

## Yak & Yeti: Dining With An Asian Flair

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The Walt Disney World Resort is ever changing, and that doesn't mean just adding new attractions or updates to old favorites, it also means new dining opportunities. Over the past few months, we had watched with eager anticipation as plans were announced for various restaurants and each one that was new or had undergone major changes was dutifully added into our itinerary.

One of those that I was probably most eager to try was the new table-service restaurant at Disney's Animal Kingdom. For a long time, I've loved this park, but my main frustration with it has been the lack of good places to sit down and enjoy a good meal. We're just not counter service people. We like to settle down, browse a menu, pick some food and enjoy it, rather than having to go and order it, find a table (sometimes not the easiest of tasks!) and then feel rushed, as other people are in the same position. When I heard about Yak & Yeti, I just knew we had to try it out. Fortunately, that ended up being just a few weeks after it opened.

Set in Asia, its no surprise that Yak & Yeti is an Asian-themed restaurant, offering food that seemed to be Chinese, Japanese, and perhaps Thai in origin. You can start off with a choice of appetizers, soups, and salads. The wonton soup, with pork wontons and a clear chicken broth (\$4.99) got a thumbs up from our table, although I found the prawn flavored crisps (\$4.99) to be nothing special. I think perhaps I was hoping for more than the standard prawn crackers that we get with any Chinese takeaway at home! That's not to say that the menu isn't ambitious. More unusual dishes to start with include the seared ahi tuna (\$9.99), the steamed mussels with a Thai basil broth and lemon grass (\$9.99) and the lettuce cups with minced chicken breast, chopped vegetables and maple tamarind sauce (\$10.99).

There's a strong focus on seafood and fish here at Yak & Yeti, as shown by the fact that of the four specials offered when we dined there, only one was meat-based, the other were all fish. It was one of those that I eventually went for - the seared miso salmon (\$20.99), following a glowing recommendation from our server. It came with jasmine rice, which seemed to be a staple accompaniment to a lot of the main dishes, baby bok choy and a shiitake mushroom stir-fry. As soon as I bit into it, I could see why our server had been so keen on it. It was one of those dishes where all the flavors blend together perfectly and eating every mouthful was an absolute treat.

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If fish isn't your thing, there's plenty for meat eaters, with other dishes including the crispy honey chicken with broccoli, carrots and honey sauce (\$15.99), maple tamarind chicken with an Indonesian tamarind glaze and coconut-ginger rice (\$17.99), duck with Anandapur glaze - a roasted half duckling with orange wasabi glaze, jasmine rice (again) and stir-fried vegetables (\$21.99). My husband went for the shaoxing steak and shrimp (\$22.99). Despite its fancy name, this is essentially surf'n'turf, although the shrimp is tempura-battered and it's served with the ever familiar jasmine rice, stir fried vegetables and chili plum dipping sauce.

One comment I had heard before dining at Yak & Yeti is that there isn't much for true vegetarians and the menu certainly failed to highlight anything under the entrees that didn't feature either fish or meat, which is a great shame. However, this is Disney and usually a word with your server and the chef can come up with something, but it's still a disappointment not to see vegetarian dishes appearing as a matter of course on the menu.

Dessert choices include mango pie (\$6.99), chocolate brownie sundae (\$7.99) and fried wontons (\$7.99), which we sampled. This is skewers of fresh pineapple and cream cheese wontons, vanilla ice cream and honey vanilla drizzle. Odd as it sounds, it seemed to work and was met with smiles from around the table.

If you're thinking that perhaps Yak & Yeti's food is a touch too exotic for you, don't worry. We dined with friends, one of whom I think it's fair to say is fairly conservative in their food tastes and they found plenty to enjoy.

But the food is only half the story here. Yak & Yeti has to be one of the best themed restaurants on Disney property. It's clear the Imagineers had a ball putting this place together. Everywhere you look are Asian artifacts, and this is a photographer's paradise. The minute you walk in, you really do feel as if you're stepping onto a different continent.

Within the restaurant, there are a series of different rooms with different color schemes, including pale greens, blues and orange. As you walk from one part of the restaurant to another, you get a different atmosphere, and that was a great touch. It's worth chatting with the Cast Members here. They were only too happy to explain to us all about some of the artifacts that are on display, some of which have very interesting stories behind them. There's even a fertility Buddha in there, so if children is something you'd like in your future, be sure to find it and rub its belly!

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All in all, Yak & Yeti is a great new addition to dining at Disney's Animal Kingdom and it's just a shame it was so long in arriving. Let's hope, as the park prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary this year that plans are in the works for more table service restaurants in the park's second decade. If they are, Yak and Yeti has already set the bar exceptionally high here for good food and wonderful theming. Any other restaurants here in the future will have a lot to live up to.

*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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