

BLUE SUSHI SAKE GRILL | SARABOO CREEK | NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE FOOTBALL

naperville

SEPTEMBER 2017

**DISCOVER
HINSDALE**

A DESTINATION-WORTHY VILLAGE

**SENIOR
LIVING
GUIDE**

Modern
MIDWEST

MIDCENTURY SLEEK IS BACK IN VOGUE

TABLE FOR TWO



BLUE SUSHI SAKE GRILL
123 Water Street
630.305.3099
bluesushisakegrill.com

Rolls on the River

WATER STREET'S BLUE SUSHI SAKE GRILL

By Mark Loehrke



Seaweed salad

The restaurant business is consistently perplexing to those on the outside of it. From the predictable, pedestrian hole-in-the-wall that manages to somehow stick around for decades, to the can't-miss hot spot that sparkles, fades and is gone in six months, a general sense of bewilderment seems to be the only sure thing.

It's tough to say, then, whether diving into a downtown Naperville market that is already awash in rolls and raw fish is a big gamble or a no-brainer for the folks behind Blue Sushi Sake Grill, the latest addition to what is rapidly becoming a cozy little riverside restaurant row in the new Water Street development. It's akin to opening a fudge and T-shirt shop in the Wisconsin Dells—yes, the masses have clearly demonstrated that they want these things, but scarcity and novelty ought not be the aspirational pillars upon which your empire is built. So my first thought as we passed three sushi joints just on the walk from my car to Water Street on a sweltering Tuesday evening was pretty simple—better bring your A game.

PRIME PERCH (NOT THE FISH)

Of course, the newest entrant in the sushi wars starts with something of a leg up on the competition based solely on its prime location. Not only does the outdoor deck overlooking the DuPage River nearly double the restaurant's capacity on warm evenings, there's just something about enjoying a sushi spread next to a calming body of water that's hard to beat.

That being said, patrons who opt for a seat in the dining room will hardly be sacrificing an inviting ambiance, as a flock



Anticuchos



Wild mushrooms

of wooden origami birds soars over the interior space while diners at the handsome bar enjoy an up-close view of the sushi chefs doing their impressive thang. Ultimately, this is where the fate of Blue Sushi will be decided—not on the tantalizing possibilities of that alfresco patio, but at the talented hands of these culinary artists.

ON A ROLL

While the menu here doesn't diverge dramatically from typical sushi fare, there are a number of distinct detours well worth taking (even more so during Happy Hour—3:00 to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, noon to 8:00 p.m. Sunday—which is a boon for bargain

TABLE FOR TWO



hunters). For example, we discovered two of our favorites of the night on the warm appetizer slate, where a plate of crispy Brussels sprouts in a lemon miso sauce inspired us to order an encore serving just minutes after making quick work of the first. Likewise, the signature

river rock beef tenderloin was a dazzler, with the tender slices sizzling to perfection atop hot stones right there in the middle of our table. This dish seemed to be a hit throughout the room, harkening back to the hazy days of restaurant smoking sections.

From the primary menu of maki, nigiri and sashimi, the array of choices (raw or cooked, warm or cold) is designed with widespread appeal in mind, with something for everyone from Michael Jackson fans (the Thriller: shrimp tempura, spicy crab, ponzu, creamy sauce) to dermatologists (the Itchy Salmon: baked salmon on top of spicy crab topped with serrano, cilantro and ponzu) to John Hughes completists (the Pretty in Pink: snow crab, cucumber, salmon, tuna, soy paper and wasabi). While my non-seafood-loving companion stuck with a couple of the standard veggie rolls, I ventured into the Pacific for a delicious tempura-fried Hawaiian roll with salmon, crab and mango.

Satisfied, but profoundly intrigued by the tempting dessert list, we capped things off with some chocolate torte calorie bombs and a chocolate spring roll that tasted straight from the carnival midway. It was our personal version of the credo "there's always room for one more," a lesson that Blue Sushi has obviously taken to heart in landing on the shores of Naperville. 🍣