fried tofu strips with wakame (seaweed), tempura puffs and cold noodles. My lovely ladyfriend found it funny eating cold noodles but on a hot and sweaty 30C day it's the perfect cooling remedy. The slightly sweet tofu went so nicely with the vinegar sauce, seaweed and spring onion, she hailed it “super flavoursome!”

As the sun went down on Charles St, we finished off with another round. I picked mine simply for the name – a Kirin Nodogoshi Nama from Tokyo (try saying that mouthful

Scottish-English glossary:

Doolally – temporarily deranged

Glaikit – stupid

Haver – talk nonsense

Beamer – red face

Bonnie – gorgeous

Totty – tiny

Scoosh – splash

Blethering – chatting non-stop

Bevvies – drinks

Guid things come in sma bulk – Good things come in small packages

after a few bevvies), which is also gluten-free. Thin, light and fizzy, I kinda felt like I was supping a soft drink or a very weak shandy. Em had a Kyara Malt from Kawago, a very agreeable beer which is a little bit hoppy with an interesting toffee-esque character.

Verdict: Guid things come in sma bulk



Claire Henderson is a perpetually hungry Scot who lives life with her glass at least half full at all times.

