

## Rediscovering Nine Dragons: An Epcot Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I don't know about you, but for me, there's nothing more depressing than hearing consistently bad reports about a restaurant at Disney. It certainly puts me off from either going there or returning, but things can change -- and for the better -- as I discovered on my most recent trip.

We last ate at Nine Dragons, the table service restaurant in China, on our 2002 visit and we immediately put it on the "to be avoided at all costs" list. It had nothing to do with the food, which was very good, but everything to do with the prices in there. I seem to recall that, at one time, in the *Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World*, it scored an F when it came to value for money and the scale ran from something like A, which was excellent value, right down to F. No other restaurant was graded so poorly and our experience backed up that rating. It's hard to remember now, but I think our lunch there came to something like \$75 for the two of us and we didn't order the most expensive items from the menu! We were stunned when we got the bill and, ever since we've avoided it.

That all changed on my last trip, when our plans for our final day altered and we were discussing where to go for lunch at Epcot. We tried Le Cellier, more in hope than expectation, and unsurprisingly, it was full, so after a discussion, we thought maybe we'd give Nine Dragons a go and were rewarded with a noon booking for lunch the next day.

When we arrived, it wasn't yet open and, on a baking hot day, we were reduced to waiting outside, which is very unusual for any Disney restaurant. Usually there's somewhere shady to wait, but not here and that's something that really does need addressing, as it was pretty unbearable outside that day, even though it was still only early May.

When we were admitted, we were greeted and immediately checked in, along with the three or four other people who were waiting. We quickly took a seat, but barely had a chance to sit down before our name was called and, feeling very much like royalty, we were led past a row of servers, all bowing to you as you passed.

The first thing I noticed as we were led to our table was how dark it was in here, but in a beautiful way. It's full of mahogany furniture and finishes here, but brightened up by brilliant red and yellow lights. It's actually a very pleasant contrast from outside, particularly on a sunny day. Although you get an Oriental feel from the decor, it's very subtle

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and the feeling you do get is that you're in an exclusive restaurant. The theming wouldn't be out of place in some of the more expensive places that we've eaten at.

However, that slight moment of panic disappeared as soon as we were presented with our menus and we opened them. My eyes went straight to the prices to see just how much this meal was likely to cost us, and I liked what I saw.

You're presented with a choice of hot or cold appetizers and soups and salads and my eye instantly went to the shrimp summer rolls, which were excellent, very tasty, and just the right size. Other choices included pot stickers, sauteed pork and vegetable dumpling with a dipping sauce, which I'm told were very good, fragrant chicken, spicy beef, shrimp and chicken egg rolls, and Chinese chicken salad. Non meat-eaters could opt for the Diosa Yu Tai cucumber salad or vegetarian fried rice. Prices range from \$4 for soup to \$12 for the appetizer sampler for two.

The choice of entrees for lunch wasn't as extensive as the choice of appetizers, but having said that, it was still more impressive than some of the other restaurants we'd sampled earlier in the week. As someone who doesn't eat meat, my eyes instantly went to the fragrant five-spiced fish, which was superb with some beautiful flavors to it. I couldn't fault how much there was on my plate either. I was expecting just one piece of fish -- and at \$22 -- I wouldn't have been too upset at that, so imagine my surprise when the plate arrived complete with two massive pieces of fish!

Other choices for entrees include honey sesame chicken, sweet and sour pork, vegetarian stir fry, peppery shrimp with spinach noodles, and Kung Pao chicken. Everything was reasonably priced, with entrees generally ranging from \$14 to \$17, with just my fish more expensive than that.

As it was such a hot day, all we wanted was ice water and we consumed a fair few glasses of that. Here, I have to compliment our wonderful server, who did an excellent job of ensuring those glasses were kept full. At the speed we were drinking, I can tell you that was no mean feat! You really got the feeling that nothing was too much trouble and our server was always there whenever we needed him.

Without dessert or drinks, our meal came to around \$55, which we both thought was excellent value. The fact that it was a cheaper lunch than the last time I'd dined here seven years earlier tells you exactly how much the value for money has improved here.

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I'll certainly be heading back -- with plans to re-visit Nine Dragons on our next Disney trip, it was that good. Don't let yourself be put off by poor reviews of this restaurant any longer, as it's improved significantly and is now one of the hidden dining jewels at Epcot.

*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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