

## FOOD NOTES »

## Vancouver chefs to create beautiful cherry blossom-inspired dishes for Sakura Night Gala 2018

by [Tammy Kwan](#) on March 29th, 2018 at 5:33 PM



The Sakura Night Gala will feature a variety of cherry blossom-inspired foods, including Dosanko's sakura onigiri.

LEILA KWOK

Cherry blossoms are slowly starting to appear around the city—we can finally admire the blooming trees covered with pale pink petals that form a canopies over sidewalks and front yards,

which garner local and international attention.

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The [Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival](#) (VCBF) will soon be in full swing, offering family-friendly events around the community such as the Big Picnic, [pop-up concerts](#), and the [Sakura Days Japan Fair](#).

One of the highlights at the annual fête is the [Sakura Night Gala](#)—a celebration of the spring season's blooms that feature culinary creations by top chefs around town.

The standing reception takes place on April 22 (6:30 to 9:30 p.m.) at the Stanley Park Pavilion (610 Pipeline Road), offering a night of great food, drink, and entertainment.

“It’s to celebrate spring, with seasonal Japanese food,” Linda Poole, executive director of VCBF, told the *Straight* in a phone interview. “In Japan, they really celebrate the seasons and this was about spring. The chefs have all created something special and they’ve paired it with a wine, beer, or sake.”

This year’s participating chefs include Taka Omi of Benkei Ramen, Nathan Lowey of Dosanko, Ken Nakano of Shangri-La Hotel Vancouver, Masayoshi Baba of Masayoshi, Will Lew of Fairmont Hotel Vancouver’s Notch8 Restaurant & Bar, Nobu Ochi of Zen Japanese Restaurant, and James Coleridge of James’ Gelato.

Each chef created a food item that pays homage to *sakuras* (cherry blossom trees). Attendees can expect to taste dishes like sakura *onigiri* (Japanese rice ball), *tori-shio* (chicken and salt seasoning) ramen with cherry blossom, sakura mochi with duck and shitake mushrooms, and salted sakura gelato.



Shangri-La's Ken Nakano will be serving up smoked Manila clams with eggplant, and a sake kasu macaron.

LEILA KWOK

Notch8 Restaurant's chef de cuisine Will Lew explains to the *Straight* by phone that although he doesn't have connections to Japanese heritage and works at a western restaurant, he thinks it's a privilege to be invited back to the gala to create a dish that pays respect to the Asian culture.

He'll be putting together a display table where he can present his unique creation: an interactive set-up that will resemble a walk through a cherry blossom forest.

"It's a venison-wasabi leaf-smoked cherry tartare, but I'm going to make them into little spheres so it looks like little natural parts of the earth," said Lew. "The base will be made with edible soil using *umami* [savoury] crumb, and people can lift it up. I just really want to imagine an interpretation of a cherry blossom forest and what animals would roam through it.

"I want to bring that environment and encapsulate it into a microcosm in some way, where people can look at it and interact with it," added Lew.

Cherry blossom-inspired foods will be the star of the show, but they will also be accompanied by a variety of libations like beer, wine, and sake. Mixologist Jay Jones from Vij's and Vij's Rangoli's bar team will also be making a special cherry blossom cocktail for the event.

“The food is so exciting because they [guests] can’t get that anywhere else. It’s a special menu created just for the gala, and it will celebrate the end of the cherry blossom season here,” said Poole.

**Tickets** (\$160 per person, plus taxes and fees) can be purchased online, and sales end on April 18 at midnight. A \$100 charitable tax receipt will be issued to guests at the event.

Proceeds go toward the VCBF, which is a non-profit annual community event that highlights arts, culture, and the environment. Most of its activities are free of charge, but its ticketed events help support and grow the festival.

For more information, click [here](#).

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