

Pirate's Dinner Adventure: A Dining Review

by Debbie Mekler, PassPorter Guest Contributor

It was 7:20 a.m. on a Friday morning as our buses pulled out of the parking lot with eighty-five middle school music students and a dozen chaperones. After a year of planning, our annual music festival trip at Disneyland had finally begun.

By 4:30 p.m. we had checked into our hotel rooms and the students were hungry and restless. So how do you feed a party of two hundred on a Friday night? For the past seven years, Medieval Times has been the answer of choice, but during a summer trip to Disneyland, I had noticed that there was a new dinner theater in town. Reasoning that it never hurts to try something new, I brought it up to the music director. After a bit of convincing, we decided to try [The Pirate's Dinner Adventure](#). Okay, I'll be honest; it didn't take that much convincing. Each year we have a new "theme" in the music department, and this year just happened to be…pirates! Even the buses were nicknamed. I was in charge of the Black Pearl -- as it should be.

The Jolly Roger flew over the otherwise unassuming building on Beach Boulevard, just down the street from Knott's Berry Farm. (There is also a location in Orlando.) Our reservations were for the 6:00 p.m. show, the doors opened at 4:30 p.m.

Entering the building, we immediately encountered gift shops filled with pirate related items. Chaperones took special note of the wooden swords and other fake weapons, as these were among the items that would be confiscated until this end of the trip if purchased. To the left was a "tavern"-style area, with limited seating, a stage and area to purchase soft drinks in souvenir cups. If you have ever traveled with a group, especially young teens, you will have to agree that the only thing worse than, "are we there yet?" or "how much longer?" is "when do we eat?" Someone at Pirate's must have been aware of this, because hosts and hostesses were stationed throughout the extensive waiting area serving appetizers such as ravioli, cheese cubes, vegetables, and shrimp with a spicy cocktail sauce.

Soon the pre-show started with eight men being chosen from the crowd to participate in dastardly pirate games. Our director's husband was chosen, much to the delight of the students. This demonstration lasted about an hour before diners were ushered into the main hall. Each person's ticket is color coordinated with a specific section and pirate. Ours was the Purple Pirate, who seemed a bit clumsier than and

perhaps not as sharp as the others. As each pirate paraded into the hall with their "crew," they were subject to the taunting of another pirate near the doors.

For those of you who have tried Medieval Times, the set up is much the same; long rows of tables with diners facing the action in the center of the room. Pirate's Dinner is not as large, but there's plenty to keep the attention.

As we sat down, a salad was waiting for us. Dinner was served as the show began, with our choice of beef or seafood to go with the chicken, rice and vegetables. The vegetarians in our group were offered veggie lasagna and our one vegan was presented with a large salad and fruit. Because we had over a dozen vegetarians, we made sure the staff was aware of our special needs beforehand so that they could be prepared, which they were. Dessert, unlimited soda and water were also provided.

While we ate, our attention was diverted to the show. In the middle of the room sat a pirate ship, surrounded by water. There were masts to climb, and ropes to swing on. Soon our pirates are raising cheers from the crowd as they showed off their amazing athletic abilities. We found that the story also involved a female pirate, a princess, and a gypsy. And if there's a princess involved, you can be sure there's a romance in there somewhere. What made this dinner so much fun for kids was their involvement -- loads of involvement. Throughout the show, at least one hundred audience members of various ages are pulled out for participation. It seemed that almost every young person under fifteen had been chosen at one point or another. Even the little ones had a chance. Ever hear a three year old recite the pirate pledge? There was singing, yelling, swordplay and acrobatics to keep everyone interested. At our show, the music seemed a bit loud, drowning out the singing, but otherwise it was all good fun. The show itself runs about ninety minutes, leaving plenty of time for those caught up in the moment to purchase additional souvenirs.

Over the rest of the weekend, I asked for opinions from my group. Most of the kids truly enjoyed themselves, especially those who had been pulled out to join in. They seemed to enjoy the food (I saw a lot of empty plates that night). Vegetarians liked the lasagna option, and our vegan could tell that they really tried to make sure she had enough to eat. Adults who tended to eat out more often weren't as crazy about the food, but many of us were just fine with it. I know I cleaned my plate. My main question was, "did you have fun?" which was answered with a resounding, "Yes!"

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About The Author: Debbie Mekler is a school district music aide in northern California who, among other things, organizes and chaperones the annual Disney trip. She is also married and the mother of three teenage musicians, all of whom are great Disney fans. Debbie has found the PassPorter books to be invaluable tools when planning her vacations, and was thrilled to have a story included in the first edition of the Disneyland PassPorter.

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