

Tusker House Character Breakfast: Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

It's probably fair to say that, when it was first announced that Tusker House in Disney's Animal Kingdom was going to be changed from a counter service to a table service restaurant, the idea had a mixed response from Disney fans.

It's easy to see why. There are few counter service places in Walt Disney World that served food that was as good and had a menu as diverse as Tusker House. What's the old saying? If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it. I couldn't help but feel like that about Tusker House, but equally, I've felt for a long time that part of the problem with Animal Kingdom is that it needs table service restaurants. It's one of the reasons we often don't spend a full day there, as we like to sit down for both lunch and dinner and it's clear that had to change if Disney wanted to encourage people to spend more of their vacation at Animal Kingdom.

It was therefore with some suspicion that we headed for the new character breakfast at Tusker House on the day after Christmas. The main star of the show is Donald, which I was delighted to hear, as the opening of Tusker House coincided with the closure of his Breakfast-a-saurus meal over at Restaurantosaurus. Much as I love them, it's great to see someone other than Mickey, Minnie or Winnie-the-Pooh as a lead character at a Disney meal.

When you arrive, you're made to feel as if you're embarking on a safari into the African savannah and that makes a lot of sense, with Tusker House located in Africa and just a few steps away from Kilimanjaro Safaris. I can imagine that the idea of heading out on safari to get food is probably a lot of fun for kids.

The first stop is to take photos which don't feature any characters, just a backdrop. It's also worth knowing that if you plan to buy a Photopass CD, this photo won't be included on it. The only way you can get it is by purchasing it separately and they'll be around during your meal to show you the finished product. Fortunately, we found a quick "No thanks!" got the message across, as it seems that Disney is now instructing people to avoid the hard sell with these photos at meals. I, for one, was relieved at that.

The next stop will see you meeting your guide, who will take you into

the building and to your table. On the way, they'll also explain about the food that's available at the buffet. It's all themed to look very much like an African marketplace and, in that respect; it hasn't changed that much from when Tusker House was a counter service restaurant.

There are separate areas set up around what used to be the room where you'd order your food. Those include areas for pastries, cereals, frittatas (both meat and vegetarian), breads, fresh fruit and yogurts. I was impressed with the selection of items available to those of us who don't eat meat and, in particular the vegetable quiche, a rather unusual choice for breakfast. Another unusual choice for breakfast, or any other meal of the day in fact, was the orange bread. They had some superb breads with beautiful flavours to them. It's definitely worth giving these a try.

Your server will also offer you what they call "jungle juice", although the most observant amongst you may notice that it has a very striking resemblance to the Frunch that they serve at Boma. I didn't manage to confirm this with our server, but I'm pretty sure that it's exactly the same stuff, just given a new name. It's exceptionally refreshing and gets your day off to a great start.

Despite the fact that this does have an African theme to it, don't worry if you have picky eaters in your family. In that respect, the meal is just like dining at Boma, with plenty of more standard fare for those who don't -- or can't -- step out of their comfort zone.

As for the characters, Tusker House plays host to Donald and his beloved Daisy, along with Mickey Mouse and Goofy. They're all attired in safari gear, which makes for some great photos. It's nice to see the characters dressed in something unusual, rather than their usual gear.

Finally, just a warning to those of you who perhaps prefer a quieter character meal, if there is such a thing. Tusker House hosts a party every half hour or so, where children are invited to dance with the characters. It's very similar to the parade they do at the Crystal Palace or the napkin twirling at Chef Mickey's, but it's worth knowing that in advance. The party does take up a lot of space and you may find yourself trapped at the buffet, as there is no way you can get past when it gets going, so do listen out for the warning they give a few minutes before it's due to start if you don't want to get stuck.

Despite all the fears, Tusker House is still serving up a superb meal, with some wonderful and unusual items on offer, supplemented by a lot of fun with some of your favorite Disney characters. It's a good addition to the range of table service restaurants at Animal Kingdom and I have

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no doubt we'll be heading back there again, if only to sample that wonderful orange bread!

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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