



LakeNorman

M A G A Z I N E

HOLIDAYS AROUND THE LAKE

YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST
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AND GIFTS THIS SEASON

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Cross-continental Cuisine

BY ALISON HENRY
PHOTOS BY RICHARD RUDISILL

Sushi in Lake Norman should never taste like it came from the waters of Lake Norman. Fortunately, folks in Davidson now have Sabi, a contemporary yet relaxed house of hibachi and hand rolls. I had a pleasing experience while dining there with a comrade barely two weeks after its opening.

From the car, I could see the warm, inviting glow of the white globe lights in the dining room – a welcoming sight on a prematurely dark, brisk fall evening. A hostess led us to a cozy booth, where

Sushi and other entrees from Sabi cover a range of Asian fusion

pop music played from the nearby bar. As faint bass lines played through a dining room filled with both families and young adults, I looked over the menus of beer, wine, sushi and entrees.

Asian restaurants are not typically known for their wine and beer selections, but Sabi's lists rival many found at local bistros. Bartender Jeff Parks wanted the libations to reflect the East-meets-West theme and allow people to be able to eat and drink well. You can pair your Spicy Mango Chicken with Shiraz or Merlot, or quench your thirst with a Dogfish Head 90 Minute IPA. I was almost too excited to make a dinner selection after reviewing their extensive list of specialty and craft brews, but I eventually focused my attention back on the food.

Sabi's sushi rolls cater to any experience level. Guests can pick a la carte rolls or nigiri, or choose one of the Sushi and Sashimi Combo plates. None of the rolls



Dragon and Phoenix (red curry shrimp and General Tso's chicken), above. Sushi and Sashimi Combo, right.

is particularly adventurous, but patrons do have the option of creating their own. After requesting the same customized roll on five separate visits, one lucky guest had her culinary creation added to the menu. Baked, chopped soft shell crab mixed with special sauce and served on top of a California roll has now been named The Bruna Roll, after its creator.

The entrées cover cross-continental territory with Asian favorites such as Spicy Red Thai Curry (\$11-15) and Pad Thai (\$9.95), American-Asian staples such as Sesame Chicken (\$10.95) and Broccoli Beef (\$10.25), and dependable American dishes such as Crab Cakes

(\$15.95) and a Cowboy Cut Ribeye (\$23.95).

My friend played it safe and ordered the Broccoli Beef, while I chose a Dragon Roll (shrimp tempura topped with eel and avocado for \$9.25), 88 Roll (crab, cucumber and smelt roe with spicy sauce for \$5.95) and Spicy Tuna Roll (minced tuna in a spicy sauce for \$6.25). The beef was served in a rich brown sauce with carrots and bright green broccoli on a square ceramic plate. The vegetables were cooked crisp yet slightly tender and the sauce was, surprisingly, not too salty. The sushi rolls were beautifully presented on a large



white plate for sharing, and the 88 roll was the first to disappear. It provided a refreshing relief from the commanding flavors of the Broccoli Beef, eel and tuna. The Dragon Roll and Spicy Tuna Roll were equally tasty and served at ideal temperatures.

If the key to good fusion cuisine is balance, then Sabi has mastered the proportions and applied them to all aspects of the business. In the planning stages, chef/owner Pau "Ken" Yung leaned on fellow owners Margaret and Bob Mitchell for their Americanized design and

construction ideas. In turn, the Mitchells relied on Yung's New York City-based Asian cooking experience to create a menu.

Their professional lives are also in harmony with their personal lives. The families and their children often get together to cook meals, and the Mitchells keep the business actively involved in the community. Currently, Sabi caters lunches to Davidson Day School. "It's amazing to walk into a cafeteria and see four-year-olds with chopsticks eating sushi. It's adorable," says Margaret Mitchell.

Their appreciation for the community is further evident in the restaurant's name. "Sabi is short for 'wabi sabi,' which means 'simply beautiful,' which is what we consider Davidson to be," explains Margaret Mitchell. "Really, it's what we want the restaurant to be."

Its diverse menu, and strong sense of family and community is what makes Sabi the yin and yang of neighborhood comfort and upscale, trendy dining. It is all the elements of dining in sophisticated city, effortlessly and deliciously executed, without the attitude. | **LN**

Sushi chef Lin Nian Ai, below, prepares a Sushi and Sashimi Combo at Sabi in Davidson. Below right, from left, Big Red Saketini, Ken's Kamikaze and a glass of red wine.



Want to go?

Address: 130 Harbour Place Drive, Suite 120, Davidson, NC 28036

Phone: 704-895-5707

Hours: Mon-Sat 11 a.m. – 12 a.m.
Sunday 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Brunch served featuring items including French toast with cream and fresh fruit, bottomless Mimosas, and selections from their standard menu.)