

Kona Cafe: A Hidden Jewel at The Polynesian

by Mary Albright, *PassPorter Guest Contributor*

I admit that dining is a big part of what I enjoy about my vacations to Walt Disney World. Like most return visitors, we have our favorite haunts and our "must-do" places to eat. But every trip, I want to try something new so it isn't the same old-same old each time we visit.

When the time came to make our December 2006 Advanced Dining Reservations (ADR), I usually would have booked 'Ohana (also at the Polynesian) since my kids, my husband and I love the food there. But I have been dying to go to Kona Cafe since I saw some of their menu items. We were giving the Disney Dining Plan a trial run this trip, so I booked Kona Cafe as our first dinner the day we arrived in Florida.

We had eaten at Kona Cafe for breakfast on previous trips and like most people, fell in love with Tonga Toast, but this was our first dinner there. I feel that Kona Cafe is a hidden jewel among the dining options at Walt Disney World - great food, great service, but not always on everyone's radar.

It was a very busy Saturday evening at the Polynesian Resort. The line to check in at 'Ohana, next door to Kona Cafe, was very long. In contrast, we waited behind just one party while checking in at the Kona Cafe. We had a 5:30pm ADR, checked in at the podium a few minutes early and were given a beeper. The nice thing about the Polynesian is that the beepers work all over that second floor. So we wandered over to Trader Jack's and shopped a bit. Maybe 5 minutes later, our beeper went off and we were promptly seated. Debbie was our server and she was fantastic. We ordered Coke, Diet Coke, Lemonade and Root Beer all around and started working on appetizers. We asked if we could just put in our whole order with her all at once since we were hungry. She said that would work well because there were a couple larger parties and we'd probably get our food quicker if we did that. Since my children were 10 and 11, respectively, they were treated as adults on the Disney Dining Plan. This worked great because they could each pick things they liked and get good and full!

My daughter, Caitlin, ordered the pot-stickers, which were little dumplings. They were filled with duck meat and came with a creamy ginger soy sauce and some pickled cucumbers. My son, Stefan, ordered the sticky chicken wings, which came with a garlic sauce and sesame seeds on top. This was a very generous serving of chicken wings; it

easily would be a nice appetizer for the entire table. I ordered the crab cakes, which was served with a tartar sauce and pineapple relish. I really liked the crab cakes, 'though I'm not really into crab cakes at all. I thought my portion was a perfect appetizer size for one person. My husband, Bryan, had the Creamy Kona Seafood Chowder. It's a blend of shrimp, crab and fish in a sort of creamy bisque. He really enjoyed that soup. Caitlin didn't really care for her pot-stickers, but I think it was more because she loves chicken and wanted Stefan's chicken wings. They pretty much inhaled that plate. The plate of chicken wings could easily have been an entree for Caitlin, but they did well sharing together.

When we ordered our entrees, Caitlin wanted to get the turkey medallions and Debbie told her right away that she would not like that. I appreciated her honesty and her assistance in helping Caitlin pick something that she would like. She asked Caitlin what she liked. Caitlin describes herself as a "meat-o-saurus" and her favorite meat is always chicken. She tells Debbie, "chicken" so Debbie recommended she have the Coconut Chicken. It also came with Asian greens, pineapple, strawberries and a yummy honey-lime dressing. Caitlin ate the chicken; I ate her "salad", as she put it, and everyone was happy.

Stefan ordered the shrimp and scallops entree, which came with sticky rice and a variety of dipping sauces. He loves shrimp and was ready to try scallops. He inhaled his shrimp pretty darn quick, but didn't care much for the taste of scallops. I was happy to help him finish those off!

Bryan ordered the prime rib with mashed potatoes and stir-fried broccoli. It was slow-roasted and must have tasted pretty good because it wasn't too long before he was wiping his plate clean.

I ordered the Macadamia Nut Encrusted Mahi Mahi. It came with mushroom rice, sauteed bok choy and fried onions, with a lime-butter sauce. Mahi Mahi is my absolute favorite fish. I loved this dish and ate everything! I don't even like onions as a rule, and I made those fried onions disappear. Caitlin's favorite word to describe really good food is "Yumatrocious!" and that applied to every bite of my entree.

Then it was time for dessert. Kona Cafe has a wonderful dessert selection. Stefan opted for the Kona Kone, which had 2 kinds of ice cream in a sugar cone with cotton candy around the bottom. He loves ice cream so this was a good deal for him. Since Caitlin considers chocolate a food group unto itself, she ordered the Kilauea Torte. She giggled with glee when that chocolate fudge oozed out of the cake when she cut into it.

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Bryan chose the White Chocolate Cheesecake. He generally doesn't like white chocolate, but commented that this cheesecake was quite tasty.

I had the Caramel-Banana Crème Brulee. All I can say is "Oh my gosh!" I love crème brulee and this was just rub-your-tummy good!

As we were on the Disney Dining Plan, this meal used four (4) Table Service Credits. If we hadn't been on the dining plan, this meal would have cost \$179.22. I felt that for our family, this was a very good value. We all tried new things that we hadn't tried before and I enjoyed being able to do that without worrying about the total cost.

Dinner at Kona Cafe was a definite thumbs-up and we plan to visit here again for dinner on our next trip to Walt Disney World.

About The Author: Mary Albright is a previous PassPorter News Guest Contributor. Married with two children, she lives in Minnesota and works as a director for a direct sales company. She has visited Walt Disney World 11 times since 2000. Her next trip is December 2007.

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