



Double Date: Sushi Chef for the Night at the Kona Grill Sushi Class

Since opening in late 2016, Kona Grill in Winter Park has been on our radar as a notable date night destination. Each Tuesday is date night, featuring a special menu for two under \$50. The extensive happy hour menu is another wallet-friendly option. So when we were invited to check out the newly launched sushi class, we jumped at the chance to test it out on a hosted double date.

There are tons of hands on cooking classes offered each month in Orlando, but Kona Grill's sushi class grants you access to work alongside a master in a personalized environment.

For starters, the executive chef and a head sushi chef lead each class, so you know you're in good hands. Our teachers for the evening were Executive Chef Anthony Meder, and Head Sushi Chef Andy Phoong, the latter boasting 22 years of experience as a sushi chef.

Your classroom for the evening is a semi-private table in a quieter corner of the restaurant, where the fun begins. Place settings are decked out with a sushi bandana (a group selfie is a must), makisu (bamboo mat for rolling), and chopsticks, all of which you get to take home.

During your class, you'll learn everything from sushi terms and knife techniques, to how to roll sushi and select ingredients from the store for preparing sushi at home. Each class is customizable, and class structure varies depending on what you'd like to learn.

Sushi beginners will love the basic class (\$35-\$40/person), an intro to sushi where you'll make simpler rolls such as California rolls and shrimp tempura.

The standard class (\$50/person) combines elements of the basic class with a few more complex rolls, like checkerboard and Picasso rolls.





And if you really want to expand your sushi expertise, opt for the advanced class (\$75/person), which includes all of the above in addition to sashimi and nigiri.

Our group's sushi experience ranged from non-existent to moderately experienced, but even the sushi novices among us were able to handle the advanced class.

While the learning experience is enjoyable, you'll also take extreme satisfaction in the portion of the class dedicated to eating your creations. We feasted on California rolls, spicy tuna rolls, sashimi, nigiri, and more during our experience.

The slightly more advanced rolls—checkerboard and Picasso—were the highlights of the evening. Although more difficult to make, the flavors

were more complex, and the presentation was representational of the artful side of sushi.



The dragon roll, made with barbecued eel, was another favorite.

The class concluded with one last surprise – a sake flight and pairing. It's definitely worth the extra \$12/person to expand your knowledge – and your taste buds will thank you.

Acquiring new knowledge and leaving with full bellies (and plenty of leftovers) made for a memorable experience, but perhaps most rewarding is the opportunity to learn from a sushi master. Building a career as a sushi chef takes years of work and expertise, so the chance to learn from a head sushi chef is a total must-do. This is a bucket-list worthy date night you won't soon forget!



INFO

Sushi classes are available on a reservation-only basis. Call (407) 900-0100 to make your reservation.

Classes are offered at the restaurant, or in your home for an extra fee. At this time, a minimum of 4 people is required, so make it a double date!

The cost of the class ranges from \$35-\$75/person depending on how in depth you want to go. Add a sake pairing to any class for \$12/person.

All images by Stephanie Patterson

