



PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

NU-SHI

Sushi restaurants open just in time for summer BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

Some of us like it saucy and hot, and not frozen but fresh — some of us like it raw. And sushi is the food of choice for Eugene’s fish fiends and raw dawgs. Though there is no shortage of local sushi joints, this abundance creates a market where the law of supply and demand battles with the need for quality over quantity. Two new Japanese restaurants just hit the scene, adding to the menagerie of miso and masago that we Eugeneans are so blessed with.

“I saw one person come in and eat 15 plates,” Sushi Island waitress Hailey Rose says. “Because it’s buffet-style here, we get people who really love to eat.”

Rose works a lunch shift at Sushi Island, the hottest new spot to get your wasabi on if you’re cruising West 11th. Nestled between Seneca Road and Bailey Hill, right next to Skip’s Records & CD World, Sushi Island offers the look and feel of a big-city sushi restaurant but maintains a calm Eugene-ish vibe. The conveyor belt of tasty rolls that travel ‘round and ‘round the two main seating areas will have you thinking you can eat just one more, even after you’ve had your fill.

But if you desire something a little more adventurous than the standard fare of spicy tuna and sashimi, Sushi Island boasts a killer menu with monster-themed rolls that deliver mouthfuls of satisfaction. The Godzilla roll, a combination of soft-shell crab, unagi, avocado and masago, is a zingy must-try concoction that lives up to its name. We are also strong advocates for the Angry Dragon — a well-proportioned combo of crab and cucumber, topped with tuna and wasabi tobiko. Oh yeah, then there’s the King Kong roll, full of lobster, scallop, crab, avocado and scallion. This island is serious; go there, but mind the monsters.

The Whiteaker is about to become home to a new sushi spot that is unlike any other. Mame, named after the sushi appetizer edamame, is the epitome of fresh — seriously, like, they refuse to own a freezer.

“Frozen is exactly what we don’t want to do,” owner Taro Kobayashi says. “I’m not here to open a can and feed you. I’m here to open a restaurant.”

Mame, next to Olive Juice at 541 Blair, will sneak open its doors on Saturday, June 16. It might be Eugene’s most intimate sushi restaurant. Seating only 15 customers at a time, the place embodies the environmentally friendly DIY nature of the city. Customers are encouraged to bring their own pair of chopsticks, which Kobayashi and company will sanitize and store for you at the restaurant.

The folks at Mame are adamant about keeping everything on the menu fresh. Along with no freezer, Kobayashi says all of his fish will be shipped in daily. The place also has its own herb garden and, once Mame is in full swing, the restaurant plans to grow its own edamame as well.

“People might be a little skittish about the no-freezer part, but that’s OK,” Kobayashi says. “What we offer is a better product.”

Kobayashi, who is also a local Kung Fu instructor, says that part of why he is opening the restaurant is his connection with the Eugene community and his support of healthy dieting. He says Mame will also specialize in bizarrely unique dishes that cannot be found elsewhere.

“We want to make Asian- and American-inspired Oregon food,” Kobayashi says. “That sounds weird, but come down and check it out for yourself.”

We couldn’t agree more. But make sure to bring your adventurous spirit — the menu at Mame changes weekly on account of how damn fresh things are. ■

Sushi Island is located at 3215 W. 11th Ave. Mame is located at 541 Blair Blvd.



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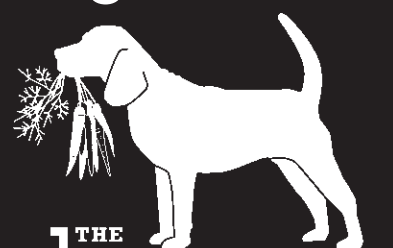
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