



From Hawaii to Milan to Ra'anana

• By DEBBIE LAMPERT
eLuna.com

Poke bowls, the trendy fast food that has taken the world by storm, is finally catching on in Israel.

Poke bowls have to be the most Israeli non-Israeli food ever. When I figured out what they were, I wondered what took so long for them to gain popularity in Israel.

We love our food fast. We like it to go, and we like it made the way we want it. Poke bowls are all of this in one, and they are healthy to boot. This is so appropriate for the Israeli market that I suspect that once the herd effect kicks in, poke bowls will be as ubiquitous in Israel as they are in the US.

A poke is a meal in a bowl. It contains a carb, a protein and veggies flavored with sauces. This street food, originating in Hawaii, contained just these four ingredients. But as poke bowls hit the mainland, they were influenced by Japanese cuisine, and sushi ingredients like sticky rice, avocado and wasabi found their way into the bowls. These days poke bowls are more like deconstructed sushi than their original Polynesian ancestor, but they are much more versatile and more fun than sushi.

RA'ANANA BOASTS Poke Bar branches in two locations: on Ahuza off Kazan Street, and on the other side of town on Hanesi'im Street, off Weizmann.

Step right up to the counter at either location and choose the size

of your bowl (NIS 49 or NIS 59). Then configure the contents of the bowl according to your preferences. Will it be rice or noodles, fish or tofu or both. Choose all the vegetables that you like, followed by crunchies and sauces.

The more times we order poke bowls, the better we get at choosing just the combinations that work best for each of us.

The star of the poke bowl is the sushi-grade fish. Raw, cured or cooked, it must be very fresh to "make" the bowl.

The fish at the Poke Bar is sourced from the La Crie Israel fish store, also in Ra'anana. This fish store is the Funaro family enterprise. Son David runs the fish store. Sister Nadine handles customer support. Mom does the online orders, and son Asher is Mr. Poke Bar.

The Funaro family came on aliyah from Milan, bringing with them their expertise and their connections with suppliers around the world. The fish is now imported to Ra'anana every day from places as far as Morocco, Norway, parts of Africa and Asia, and is sold throughout Israel. They take orders online or at the shop.

It gets better.

Always looking for new ideas, Asher and his team have inaugurated a full fish restaurant menu at the Ahuza Poke Bar. In addition to the poke bowls, you can now sit down to a top-notch fish meal served all day. There is a full menu of starters, main dishes and sinful desserts, presided over by a professional chef. And then there are the cocktails. Wow.

Poke Bar Fish is the first and only fish restaurant in Ra'anana! At last, the gap has been filled.

Starters include several tartare dishes that work because the fish is so fresh and thinly sliced.

For our starter we shared the cooked Salmon Pasticcio filled with fish and rice. There were just enough fish balls for each of us to fall in love with this tasty dish.

The crowd-pleasing fish-and-chips are prepared in tempura sauce and served hot and crispy (NIS 65).

The Thai salad flavored with sweet teriyaki sauce was my favorite (NIS 59).

My companion is not happy till he has burned his taste buds on a super spicy dish. His sea bream with rice and vegetable dish, flavored with a healthy dose of curry, hit that spot. He described it as nicely spiced. The menu also offers salmon fillet and sea bass (NIS 102 and NIS 119).

Feeling especially decadent, we indulged in a cocktail with our lunch à la *Mad Men*. The selection of cocktails is limited but nice. Bottled cocktails are sold at the Hanesi'im branch, and freshly made cocktails are served at the Ahuza branch. We shared a fruity cocktail laced with rum. Next time I want my own.

The restaurant has two desserts for those who can eat more after these mains. The Ferrero Rocher dessert was tempting, but please, no more.

The restaurant has mostly outdoor seating, with some tables inside. The greenery separating the outdoor seating creates a fine atmosphere.

The service is excellent, with Hebrew- and English-speaking staff.

Poke Bar

Poke & Cocktail

71 Ahuza Street at Kazan

Ra'anana

Tel: (09) 866-8888

47 Hanesi'im Street

Tel: (09) 861-6102

Kashrut: Ra'anana Rabbinat, parve

Open: Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, after Shabbat till 11 p.m. Closed Shabbat.

The writer was not a guest of the restaurant.

The writer is the founder and CEO of eLuna.com, the premier English-language website for kosher restaurants in Israel.