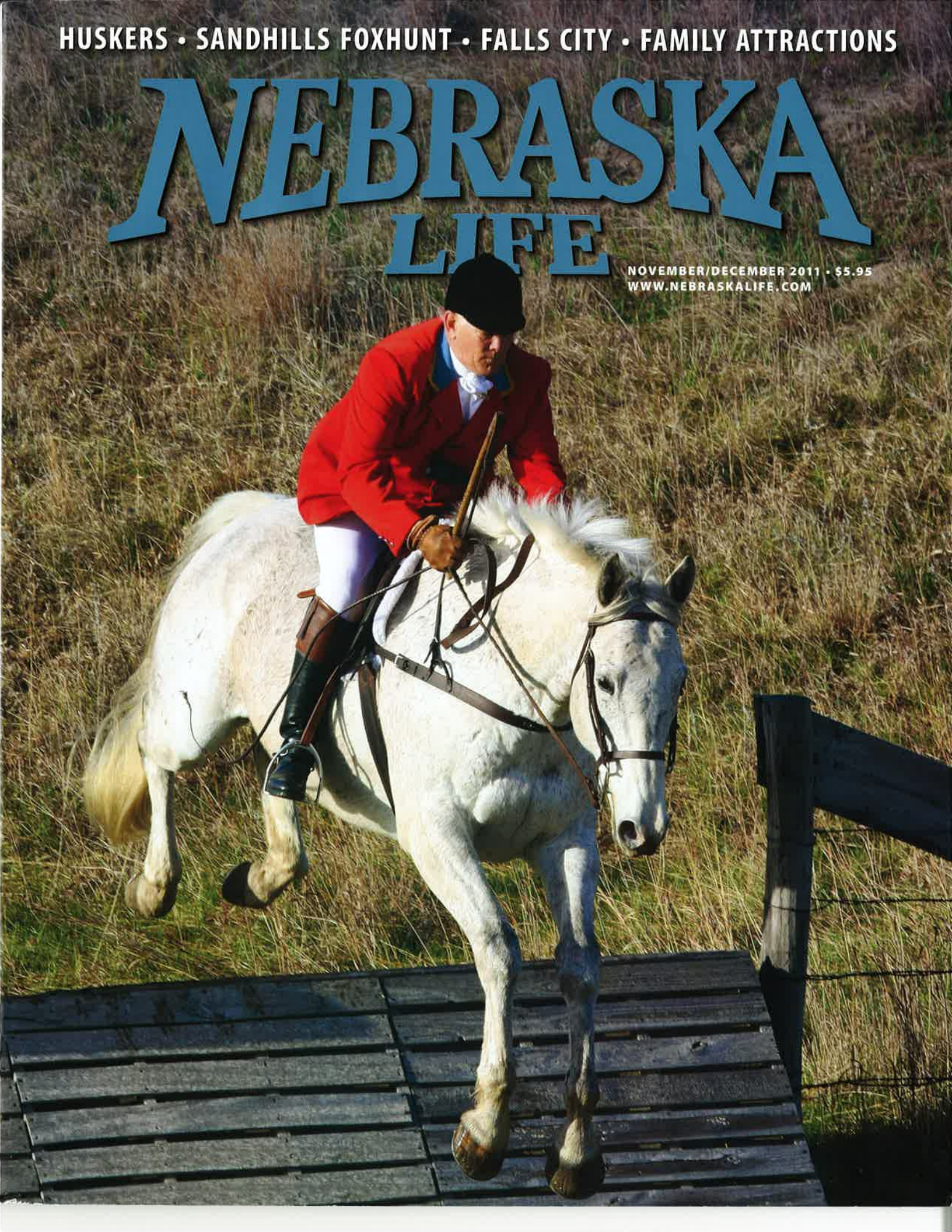


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NEBRASKA KITCHENS



Omaha's Old Market

RESTAURANT WORLD TOUR

World-Class Dining In The Big O

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN J. BARTELS

THEY SAY EVERYTHING OLD is new again, but Omaha's Old Market has never had the variety and quality of culinary offerings that Omahans enjoy today.

The historic, industrial heart of Omaha is now a smorgasbord of international fare. From Classic Italian and USDA Prime American beef, to traditional Indian meals and world-class sushi, dining in the Old

Market is the equivalent of a culinary world tour, all within an area of just a few city blocks.

We visited the cobblestone streets of the Old Market and came away with satisfied appetites, and a few secret recipes, too.

Fellow Nebraskans, consider this Nebraska Kitchen's feature as just an appetizer to your own Old Market restaurant world tour.

BLUE SUSHI SAKE GRILL

TOM BUDER TRAINED UNDER very strict Japanese experts for seven years while learning the skills of traditional sushi preparation. Then, he broke the rules.

As the son of a Vietnamese mother and a German father, mixing unorthodox elements with time-honored sushi ingredients came easy for Buder.

"Why can't I, if it tastes good?" said Buder. "We specialize in infusing cultures."

The upscale business that has been featured in food magazines, and on MTV twice, has three levels. The restaurant is on the ground floor, with the second level being a bright, trendy lounge, and the upstairs banquet hall has a wide view of the Old Market from the third floor.

Buder says that Blue Sushi Sake Grill is mostly responsible for Omaha's sushi boom. When the business started in 2002, there were three sushi restaurants in Omaha. Now, there are 20, including two other Blue Sushi Sake Grill locations in the Big O.

Sushi is so popular in the city that it has been called "the new steak of Omaha," and Buder says it isn't a coincidence.

"We changed the way people eat Sushi in the Midwest," Buder said. "We are always trying to outdo ourselves, and always training."

And, they've trained people, too. "Many people think sushi means raw fish," Buder said. "But the word actually means seasoned rice. And, not all sushi is raw."

Blue Sushi Sake Grill is well known for its signature sushi rolls such as the Crunchy L.A., and the Crunchy Blue, both of which Buder invented. By using tasty elements from cultures



in Mexico, China and Thailand, to name a few, the restaurant appeals to a broader audience and infuses tastes never known in sushi before.

Simply known as Blue to many patrons, the restaurant boasts very fresh fish. "When someone asks where we get our fish, I jokingly tell them Carter Lake," Buder says.

But actually, the octopus served at Blue comes from Japan; and the tuna is from Hawaii. The yellowtail is brought in from Australia. And the salmon is farm raised. And, all of it is flown in daily. "The fish we are serving today was swimming yesterday," Buder says. The only fresher fish in Omaha swims at the Henry Doorly Zoo.

Ceviche-style White Fish

(from Blue's New World Sashimi menu)

- 1 halibut or fluke fillet
- 1 cucumber
- 1 shallot
- 1 aji pepper
- cilantro leaves

Serves 1

Slice fish into 5 very thin, 1/2-ounce portions. Top each piece with a thin slice of cucumber, cilantro leaf, shallot and aji pepper (in that order). Presentation is important. Serve on a cold plate (plate can be placed in freezer ahead of time).

Pour on new world sauce to taste, and serve immediately as the acids in the sauce will quickly cook the fish.

New World Sauce

- 1 cup fresh squeezed lime juice
- 1/2 tsp fresh grated celery
- 1/4 tsp fresh minced garlic
- 1/4 tsp grated black pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp salt

Mix all ingredients, strain and add to fish according to taste.



The Crunchy Blue and Crunchy L.A. sushi rolls, shown opposite page and at left with Executive Chef Tom Buder, are top secret recipes of the Blue Sushi Sake Grill in Omaha. While you will have to visit Omaha to enjoy these Buder-invented rolls, he did share the recipe for his popular Ceviche-style White Fish in New World Sauce, above.