

Flying Fish Cafe: Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When it comes to dining, Walt Disney World offers perhaps one of the widest ranges of dining opportunities, outside of the world's major cities. It's one of the great draws for us, as we love exploring the different restaurants available, all with something unique. From dining with Mickey or Winnie the Pooh to enjoying superb views of fireworks or dining under the sea, there's literally something for everyone. As a fish lover, you'd imagine that one of my favorite restaurants on Disney property would be the Flying Fish Cafe, wouldn't you?

Although a number of Disney's signature restaurants are known for their excellent fish dishes, let's be honest, when it comes to the Flying Fish Cafe, the emphasis on their menu is highlighted in their very name. There are few restaurants that we visit where the fish choices easily outnumber the meat options, but this is one of them.

Therefore, it may come as a surprise to learn that our first visit to the Flying Fish Cafe in 2004 was far from magical. It probably didn't help that we arrived late, having been stranded waiting for a boat during a freak tropical storm, but the service was exceptionally slow that night, and although the food was good, to us, it was nothing outstanding and nowhere near as good as we had been expecting.

Disappointed, we avoided the restaurant for a number of years, but from hearing from people who had dined there, one thing shone through -- that the Flying Fish Cafe always received glowing reports from diners. I don't think I ever read one review that was critical, which made us think that perhaps we had just hit it on a bad night, as it obviously has an excellent reputation with many.

Our recent return to the Flying Fish Cafe couldn't have been more different from our previous experience. We were seated almost at once, with a table close to the kitchen, so we could watch the chefs at work.

We were looked after by Tim, who must rank alongside Disney's best servers. He knew the menu back to front and was able to recommend choices that were perfect for us, after we described our tastes to him. Where we often need help is with wine selections. We tend to know what we like, but we've no idea whether the wine we like will go with the food we're choosing or not. Here, Tim came into his own and selected a superb Riesling that beautifully complimented all of our courses and we were only too delighted to go ahead and get a bottle to enjoy between the two of us.

He also did a wonderful job of timing our dinner superbly. We had told him when we first saw him that we wanted to be done to head into Epcot to see IllumiNations and he obviously kept that in mind. At no point did we feel rushed during the meal, but we did notice as it got towards the end, that we were ahead of other people that had been seated at the same time of us. In fact, we were finished with about 40 minutes to spare before the nightly show, which proved to be perfect timing.

Our table was perfect as well, near to where the chefs were creating our meals and, every so often, our attention would be grabbed by a flame exploding from the grill. When we had eaten here previously, we hadn't even realized that there was a show kitchen, so this was a real attraction for us. Somehow, I always admire chefs even more when they're cooking in front of the people who will be eating those meals. To me, that takes even more confidence and is something I could never do. The last thing I want is people watching me when I'm cooking!

We were on the Deluxe Dining Plan for our meal at the Flying Fish Cafe, so price was no limit for us, which was a lovely feeling and certainly allowed me to relax a bit more during all our meals at signature restaurants. That probably explains why I started my meal with the Flying Fish artisanal cheeses. The five choices were largely unfamiliar to me and I'm a huge cheese connoisseur, so that said something. All were excellent and came with a range of different accompaniments, all of which fitted the cheese in question perfectly. I was also able to sample the Maine Lobster and Cinco Quesos (or five cheeses to you and me) quesadillas and those were just as good as my choice.

There was only one choice for me for the entree and that had to be the Chef's Thunder, a regularly changing dish, which is the restaurant's signature dish. On the day we visited it was pan roasted Florida day-boat Mahi Mahi, which came with a selection of vegetables. It was slightly too spicy for me to finish it, but all the same, the flavors from it were beautiful.

Sadly, even all the wonderful fish choices on the menu couldn't tempt my meat loving husband and he went for another signature dish, the char-crusted New York strip steak, although he did conclude that the best dishes here were the fish ones. Perhaps, bearing in mind the restaurant's name, that's no real surprise.

One thing that did surprise me -- and very pleasantly -- was the choice of desserts here. Recently I've found that a lot of menus at the Disney restaurants are becoming very similar and that's something I've noticed with the desserts in particular. Here, there was no such issue. I went for the trio of home-made sorbets, which blended together beautifully,

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while my husband went for the Study in Fall's Best Pears, which included a tiny, white chocolate mousse-filled baked pear, crisp pastry of French pear and dried cranberries, and a rustic red pear cobbler. Now how often do you see something like that on a Disney restaurant's menu these days? It seemed very appropriate, given that it was the Food and Wine Festival, which included a special display on pears this year at the American Adventure.

Although the bill wasn't a worry to us as we were on the Deluxe Dining Plan, for three courses and a bottle of wine, it came to \$127. Yes, it's a lot of money, but it's also a wonderful experience and one that we'll be heading back to enjoy on our next visit to Walt Disney World.

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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