

Iron Chef Morimoto opening Napa spot next week

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Craig Lee / The Chronicle
Chef Masaharu Morimoto will blend local ingredients with Japanese techniques at Morimoto Napa.

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The Iron Chef is ready for his Napa cuisine to reign supreme.

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It's no secret that globally renowned chef **Masaharu Morimoto** has been building an eponymous restaurant in the Napa Riverfront development - lately he's been spotted everywhere around town, from golf courses to pizza kitchens - but, surprise: **Morimoto Napa** (610 Main St.) is opening at the end of next week.

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The restaurant features about 70 seats scattered inside between a dining room and a bar/lounge, plus 40 or so more on a patio overlooking the river. The restaurant is designed in a way that allows for extended meals like omakase at the sushi bar or, on the other end of the spectrum, quick bar bites in the lounge area.

Morimoto Napa will be the first West Coast restaurant for Morimoto. Like his other restaurants - Philadelphia, New York and Tokyo, among others - it will blend local ingredients with Japanese techniques and the chef's distinct flair. The fish will be shipped from Japan.

Although the menu will feature some signatures from elsewhere in the Morimoto empire - tuna pizza, for example - there will be plenty of dishes exclusive to the Napa outpost, including sea urchin carbonara

(udon, smoked bacon, crispy shallots, sea urchin) and fig tempura (whole fried Black Mission figs, sliced and served with foie gras peanut butter sauce and pomegranate reduction). Also on the menu: a 12-inch-long bone marrow number.

In tune with Wine Country, the menu is designed to pair with California wines, especially the cult Cabs. Morimoto has also applied for a brewery license, so expect to see some house-brewed beers down the line.

Also due later this year: Morimoto's two high-profile Riverfront neighbors - **Tyler Florence's Rotisserie and Wine** and **Lark Creek Restaurant Group's Fish Story**.

Note: Morimoto is holding a sneak peek on Sunday evening to benefit the **Napa Valley Opera House** (for tickets, go to nvoh.org). Or you can stalk him on the golf course.