



COOKS ROLL SUSHI INGREDIENTS INTO BURRITOS AT SUBO

Portable Sushi Roll

TRENDY SUSHI BURRITOS IN SPRINGFIELD AND EUGENE BY AMY SCHNEIDER

What do you call a giant sushi roll? A sushi burrito, of course.

“It really just made itself,” says Toby Helms, owner of Unami Sushi and Asian Grill in Springfield. “It doesn’t have a tortilla or anything like that — it’s just a large roll, with our sushi ingredients.”

Unami’s sushi burritos run the gamut of flavors — its “California” burrito (\$9.95) is simple and based on a classic California roll, with rice, surimi crab, cream cheese, carrots and avocado, all wrapped in a sizeable sheet of seaweed. The “Samurai” burrito (\$16.49) is packed with ingredients, including fresh salmon, yellowtail, yellow fin tuna, avocado, panko green onion and ginger pickled red cabbage.

Each burrito comes with a paired housemade dipping sauce, including a sweet soy reduction and a flavorful garlic sauce, all created with a gooey consistency that makes for easy dipping or drizzling over the burrito.

“There’s a need for quick-service sushi that isn’t conveyor-belt style, and the only way that makes sense is to get people to order just one item, because it takes forever to make a bunch of different items,” Helms says, adding that he and his team came up with the sushi burrito concept shortly after opening Unami Sushi in 2013.

The sushi burrito is taking off in California — from L.A. to San Francisco, Californians are munching logs of tasty sushi — but Helms appears to be the only local sushi maker delving into the concept.

Helms is no newbie to the food business. When he was 15, he starting working at restaurants in Montana, holding down two jobs and rotating through various

cuisines so that he could learn as much as possible.

At age 23, he and a business partner opened 2nd Street Sushi in Hamilton, Montana.

“It was a fine-dining type of sushi restaurant,” Helms explains. “We had 12 tables, and we did seven-course wine and saki pairing dinners. It was like a test kitchen where I could make up as many recipes as I wanted, and that’s where I honed my skills a bit.”

In 2013, Helms sold the restaurant to his business partner and moved to Lane County. He owns Unami Sushi and the six-month-old Subo Sushi Burritos food cart in the Whiteaker neighborhood, and he says he hopes to open more locations in the near future.

“The goal is to serve high-quality sushi that is made to order but is also quick service,” Helms says.

He sources his ingredients from True World Foods, he says, which offers local produce whenever possible, including albacore tuna and crab from the Oregon coast.

Unami offers a wide variety of regular sushi rolls in addition to its sushi burritos, all concocted by Helms and his chefs. While the Whiteaker location doesn’t serve sushi rolls, it does make sushi nachos and sushi rice bowls for the adventurous in spirit and appetite.

Still, it’s hard to beat the convenience of the sushi burrito. They don’t fall apart when eaten, and the blend of flavors makes for a unique and satisfying meal. ■

Unami Sushi and Asian Grill is open 11 am to 8 pm Monday through Saturday at 4205 Main Street in Springfield. Subo Sushi Burritos is open noon to 7 pm Tuesday through Saturday except Friday, when it’s open until 8 pm, at 3rd Avenue & Van Buren Street. See Facebook for more info.

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