

A New Look at An Old Friend

Would you prefer the filet of beef with pancetta-mashed potatoes, wild mushroom ragout, chive crème drizzle and sun-dried-tomato jam or the grilled pork tenderloin with creamy polenta, cremini mushrooms, and zinfandel glaze? Perhaps the grilled buffalo sirloin with sweet potato-hazelnut gratin and sweet onion jam better suits your fancy. My mouth is watering just typing this! You may think we're dining at Tavern on the Green, but would you be surprised if I told you these are just a few of the fabulous menu items available at Walt Disney World restaurants?

If you are one of the many people under the impression that dining at Walt Disney World is all about burgers, fries and chicken fingers, then I'm here to tell you there is another side to Disney dining that is much more palatable. Sure they have plenty of burgers (and they're very tasty I might add), but a plethora of epicurean delights awaits for those who know where to look. I try to visit Walt Disney World at least every other year and on each visit, I like to try as many restaurants as possible that I've not been to before. It's difficult to pass on old favorites, but it's even more fun to discover new ones!

Here are a few of my favorites that you might want to try on your next visit:

Jiko – at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge – this AAA 4-Diamond award winner is rapidly gaining in popularity not only with resort guests, but with the locals. It features the largest collection of South African wines outside of Africa. The Kenyan Coffee Barbequed Chicken Flatbread with grilled onions, apple julienne and four cheeses is especially good for an appetizer. You might try the Oak Grilled Filet Mignon over macaroni and cheese in a red wine reduction for your entrée; a bizarre combination perhaps, but I thought I'd died and gone to heaven!

Spoodles – at Disney's Boardwalk Resort – this Mediterranean themed restaurant features an open kitchen with brick ovens. You can pick up a pizza from their walk-up takeout window, but I prefer dining in. Everything is prepared fresh. The Sautéed Chile Garlic Shrimp will start your meal off with a bang.

Kona Café – at Disney's Polynesian Resort – you've not lived until you've tried their Tonga Toast for breakfast. If you're one meal away from a heart attack, this is the one that will put you over the edge. It is a giant piece of French Toast, stuffed with bananas, deep fried to perfection and coated in cinnamon and sugar, served with your choice of bacon or sausage. It makes Kentucky Fried Chicken seem like eating grapefruit, but it's sinfully good.

Chef Mickey's – at Disney's Contemporary Resort – this one wins my award for the best character breakfast at Walt Disney World. If you want to meet all of the classic characters (Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy, Pluto, Chip & Dale), and

stuff yourself to the gills, this is the place to do it. This buffet offers great variety. The sausage roulade and frittata are quite good as is the peanut butter and jelly pizza with marshmallows (ok, this one is from the kids buffet, take a slice when nobody is looking).

This is but a small sampling of the great restaurants waiting for you at the Walt Disney World Resort, so get out there and Eat Disney!

This is part one of a three part series I'll be doing on what I like to call the "Hidden Disney World". Next month we'll look at some of the great off-season happenings at Walt Disney World and we'll wrap up in July with a look at the different resort options available to you. I hope you'll stick with me!

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