

LYNQ restaurant in south Fort Myers has Blu Sushi roots, worldly menu

Artis Henderson, Special to The News-Press

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LYNQ, which opened for lunch last week, comes from a founder of Blu Sushi and Blanc. The south Fort Myers restaurant links tastes from around the world.

When Chris Whitaker sets out to open a restaurant, he looks for a concept that's unique. His most recent venture — [LYNQ](https://lynq.life/) (<https://lynq.life/>), which opened off Summerlin Road in south Fort Myers in April 2017 — is no exception.

"LYNQ comes from an idea I had about linking different cultures, cuisines, people and music," Whitaker said.

"We have some Asian things, we have Italian, contemporary American, French, tacos. It's a diverse menu, but it's not too cluttered." The menu generally features four types of ramen noodles, four different tacos, four salads and eight entrees.

"No matter who shows up at the door, we'll have something for just about everybody," Whitaker said.

The restaurant is situated in the space once occupied by Yabo. When he took over the lease, Whitaker transformed the unit into something that reflected his unique vision.

"It's a real fun space inside," he said. "We linked different metals and woods and fabric, like a potpourri of design."

People often ask Whitaker who he used as his interior designer, but he just laughs and tells them, "We did it ourselves."

Together with business partner Jean-Claude Roge, Whitaker designed the interior of the restaurant and its patio area. Some of LYNQ's notable features include a large video wall that plays music videos from a playlist of 20,000-plus songs, and an element called the "fire wall" that incorporates pieces of metal and wood.

This emphasis on unique design is a trademark of Whitaker's other restaurants. He helped launch the original Blu Sushi in 2003. In May 2016 he and Roge opened Blanc, a narrow and much smaller space, but one that's just as stunning as LYNQ.

Why is design so essential?



The bar at LYNQ. (Photo: Special to The News-Press)

"Basically, we're in the entertainment business," Whitaker said. "People come to our doors to be entertained, to have fun and to have a great experience. If you walk into a space and you feel good, that's all part of the experience."

It'd be easy to assume Whitaker has been in the food business his whole life. But his background is in manufacturing, and for 15 years he ran his own storm shutter company. He started Blu, his original restaurant project, as a side business.

"I was a maitre d' in college out in Colorado, and I've always liked the restaurant business," he said.

"I had an idea for Blu with a friend in 2002. We were in a sushi restaurant and nobody spoke English. We couldn't get a cocktail, and all they had was beer and wine and old sake. We said to ourselves, 'Wouldn't it be cool to have American-style sushi with some fun martinis?' So we opened Blu on McGregor as kind of a hobby, and it took off."

LYNQ started serving lunch last week. Its daytime menu includes sushi, poke bowls and ramen noodles, among other dishes.

"We won't be fast-casual," Whitaker said, meaning the restaurant will still feature traditional sit-down service at lunchtime. "But it's going to be very quick."

When he talks about the success of his restaurants, Whitaker credits the food and the design, but he says his staff is what makes the experiences especially unique.

"I have a great team of wonderful people," he said. "I try to hire people that have empathy and that really care about the customer."

Off the Eaten Path highlights local, independent restaurants and food producers throughout Southwest Florida. Send ideas to taste@news-press.com



LYNQ features a menu of unique sushi items, including rolls topped with steak. (Photo: Courtesy LYNQ)

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LYNQ

Where: 16230 Summerlin Road, south Fort Myers

Hours: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and 4-10 p.m. Monday to Friday, 4-11 p.m. Saturday, closed Sunday

Prices: Most starters \$9-\$13, entrees \$16-\$30, ramen \$15

Call: 239-204-9345

More: lynq.life (<https://lynq.life/>)

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