

Mama Melrose's at Disney Hollywood Studios: A Walt Disney World Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Talk to anyone who's been to Walt Disney World a few times and has sampled the delights of the restaurants at the various parks, and one thing will quickly become clear.

Disney's Hollywood Studios is considered by many to be the pre-makeover Cinderella of the parks when it comes to dining.

Ask a question on a message board, such as [PassPorter](#), and the chances are someone will suggest heading outside of Studios to find some decent dining. As such, we tend to not spend much time in the park, such is the priority we give to high-quality dining when we're at Disney.

It's been many years since we last dined at Mama Melrose's. We were hoping to eat there on our previous trip, but illness put an end to that. I will confess that I had high hopes for the place, having enjoyed some superb meals there in the past, albeit many years earlier. We still fondly talk about the amazing server we encountered on one meal, Kevin, who was as perfect as you could get.

Sadly on this trip, our welcome at the restaurant was as far from perfect as it was possible to be. In fairness, we were 40 minutes earlier for our booked time, so we knew we'd have a wait, but the way we were greeted put us in our place. We were pretty much told not to be seated before the time we had booked, and not only did we wait until our time, but beyond it, and we found the front-of-house cast members to be almost verging on rude, which is not something I expect at Disney.

As a result, Mama Melrose's had a lot to do to redeem itself when we were finally seated. The fact that we were ushered through an almost empty restaurant did not improve my mood. Our server, Jean, certainly did her best, and was very attentive to our needs, especially after we explained that this was the last thing we'd be doing at Disney before heading to the airport, ahead of a stupidly early flight to Hawai'i the next morning.

The menu looked like the traditional Italian fare that we expect from Mama Melrose's, and have enjoyed in the past. However, we were in for a bit of a surprise when it came to actually tucking into them,

particularly the very frequent use of the word "spicy," something we've never experienced in our various visits to Italy.

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□For an appetizer, I went for the very traditional fresh mozzarella and vine-ripened tomatoes, with marinated sweet onions, balsamic drizzle, basil-scented olive oil, and sweet basil leaves. I often go for this dish when we're in an Italian restaurant, as it's such a traditional dish that I can use it to judge the quality of the restaurant. Sadly, Mama Melrose's didn't fare well on this, as the balsamic drizzle was more of a drowning, and unfortunately, without that, it could well have been very good.

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□My husband had the oak-fired mussels cooked in a spicy tomato broth (see what I mean about the use of the word?), with grilled onions and herb croutons. I tried a small bite of it, and it had a dangerous kick to it, dangerous as you didn't feel the full effects until a few seconds after taking the taste.

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□Perhaps the crispy calamari topped with grilled peppers and onions, served with dipping sauce, the vegetarian minestrone soup or the Caesar salad would have been a better bet. The appetizer selection here was actually very salad-heavy, with three on offer; the mozzarella, a mixed green salad, and a Bresola salad that includes thin-sliced cured beef, fava beans, sweet peppers, olives, arugula, basil lemon, and extra virgin olive oil. As it was a cooler night outside, I would have preferred to see maybe one less salad choice on the menu.

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□When it came to the entree, both the fish choices came with the immortal words, "spicy tomato sauce." I had the pesce all'acqua pazza, fish of the day in a spicy tomato sauce with fennel, peppers and tomatoes, served over basil gnocchi pasta. I asked for it without the spicy sauce, and I didn't feel that the dish needed it, as it was packed with flavors without it. My husband opted for the oven-baked chicken alla parmigiana; breaded chicken breast with marinara sauce, topped with melted mozzarella over spaghetti. I heard no complaints from him.

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□Had I been in the mood for flatbreads, the menu featured plenty of choices, including wild mushroom, margherita (tomatoes, mozzarella and marinara sauce), carne d'Italia (pepperoni, house-made sausage, pancetta and the old favorite spicy marinara sauce), and grilled chicken. Some of the other options on what was quite an expansive menu included whole-wheat fettucini with sauteed zucchini, squash, olives, spinach and garlic; spaghetti or penne pasta with a choice of meatballs or chicken and either marinara or four cheese sauce; pork osso bucco; charred strip steak with five-cheese baked macaroni; and pollo alla cacciatora, a chicken stew.

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□ For dessert, one thing immediately stood out, the tiramisu semifreddo (half-frozen). I adore tiramisu, and I use this as another measure of a good Italian meal, and I really enjoyed my choice. My husband went for the chocolate amarettini cheesecake, which I was also tempted by, as it involves Italian amarettini cookies, which is one of my favorites. I tried some of his, and it was superb. Dessert was definitely the winner for both of us for this meal.

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□ So what did we make of Mama Melrose's? It certainly managed to redeem itself after the not-so-warm welcome we received when we arrived. We would both have preferred a more traditional Italian menu, rather than having it spiced up for us. It's not somewhere I'd immediately rush back to, which is a shame, as we've still not found anywhere that consistently delivers high quality, reasonably-priced food at Disney's Hollywood Studios. I put it like that, as our meals at the Hollywood Brown Derby have been very good, but as it's a Signature restaurant, I'd expect nothing less. If you are planning on visiting Mama Melrose's, keep in mind that you may not get as authentic an Italian experience as you'd get at Tutto Italia or Via Napoli, then you're less likely to be disappointed by what's served up here.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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