

Written by Written by Kathy Shayna Shocket

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"The AZ Insider" with Kathy Shayna Shocket: Get the inside scoop on Arizona's social scene and celebrity news.



**This week: Kathy talks with the couple about the shaking on that fateful day.**

Celebrity Chef **Christopher Gross** and Restaurateur **Jamie Hormel** were travelling in Japan on that fateful day when the 8.9 magnitude earthquake hit and triggered a ferocious tsunami.

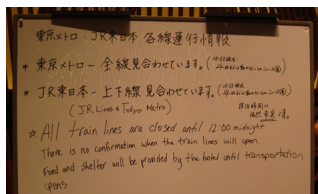
"The shaking went on for what seemed to be forever," recalled the Phoenix couple, who were in Tokyo at the time.

The two seasoned travelers who were in the middle of a Japanese cooking class when things turned surreal.

"The staff running the cooking class was very calm and took charge, opening up all the glass doors and shutting off the gas, almost routine like," noted Chris.

Fortunately, Chris and Jamie and a group of 16 family members were in an area with minimal damage, hundreds of miles away from the relentless quake's epicenter. However, the tragedy shut down Tokyo's ultra-modern transportation system. The couple took a bus to return to their hotel but it was trapped in traffic.

"We got out of the bus on the freeway and the scene was so strange because all we could see was this seemingly endless line of cars, the trains shut down and people calmly walking in different directions. Most were in hard hats," described Jamie and Chris.



The Phoenix couple (Christopher, who owns Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge, and Jamie, who owns the historical Wrigley Mansion) speculated that if this would have happened in the United States there would have been sheer panic in the streets. (Check out the picture they snapped of the sign, not only in Japanese, but in English as well, about the trains being shut down, as well as the food and shelter info.)

"We were very lucky that the cooking class we were in was in a ground level building and not much damage, but we also felt guilty and sad because there were towns in Japan that were wiped out because of the aftershocks, tsunami and nuclear power plant leaks, it was just one tragedy after another."



When the group was able to return to the hotel hours later, they joined others in the lobby who were gathered to listen to the world news reports on CNN on the TV screens. "

We were actually able to continue our trip the next few days to the south of Tokyo, only changing our plans that were near the water of course. We feel very fortunate."

## AZ Insider Exclusive: Famed Phoenix Chef and Restaurateur in Japan During Earthquake

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