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One Year
Anniversary
Issue

Hooked on Fish

A Recovered Addicts Experience

By Jeff Mustard

While my peers were worried about which class of BMW to buy, I was worrying about which recovery class to take to get clean. Part of the problem for people like me was that there wasn't a 12 step program, a treatment center or even a government subsidized clinic readily available to help me kick my habit.



Whether it's crack or smack, addictions always start the same way; an innocent introduction to a substance the new user eventually craves, and sooner or later cannot live without. And so it goes with Sushi. It's a fact, once one tries Sushi, there's no turning back. The insidious effects of this raw fish and salty soy sauce concoction are just as devastating as if it came from the tainted tip of a hypodermic needle.

It's been eight years since that fateful day when I was introduced to what would become the hottest substance of the nineties - wasabe, the potent powdered green mustard mixed daily in the back of Sushi houses across the country. This deadly compound accompanies each fish fix and is arguably at the nexus of Sushi abuse.

My friendly stockbroker started me off easy. First it was a simple lesson in chopsticks and then a California Roll. "Hey, this is cool...a new experience," I thought. "Hip people eat sushi," I said to myself as I sat at the marble sushi bar across from the Asian fish dealer. But, this was the beginning of the end.

The next time we went for sushi, he "suggested" something else. "How about a Tuna Roll?" he offered. "Why not?" I replied. Suddenly, I found myself using more soy sauce and wasabe. Next stop, Sashimi; translucent thin-sliced morsels of the velvety smooth cold raw delicacy. "Oral erotica," I thought as I dipped my fish into the muddy colored soy/wasabe potion and lifted my chopsticks to my lips. Pretty soon I was wondering where I was gonna score my next Hamachi Roll. Once hooked, I

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moved quickly through the fish chain.

At first I didn't realize anything was wrong when my friends became distant and didn't want to eat with me. All I thought about was fish, all I wanted was fish. Lunch used to cost \$5, suddenly it was \$15. Dinner was \$50, \$60, sometimes even \$70, but it just didn't matter.

Soon, I was wandering aimlessly in a Saki stupor from one Sushi bar to another. My American Express card reached it's limit, my Visa was maxed and my Discover had been suspended. I went to the ATM, "No funds available," read the computer printed receipt as I trembled and broke into a cold sweat. Close to being a broke person, I'd share Sushi, fish and hand roll combinations with people I'd never met. We'd discuss the best sources for the biggest and freshest

Sushi. Money was never mentioned, it didn't matter.

The next step for me, that final moment of "clarity" occurred shortly after I pawned my car phone. I had just copped when my friends found me curled up in the corner of the back-seat of my 300 SD free-basing

soy, wasabe and ginger from a saki cup. I had bottomed out. Just like the marijuana user who never thinks he'll end up with a tourniquet around his arm preparing for the next deadly injection that will take him to Oz, so too the casual sushi dinner could never have anticipated the exotic oral experience of fish euphoria and the very crooked path which would lead to a devastating dead end.

Today, I'm proud to say that I'm sushi free. My family, whom I had all but abandoned, found a special place for me to kick my sushi dependency. A thirty day stint at the "Masa San Sushi Clinic," a quaint little medical establishment in East Hampton, plus the strong support of my loved ones helped me then, as it does now.

Sure, it's tough staying clean, but I take it one day at a time. Right now, wrapping my hands around a warm cup of green tea is satisfying enough, although, I find myself searching out Thai restaurants in the seediest parts of town. There's just something about red chili

Thai sauce and the way it clears my sinuses that reminds me of the old days.

I had just copped when my friends found me curled up in the corner of the back-seat of my 300 SD free-basing soy, wasabe and ginger from a saki cup.