

## Approachable sushi restaurant opens in Naperville

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Jane Donahue



Blue Sushi Sake Grill is making a splash in Naperville, bringing a fresh and fun dining experience to the Riverwalk area at 123 Water St.

Since June, the grill has been delighting diners with their modern take on sushi and more, including a variety of Asian-inspired dishes and specialty cocktails.

"The response so far has been absolutely amazing," said Erin Herbert, assistant general manager of Blue Sushi Sake Grill. "Even though this is our first location in Illinois, we are finding that we already have many repeat guests and a great clientele that keeps coming back."

The menu is very approachable, with sushi options divided into categories (like salmon, tuna or vegetable only) as well as showing which rolls are raw and not raw. They even offer a "little bento box" for kids, which includes a choice of a California roll, chicken tenders or shrimp tempura served with edamame, fries and fruit.

Here's the dish on this new hot spot.

What's on the menu? The diverse menu includes a selection of maki, sashimi and nigiri along with Asian-inspired atataki (warm) and tsumetai (cool) dishes, salads and desserts. There is an extensive drink menu including premium cold sake, cocktails, beer, wine, mocktails and hot tea. Blue also takes great care to provide a selection of vegan and gluten-free menu items.

About the owners: Blue Sushi Sake Grill is owned by the Flagship Restaurant Group, a privately held company based out of Omaha, Nebraska. The organization is comprised of Nick Hogan, Tom Allisma, Tom Buder, Anthony Hitchcock and Tony Gentile, who started the company in 2002. The Naperville spot is their 10th location, with other grills located in Nebraska, Colorado, Texas and Kansas. Additional locations are set to open soon in Kentucky and Indiana.

A mission statement or philosophy? Blue Sushi Sake Grill is committed to delivering innovative food and exceptional dining experiences to guests, bringing a "fresh, fun and energetic dining experience to the heart of downtown Naperville."

What's the decor like? A vibrant and contemporary interior — including bright hues of blue, exposed brick walls and interesting light fixtures — welcomes guests to the Water Street location. Beyond the bar and dining room, the Sake Bomber's Lounge is designed as an alternative to traditional seating and offers more intimate table arrangements. Two outdoor patios are charming, complete with bright blue awnings and beautiful planters and greenery.

Food specialties: Traditional maki, nigiri and sashimi are offered along with specialty options such as poke (a raw seafood salad), with wild sockeye salmon, sweet onion, wakame and avocado tossed in a sesame dressing. In addition to sushi, Blue offers a variety of Asian-inspired dishes on the menu like the River Rock beef tenderloin, a tender beef served on sizzling hot rocks with jalapeno ponzu and yuzu kosho, or the sansho pepper salmon, which is pan seared with ginger, garlic, capers and cherry tomatoes in a yuzu butter pan sauce and roasted in a clay plate.

We're different because: Blue serves "quality, fresh and fun sushi, pairing high-quality ingredients with bold, yet approachable flavors" to ensure that guests have a "truly dynamic dining experience" at each visit. Also, a daily "happy hour" with a special menu allows guests to enjoy their sushi favorites and experience something new in a relaxed and social atmosphere.

Price range: Veggie sushi (eight pieces) starts at \$4, and three pieces of tuna sashimi starts at \$6.50. Specialty maki like the amazon roll (eight pieces) is \$12 or the Philadelphia roll (eight pieces) is \$8. Toban yaki (clay plate entrees) served with steamed rice, asparagus, wild mushrooms and crispy Brussel sprouts range from \$16 (chicken) to \$28 (beef tenderloin). Desserts like the chocolate spring rolls or torte are \$8. Kids meals are \$8.

Logistics: Blue Sushi Sake Grill is open Monday-Thursday from 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m.-11 p.m. and Sunday from noon-9 p.m. Carry-out is also available. Call 630-305-3099 or go to [www.BlueSushiSakeGrill.com](http://www.BlueSushiSakeGrill.com).

*<http://www.chicagotribune.com/ct-nvs-dining-west-st-0818-20170817-story.html>*

