

# Coral Reef: Walt Disney World Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

□ We all know there's a myriad of dining options at Walt Disney World, many of them exceptionally unusual.

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□ But there's only one place in the World where you can literally go under the sea and dine with the fish at the Coral Reef.

□ The Coral Reef is part of the pavilion that's now home to the Seas with Nemo and Friends, and was once known as The Living Seas. The restaurant is one of those places that you probably won't find unless you know where it is, as it's hidden off to the side from the pavilion's main entrance, and you do have to go looking for it, but when you get there, you're immediately transported a million miles away from Epcot. The doors, with their seahorse handles, give you an idea of what awaits. The lights look like shells or coral, while the windows inside are cleverly decorated to give you the feeling of being under the sea, complete with sand.

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□ We were seated very quickly, although sadly when we got into the restaurant proper, it became clear that it wasn't the greatest table. Let's be honest, anyone who comes to the Coral Reef wants a front row seat, because those are right in front of the pi&egrave;ce de resistance for this restaurant, the huge aquarium tank packed with marine life. The chances are, at any time, you'll see something swim past, from stingrays to tropical fish to turtles.

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□ I'll say here that the last time we ate at the Coral Reef was many, many years ago. It's taken us a long time to return, because the first time was so awful. The food wasn't brilliant, but it was the service that really let us down, with our server actually disappearing permanently halfway through our meal! Having looked and looked for him, we found someone else and concluded that he'd gone home, as there seemed to be no other explanation.

□ So, bearing that in mind, how was our return visit? First off, the service wasn't amazing, although it was certainly better than the previous attempt. We found our server to be a bit offhand and not that interested in listening to what we were trying to tell him, which was a great shame.

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Turning to the menu, I was spoilt for choice, with some lovely seafood on offer as you'd expect from a restaurant called the Coral Reef. In the end, I went for the crab cakes with tropical fruit salsa and tequila & lime. I really couldn't fault the crab cakes themselves, although I wasn't 100% about the way the flavours blended together in this dish. If you like crab cakes, this is a good place to try them at Disney.

Other options included the creamy lobster soup (which sounded wonderful, apart from the fact that it includes tarragon, which I can't stand), crispy-fried shrimp with a Jicama slaw and spiced remoulade, and steamed mussels with cilantro sofrito, fennel, tomatoes and toasted ciabatta. If you really can't make up your mind, and you're prepared to share, then the appetizer for two gives you the chance to sample the crispy-fried shrimp, crab cakes, and creamy lobster soup.

When we dined at the Coral Reef, the entrees were pretty evenly divided between meat and fish dishes, with a vegetarian option included as well. I opted for the lobster ravioli with fresh shrimp and lobster cream, after learning I could get the tarragon removed. It's an ingredient that they seem particularly fond of here. The dish was absolutely beautiful, and surprisingly light, as all too often this sort of item can be exceptionally rich.

My husband seemed to enjoy the grilled New York strip steak, served with horseradish smashed potatoes and market fresh vegetables. The other fish options on the menu were seared Scottish salmon, seared rainbow trout, and grilled Mahi Mahi, while meat eaters could also enjoy a seared chicken breast or roasted pork chop. For vegetarians, mushroom phyllo crisp or Caesar salad, minus the optional chicken or shrimp, are both possibilities.

Now to what is usually my favourite part of any meal -- the dessert! Sadly, here, it wasn't to be a winner for me. I was fascinated by the idea of the passion fruit creme brulee, as it sounded deliciously different, but I was exceptionally disappointed by it. It was very sweet and sickly, much more than I'd expected, which was a nasty shock to the system. I wished instead that I'd gone for the signature dish here, Chocolate Wave with raspberry gelato. Having heard so many good things about it from other Disney fans, I think it would have been a wiser choice. My husband gave the key lime mousse the thumbs up, while the Bailey's and Jack Daniels mousse was another option I seriously considered. If only I could have sampled a range of different desserts here!

Although our lunch here wasn't a 100% success, it was certainly a huge improvement on our previous visit. Part of the attraction here is

the theming, with the wonderful vista of the tank in front of you. Maybe one day we'll be able to enjoy a front row seat for those! The food, from what we've sampled, does seem to be a bit hit or miss, but when it's good, it's exceptionally good. It'll be interesting to see whether it's third time lucky when we next return.

*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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