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Blue Sushi Sake Grill

“Fantastic” is how Jake Mason describes the introduction of Blue Sushi Sake Grill to the Lincoln dining scene in May 2014.

Mason – general manager of the Lincoln restaurant – says that the restaurant in the Haymarket district had one of the most successful openings for the corporate group that operates three other Blue Sushi eateries in Omaha, as well as in three other states.

The addition of a Lincoln restaurant was a natural progression, according to Mason.

“We were always looking to find the right location,” he says, explaining that the Omaha locations would often hear queries about when a Blue Sushi would be available in Lincoln.

“We have a great location, a great landlord and a great staff,” Mason exudes. He continues by emphasizing how supportive the Lincoln dining community has been.

“Business has been consistent throughout the year,” he says, “and our diners have understood that there might be occasional bumps in the road early on, but they have stuck with us and the ship is sailing right along now.”

The customer demographic at Blue Sushi is a wide but sophisticated group ranging from university staff and students to those in business and government. The lunch crowd usually includes business people, students and members of the military, while it is a cross-section of the community for dinner – families, students, seniors and business travelers staying in nearby hotels.

The Blue Sushi menu has a broad appeal with lots of options, from vegan sushi to more complex dishes, Mason says, quickly explaining that “complex” does not necessarily mean complicated.

“Some dishes are really quite simple,” he says. “The complexity could be in the different tastes and textures that the diner experiences.”

The restaurant’s core menu remains consistent with few changes, and those that do occur are based on “wanting to have items that are great, rather than good, for our customers.”

The Blue Sushi menu features categories that include Nigiri (traditional piece of sushi – slice of fish placed over a small rice cake), Sashimi (just fish itself – different cut and presentation) and Maki (raw or not raw sushi rolls).



Varieties of salmon, tuna, white fish, shellfish and fish roe are offered as Nigiri (two pieces, \$3 - \$9) or Sashimi (three pieces, \$5.50 - \$11).

Specialty Nigiri menu items number four: blue balls (tempura fried, spicy crab, inari / \$7), cherry bomb (tuna, serrano, rice tempura, sriracha, ponzu / \$7), itchy salmon (baked salmon, spicy crab, serrano, cilantro, ponzu / \$6.50) and itchy seabass (baked seabass, spicy crab, serrano, cilantro, ponzu / \$8). There are also four specialty Sashimi dishes: ceviche-style hirame (white fish, Japanese cucumber, shallot, cilantro, lime juice, black pepper, aji limo / \$10), peppered tuna tataki (seared big eye tuna, scallion, toasted sesame garlic sauce / \$12), snapper chimichurri (madai, Japanese cucumber, cherry tomato, rocoto pepper, olive oil, marcona almonds, china chimichurri / \$11) and yellowtail serrano (yellowtail, cilantro, serrano, ponzu / \$11).

Under the Maki offerings are 21 non raw sushi rolls and 14 raw choices, with prices ranging from \$4 - \$14. According to Mason, the cali roll (crab, avocado, cucumber / \$6.50) and the crunchy blue (spicy crab, cilantro, crispy panko, eel sauce / \$7.50) are good beginner choices on the not raw side, with the most popular not raw choice being the crunchy l.a. (crab, avocado, Japanese cucumber, crispy panko, sweet chili sauce / \$7.50). Among the raw Maki items, the spanish fly (yellowtail, spicy crab, tuna, shallot, cilantro, serrano, yuzu ponzu / \$14) is popular.

Starters or appetizers include edamame, spicy edamame, shishito peppers, calamari, mango crab rangoon, pork gyoza and edamame hummus (\$5 - \$8), with miso (\$4) or coconut crab (\$6) soups available. The menu includes a house salad and island chick salad, as well as two non-lettuce salads – seaweed salad and squid salad.

Nine Shared Plate choices include chicken satay and shrimp tempura (both \$8), sapporo steamed mussels (\$11) and river rock beef tenderloin (\$12.75). Entrees of shishito pepper filet, citrus salmon, sesame sea bass, crispy coconut chicken and anthosan's chicken range from \$13.50 - \$27.

Mason emphasized that while the restaurant has a full bar with many specialties, a highlight is its availability of 11 choices of sake.

“Blue Sushi Sake Grill offers a great dining experience for everyone,” Mason says. “Whether one is wearing a suit and tie or in shorts and a tee shirt, we want to offer a quality and comfortable time with great products that are executed well.”





Jake Mason, general manager at Blue Sushi Sake Grill in Lincoln's Haymarket district.



Blue Sushi's dining room.



The Crunchy L.A. consists of crab, avocado, Japanese cucumber, crispy panko and sweet chili sauce.

Blue Sushi Sake Grill

808 R St., Suite 200 • 402-805-4232

www.bluesushisakegrill.com

Hours: Monday thru Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 11 a.m. to Midnight; Sunday, noon to 9 p.m.

Seating: 120 inside, 70 patio

Dine in and carry out

Full service bar, including nicely stocked Sake list

“You have to try ...”

Jake Mason’s personal recommendations include both the Nigiri cherry bomb (tuna, serrano, rice tempura, sriracha, ponzu / \$7) and the raw Maki sushi roll, the beach (albacore, spicy tuna, spicy crab, burdock root, avocado, cilantro, serrano, ponzu / \$13).