

The 'Bounty of the Island' Buffet Dinner at Makahiki: An Aulani Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Want to sample a traditional Hawaiian buffet during your stay at Aulani, A Disney Resort and Spa at Ko Olina, Hawaii?

Then dinner is the time to head to Makahiki, which also plays host to a character breakfast.

Makahiki is a beautiful restaurant, and well worth a visit to admire the setting alone. As you walk in, there's a striking mural of Pele, the goddess of fire. She certainly keeps an eye on everyone there; trust me, it feels as if her eyes follow you around the room! Opposite is a unique wall, created with small squares cut from coconut shells. I was so glad I'd learned that before our visit there, as it gave me an even greater appreciation of what I was seeing.

When you walk into the dining room there are yet more striking, vividly-colored murals on the wall behind the buffet, relating to the food you're about to enjoy. That theme is continued with the ceiling decorations, with various foods dangling temptingly down. I have to be honest, I sat at our table for quite some time just taking that in, as there's so much detail in this.

You can be seated either indoors or outside, and we were lucky enough to sample both options during our two dinners there. When I say the tables are outside, parts are open to the sky, and others are roofed-over, so if you're unlucky and the weather is bad, there's a good chance you will get wet here. The sides are also open to the elements, but when we ate there, there were blinds covering them up. Even if your table is inside, you still get to sample the outdoor atmosphere, as there are large floor-to-ceiling openings between the two sections.

The buffet, known as the Bounty of the Island, features a range of local products, and the menu is certainly wide ranging. During our stay, the selection of appetizers featured a market-fresh salad bar with house-made dressing, lomilomi salmon, poi, sushi, and minestrone soup. Immediately, you can probably spot a far Eastern feel to the food here, and that's very much the case, given the large proportion of Japanese visitors that Aulani receives.

You then move on to my favorite part of the meal, a selection of

seafood on ice, including snow crab legs, shrimp, poke, sashimi, and oysters on the half shell. I wasn't brave enough to sample the oysters, but I can vouch for the quality of the crab, which was absolutely superb. Sadly, the shrimp couldn't match that quality, and were lacking in taste, which was a great shame.

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□The selection of entrees was very comprehensive, with something for everyone's tastes. There was teriyaki chicken, barbecue beef brisket, grilled mahi mahi with tropical salsa, pizza, vegetable chow mein, miso-glazed salmon, pizza, and rigatonia carbonara among the offerings during our stay. I found the items I sampled to be a bit hit or miss. For example, the salmon was absolutely beautiful, while the mahi mahi didn't impress me, as it had been overcooked. There was also a carving station for meat eaters, which I didn't sample, but my husband had no issues with the quality of meat he got from there.

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□To go with this, we could choose from a range of seasonal vegetables, including some unusual options, which I always enjoy seeing on the menu, such as roasted squash with eggplant and bell peppers, stir-fried long beans, and sauteed broccoli.

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□This line-up of food is enough for most people, and I have to confess on our first visit to Makahiki, I did suffer from that buffet-diner's problem, with very little room left for dessert. Having managed to force myself to sample a few (for research purposes of course!), I made sure that on our return visit to the restaurant, I was a little more restrained, as the desserts here are definitely worth saving room for.

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□Again, there's plenty to pick from, although I found a couple of firm favorites during our meals. The first was the guava cake, very unusual, and full of flavor. I absolutely adored it! A close runner-up was the tropical coconut panna cotta, which was just beautiful. The molten chocolate cake was divine, but also exceptionally rich, and try as I might, I couldn't manage much of it as a result. Other options included the more traditional chocolate brownies, bread pudding, cookies, and Rice Krispie treats, just in case you were thinking that all the desserts were on the unusual side.

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□The service here was, a bit like some of the food, a bit hit and miss. We weren't there at the busiest time, and Makahiki was pretty deserted, and yet we didn't get the attentive service we'd hoped for.

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□Dinner here doesn't come cheaply, although having said that, this is a Disney resort, with associated pricing. On our stay, dinner cost \$43/adults, and \$23/children. It's hard to compare the price to anything at a Disney park, as most buffets there come with characters, but

Epcot's Biergarten is only a few dollars less. However, to charge this much, they really do need to work on ensuring that all of the food at the buffet is spot on, along with the service. I'd certainly go back to Makahiki on a return visit, as it's a good way to load up for the night, and it is a beautiful setting, but it is an expensive meal, and I'm not sure whether, for us, it would warrant more than one visit per stay.

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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