

## Mission: Burger: Burgers Around Walt Disney World

by Heather Macdonald, PassPorter Guest Contributor

☐ The very first thing I think about when I'm visiting any theme park is food, and it seems to me that the quintessential theme park food is the cheeseburger.

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☐ Now there are literally dozens of places at Walt Disney World (WDW) where you can order a Plain Jane cheeseburger and fries. However, you might be surprised to find out that WDW has recently upgraded some of its restaurant burgers to feature some upscale, gourmet toppings.

I set off this year to try as many WDW cheeseburgers as I could handle. Back home, planning my visits, I referred to it jokingly as "Mission: Burger." Many of you know me as a foodie, a super fan of the ultra-gourmet and fine dining. You are probably shocked to discover that my favorite food is cheeseburgers. I could easily eat a cheeseburger every single day for the rest of my life. I thought I'd share my thoughts on a few of WDW's cheeseburger offerings. You may even see more from on this mission in the future, because there are still six or seven burgers on my list to try.

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☐ The first burger joint that offered a specialty counter service burger was Pecos Bill's Tall Tale Inn, in the Magic Kingdom. The new burger made its debut there about a year or so ago, and was one of the first on my list to try. Their new burger is a 1/3 lb. Angus Burger topped with bacon, onion rings, and barbeque sauce, and comes with a choice of fries or apple slices. Honestly, if you are ordering a burger with bacon on it, do you really want apple slices? But it's nice to have choices.

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☐ I doctored my burger up at Pecos Bill's famous Fixins Bar--adding tomato and removing the onions. After a few bites I added ketchup and mayo. Why? This burger was dry. Somebody in the kitchen there is cooking burgers to death. I also found the barbeque sauce to be too sweet and the bacon slightly underdone. It was a passable meal, but not one I'll be running back to repeat.

My second counter service burger was an absolute star. Two locations in Epcot are offering new counter service burgers: The Liberty Inn and Electric Umbrella. I actually took a poll on the PassPorter Message Boards to see which burger everyone was more interested in hearing about. The Liberty Inn was the clear winner, and I'm so glad it was!

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☐ The Liberty Inn burger is an Angus burger topped with smoked ham,

bacon, smoked Gouda cheese, red onion, tomato, pickle, lettuce, and mustard aioli sauce. Mustard aioli is a mustard mayo. I should have asked them to leave the onions off, but I wanted a photo to represent what you get if you order the meal. I believe you have the option of fries or grapes, but again, who wants fruit with a cheeseburger?

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□ This is hands down the best counter service burger I've ever had at WDW, maybe the best burger anywhere at WDW. I know that you are thinking that it can't possibly be better than Beaches & Cream, but this burger is special. The ham and cheese add wonderful smokey notes, the bacon adds fat and salt (both of which are very important to a good moist burger), the veggies are super crunchy, and the aioli is tangy and creamy. I didn't add anything at all to this burger, not even ketchup, it was good and moist enough to not need extra sauce. Just a note: there is no longer a fixins bar at Liberty Inn, but the condiment station has a ton of choices, maybe because chicken nuggets are a popular menu option. Give Liberty Inn's burger a try, you'll be impressed. I still have to get over to the Electric Umbrella to try their mushroom and blue cheese burger, so stay tuned.

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□ Other locations offering gourmet counter service burgers include the All-Star Resorts, the Caribbean Beach Resort, Pop Century Resort, both Port Orleans Resorts (French Quarter and Riverside), and in the parks Cosmic Rays at Magic Kingdom, and the ABC Commissary, Rosie's All American Cafe, and Backlot Express at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

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□ Moving on to table service restaurants. I'm going to tackle two of those here, and the first is tops on everyone's list for best burger: Beaches & Cream at the Beach Club Resort. I've been to Beaches & Cream a couple of times in the last year or two. I like that they cook your burger to order, and I love watching them do it from the diner-like counter.

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□ Here's my main beef with the burgers at Beaches & Cream; the burger patties that they use are too thin, and as a result they don't often get the temperature correct. I expect to eat a well done burger at a counter service location. I don't expect it at a table service restaurant. I like my burgers on the rare side of medium rare. This problem is not unique to Beaches & Cream, as you'll find the same problem at Captain's Grille at the Yacht Club, where the burger is almost identical to the ones served at Beaches & Cream. The burger at both locations is tasty and moist; I just don't find it to be anything special.

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□ The last offering on the burger menu today is the 10 oz. Kobe Beef Burger at Yak and Yeti, at Disney's Animal Kingdom. It comes with crispy shoe string fries and is topped with sesame soy sauce, mayo, and

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a choice of either mushroom and scallion compote or Asian slaw. The flavors in this burger are really nice, with mushrooms adding a nice salty soy taste. The mayo is flavored with onion and garlic, so there are lots of different flavor profiles going on. It was quite a good burger!

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□The skinny fries that accompany this dish are a nice change from the regular, fatter WDW fries. They also provide extra mayo for dipping--so I didn't have to ask for more! I do have to tell you that my first burger came out well done, and I had ordered it medium rare, so I sent it back. I told my server that he could actually order it rare, figuring it would come out closer to what I wanted. I'm glad I did, because the second go round came out on the far side of medium rare, but it still tasted good. I'm going to have to go back and try it again with the Asian slaw option.

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□There is still a ton of burgers that I have to try, including Chef's De France and Le Cellier at Epcot, and Grand Floridian Cafe. Hopefully I'll be able to revisit this topic soon!

*About The Author: Heather is a PassPorter Message Board Guide (moderator). She lives in New Orleans and works for a major hotel chain as a bartender. Heather visited Walt Disney World as a child and after surviving Hurrican Katrina, thought it would be the perfect escape vacation! She loved it so much that she has been 10 times in the last five years.*

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