

REVIEWING GOOD EATS

By Ashley South

James and Menda Lippe started NapervilleFoodies.com as a passion project two years ago.

Their self-built and managed website hosts their reviews. Thus far, the duo has reviewed over 75 restaurants in the downtown Naperville area. “We definitely enjoy finding a great restaurant. We both grew up in families and communities where heart and soul were brought to every meal, and where the table was a place of conversation and sharing life,” says Menda. “We’ve also been fortunate enough

to travel to and live in several different countries in Europe, Asia, and Central America and a big part of our travel is finding local hole-in-the wall restaurants that give a glimpse into local customs, cultures and flavors.”

When James and Menda moved near downtown Naperville a few years ago, they found themselves going to the same few favorite restaurants over and over (haven’t we all??), and while that was fine, they decided to challenge themselves to broaden their experiences.

After several of their friends asked for recommendations, they decided to go on a quest to try every single restaurant in downtown Naperville and record those experiences through a website that they could share. “When we started out, it was just a quirky website that we built for our friends. I wanted to remember what dishes we liked and didn’t like at each restaurant so that we could order it again if we went there. Also, it was easy to tell people to just go to NapervilleFoodies.com when friends ask

for a restaurant recommendation,” said James. Unsurprisingly to us as foodies here at M&L, the website has taken off and has had tens of thousands of views.

“Yes, it was really surprising to see how

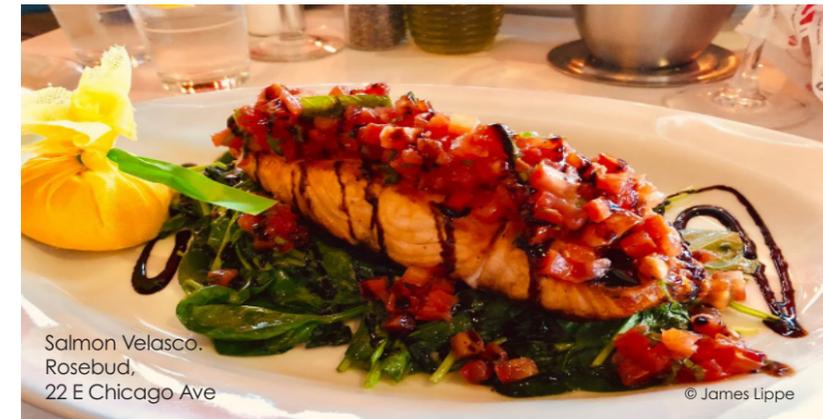
many people shared our passion for food,” said Menda. “During the pandemic, when we weren’t eating out as much, we still had people contacting us for more reviews.”

James tells us that they have even hosted

twenty of their followers on an ice cream shop tour. Five shops were selected: Cold Stone Creamery, Cookie Dough Creations, Kilwins, Midici (now closed), and Sweet Home Gelato. They spent a few hours tasting and learning how the different ice creams were made and have provided their favorites on the website. Mmmmmm...

Followers ask for specific recommendations on where to take out-of-town guests, which eateries have the best outdoor spaces, or which restaurants have private dining available for 10 to 20 guests. James and Menda welcome and enjoy these questions. For them, helping and interacting with their followers to find the perfect place for their specific needs is a fun mental revisit of their adventure.

So how is the quest to review all restaurants going? “Well, of the 75 or so restaurants in downtown Naperville, we’ve been to 64. We still have a few to



Salmon Velasco. Rosebud, 22 E Chicago Ave

© James Lippe

visit, but we’re also excited about some of the newer restaurants that have opened, so we might reprioritize,” Menda tells us with a wink. “Something tells us that this quest will never be finished, and we’re absolutely fine with that,” said James. He continued, “It’s a pretty enjoyable process.” They post regularly on their website and to their respective Instagram and Facebook pages using the same handle as the name of their website.

In addition to eating great food and sharing their experiences, James and Menda have also especially enjoyed meeting incredibly dedicated managers and wait staff along the way. James says, “The people who prepare and bring you your food really do care about also bringing you a great experience.

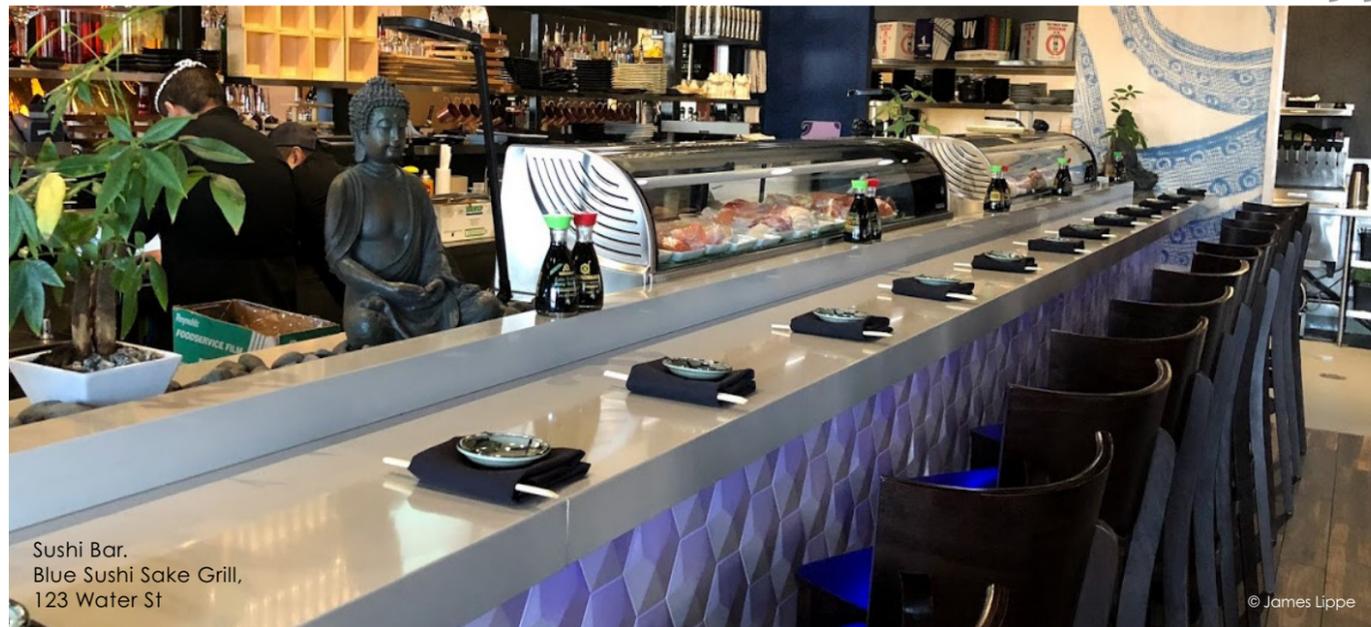
The pandemic caused so much disruption for this industry, and we were thoroughly impressed with how restaurants continued to innovate and work to serve their patrons. There are a lot of heroic stories shared during the pandemic. The restaurant industry and the people who support it is one that cannot be overlooked.”

Head over to NapervilleFoodies.com to see what restaurants James and Menda have visited recently, what dishes should not be missed, and who has the best staff bringing you that experience. There are a ton of hidden gems when you venture outside of your go-to places, and Naperville Foodies is a place to help you find it.



NapervilleFoodies.com

“We both grew up in families and communities where heart and soul were brought to every meal, and where the table was a place of conversation and sharing life.”



Sushi Bar. Blue Sushi Sake Grill, 123 Water St

© James Lippe



Strawberry & De La Casa margaritas. Fat Rosie's, 47 E Chicago Ave

© James Lippe