

## YamaChen's Sushi House offers tasty seafood and more



**Sonja Barisic**  
Food Column

SUFFOLK — Looking over the vast menu at YamaChen's Sushi House, I was tempted to order the Christmas Tree spicy tuna roll so I could joke about the meal being like Christmas in July.

Worried that the roll might turn out to be too spicy for me, I did not fully give into that impulse. I did, however, order the Candy Cane (\$12.95), a mild specialty roll filled with crab meat, tuna, salmon and shrimp.

That turned out to be a pleasing gift for the senses, sumptuous to taste and pretty to look at it, with eight delicate pieces artfully arranged in two crescents on a plate. The traditional holiday colors were represented with green seaweed on the side that was dotted with small red roe.

Such care in the details was evident throughout our meal. Dining at YamaChen's was a gracious experience, from the friendly, attentive service to the instrumental music playing softly in the background to the spacious, serene interior that evoked traditional Japanese design.

Even though my husband and I took a while making up our minds about what to have for dinner, our food started to arrive within minutes once we placed our order.

We began by enjoying the shumai appetizer (\$8.95), tender steamed dumplings filled with shrimp, with a sweet, savory and garlicky soy dipping sauce. Our server also brought us complimentary edamame (soybeans) as well as spring rolls, with vegetables bursting from the crisp

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Donica Miller and her daughters will move into their new home in Suffolk this fall, thanks to Habitat for Humanity SHR. The nonprofit organization hosted its second annual Women Build Week in June. From left are Rainham Rowe, Sandy Spiro, Donica Miller and Michelle Ward. **CINDY BUTLER FOCKE/FREELANCE**

## Habitat for Humanity makes first-time homeowner's dream come true in Suffolk

**By Cindy Focke**  
Correspondent

Girl power was in full effect recently, as Habitat for Humanity of South Hampton Roads hosted its second annual Women Build Week in June.

Donica Miller was teary-eyed as she spoke about how her dream of home ownership has come true: "I just can't tell you how grateful I am."

The single mom of daughters Abrianna, 18, and Jasmine, 15, is a

first-time homeowner. She grew up in New Mexico and was raised through the foster care system.

"I made it out successfully," she said.

Marriage brought her to the area about 16 years ago. Miller said she always wanted to own her own home, but debt and student loans stood in the way.

"Eight years ago, I had actually given up," she said.

Eventually she went back to school and is now a nurse at the Barry Robinson Center in Norfolk.

She found Habitat for Humanity during an online search for help.

"I don't know how, but Habitat just popped up," she said. "I think it was the good Lord."

Habitat SHR builds affordable housing for low-income families in Chesapeake, Isle of Wight, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Smithfield, Suffolk and Virginia Beach.

Miller's application was denied at first: "I cried and felt so defeated."

But Habitat's family services manager wouldn't let her give up.

Miller said the guidance offered helped her learn to budget and pay off some bills. Last May, she learned of her acceptance.

"I was tearful," she said. "I felt like I made it."

The original home located on the Suffolk property was torn down, and Wilson's new two-story, three-bedroom, 1,200-square-foot home with two full bathrooms is under construction. Her home is the 238th to be built by Habitat for

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## Habitat

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Humanity SHR since 1988.

Executive director Frank Hruska said home ownership is a powerful way to break the cycle of generational poverty. “The need for affordable housing is incredible,” he said.

Homes are not given away but sold at no profit to the buyers. “This is a hand-up, not a handout,” Hruska said.

Applicants must qualify for a loan and be able to pay monthly expenses.

Approximately 85% of building labor is done by volunteers. Birdsong Peanuts provided financial support as the presenting sponsor, and other businesses have also given monetary assistance and in-kind services.

Usually, the nonprofit group builds about five homes a year. This past year was especially challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, plus the high price of land and lumber, according to Hruska.

Miller will invest about 200 hours of sweat equity into the building of her new home. Being a part of the



Donica Miller and her daughters will move into their new home in Suffolk this fall, thanks to Habitat for Humanity SHR. The nonprofit organization hosted its second annual Women Build Week in June. **CINDY BUTLER FOCKE/FREELANCE**

process has brought much joy, she said. Especially gratifying was the chance to work alongside other women and the opportunity to learn new skills.

Michelle Ward of South Bay Communications and Security in Chesapeake and her colleagues helped fill some shifts. “We want to be engaged in our community,” Ward said. “We live, work, and play here.”

The company also donated a home security system.

Lekisha Wilson was also hard at work. She moved into her new South Norfolk home in May, also thanks to Habitat. “I wanted to pay it forward, and help the next family,” she said.

Wilson is now a Habitat ambassador helping to promote the organization and also is a member of the

nonprofit’s newly formed Women Build Club. The group’s goal is to engage women volunteers and build connections in the community.

The Women Build Week “encourages women to join the trades as a career choice,” said Rainham Rowe, program development director for Habitat SHR. “That nail gun is pretty empowering.”

Miller and her family plan to move into their new residence in the fall. “This has been a wonderful experience,” she said. Knowing so many have “gone above and beyond” to help her is an indescribable feeling, she said.

For more information, visit [shrhabitat.org](http://shrhabitat.org).

*Cindy Butler Focke, focke-cindy@gmail.com*

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wrappers. It was fun to squeeze the bright green, firm edamame from their pods.

In addition to the Candy Cane roll, we split a bowl of chicken ramen (\$13.95), with thin, chewy noodles and tender chicken, boiled egg, crab meat, seaweed, tomatoes and edamame in a light, appropriately salty pork broth. The dish was rich yet delicate, and so plentiful that we had enough left over for the next day’s lunch.

In another nice touch to end our meal, our server brought us a complimentary small plate of peach slices arranged like a flower.

The restaurant in Suffolk is one of multiple YamaChen’s locations throughout Hampton

### THE SPOT

YamaChen’s Sushi House, 5889 Harbour View Blvd., Suffolk

### THE VIBE

Gracious space serving Japanese cuisine

### TO TRY

Chicken ramen, Candy Cane sushi roll

### IF YOU GO

**Note:** The COVID-19 situation could affect operating hours. Please check for updates.

**Hours:** 11 a.m.-10 p.m. (closed 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m.) Monday-Friday; noon-10 p.m. Saturday-Sunday

**Cost:** Appetizers \$1.95-\$11.95, salads \$3.95-\$6.95, two pieces sushi or sashimi a la carte \$4-\$5, sushi and sashimi dinners \$22.95-\$45.95, rolls \$5.95-\$13.95, entrees \$13.95-\$15.95, combos \$24.95-\$55.95, lunch special plates \$11.95.

**Child friendly?** Yes.

**More info:** 757-686-1888, [yamachen.com](http://yamachen.com)

Roads, including Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Yorktown and Hampton. There’s also a Northern Virginia restaurant in Fairfax. The Virginia-based chain of Japanese sushi restaurants started as a small family business in 2003.

I’m glad to know that the next time I’m craving a calm, soothing meal, I can head to a YamaChen’s Sushi House nearby — and not just for Christmas in July.

*Sonja Barisic, snbarisic@gmail.com*



The Candy Cane, with crab meat, tuna, salmon and shrimp, is one of the specialty sushi rolls at Yamachen’s Sushi House in Suffolk. **SONJA BARISIC/FREELANCE**

## REUNIONS

To submit an upcoming reunion, email [cwhiteman@tribpub.com](mailto:cwhiteman@tribpub.com) with “Upcoming reunion info” in the subject line. Please include time, date, location and a contact phone number and/or email.

■ BSA Troop 364 is having a 50th anniversary celebration from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aug. 7 at Bayville Farms Park pavilions, 4132 First Court Road, Virginia Beach. All former members and adult leaders, as well as their families are invited to attend. Further information can be found at [sites.google.com/site/troop364vb](http://sites.google.com/site/troop364vb). To contact the troop, email [bayside-troop364@gmail.com](mailto:bayside-troop364@gmail.com).

■ Suffolk High School’s class of 1971 is holding their 50-year reunion at 6 p.m. Aug. 14 at the Suffolk Hilton Garden Inn, 100 E. Constance Road. There also will be a meet and greet on Aug. 13 at the hotel. For information, contact Peggy Hall Lee at [halleel@yahoo.com](mailto:halleel@yahoo.com).

■ Churchland High School’s class of 1971 is holding their 50th reunion Sept. 11-12. Saturday’s festivities are from 7-11 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel in Downtown Portsmouth. For information, visit [1971chsreunion.com](http://1971chsreunion.com) or email [Sandy@rugratsva.com](mailto:Sandy@rugratsva.com).

■ Cradock High School’s class of 1955 is holding a reunion at 3 p.m. Sept. 15 at Mario’s Italian Restaurant, 611 Airline Blvd., Portsmouth. For information, contact Mickey Elder Lane at 407-7903.

■ Norfolk General School of Professional Nursing class of 1965 is having their 55-year reunion from Oct. 18-23 at Sandbridge. For information, contact Diana Guy Laing at 497-1296 or [rupe497@yahoo.com](mailto:rupe497@yahoo.com).

■ Maury High School’s Class of 1970 is holding a 50+1 reunion on Oct. 23. For information, search Facebook for Maury High School Class of 1970 50th Reunion, call Camilla Eure Goldman at 624-1608 or email [charliegoldman@cox.net](mailto:charliegoldman@cox.net).