

Disney Character Dining Around the Globe: Disney Dining Reviews

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

If you've ever experienced dining with the characters at Walt Disney World, you'll know there's a certain way that these things are done.

Travel to another Disney park around the world, and you could be in for a shock... I know we certainly were!

For those of you who haven't been fortunate enough to dine with the characters (and if you haven't, why not? It's an amazing experience!), then let me explain how it works in Orlando. You go to a restaurant, and you'll either get your food from a buffet, as at Chef Mickey's or the Crystal Palace, or it will be brought out to your table family-style, as at 'Ohana. You may even be able to order dishes, as you do at the Princess Storybook meals at Akerhaus in Epcot's Norway.

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□ You'll generally have a good idea in advance of which characters you'll see at your meal, although Disney does always say that no one character is ever guaranteed. However, you can pretty much expect to see a raft of princesses if you head to Cinderella's Royal Table or Akershus, and Cinderella, her evil step-sisters, and step-mother are stalwarts nightly at 1900 Park Fare. Want to see the number one duck? Then Donald's usually around at Tusker House, while the main mouse is usually the star attraction at Chef Mickey's. There's also usually some link between the characters, with the Crystal Palace home to the Hundred Acre Wood characters, while you can often find the likes of Goofy, Pluto, Chip, and Dale around Mickey, Minnie, or Donald.

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□ So now you know what to expect, head to another Disney theme park around the world, and you should get more of the same, right? Not one bit of it! The first time we visited Disneyland was in 2006, and I was a little surprised not to have more idea of which characters we'd be meeting at the various meals we'd booked at. As soon as we settled down to enjoy our first character meal at Goofy's Kitchen at the Disneyland Hotel, I understood why. Of course Goofy was there, but so too was a multitude of other characters, some literally related to Goofy, like Max, others with a natural link, like Chip and Dale, but others who were just completely off the wall. It was fascinating to see more and more characters emerging as the meal went on. There were so many that we couldn't keep track of them all, and almost had to start noting them down to ensure that we didn't miss any of them. We were blown away by what we'd seen.

It was more of the same when we visited the Plaza Inn for Minnie & Friends - Breakfast in the Park four years later, where we encountered at least 12 different characters. And it's obviously something that other Disney parks have stolen as an idea as well. In late 2008, we went to our first character meal at Disneyland Resort Paris, at Cafe Mickey in the Disney Village. Of course, given the name you'd expect to see Mickey Mouse, and indeed there he was, but once again, he was surrounded by a complete mismatch of friends, to put it bluntly! Where else can you find Eeyore, Friar Tuck, Tigger, Mr. Smee, Gepetto, Pluto, and King John in one place? We were delighted, especially as we hadn't seen some of those characters in the parks over recent years. When was the last time you saw King John, Gepetto, or Friar Tuck out in Walt Disney World?

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□As the meal wore on, we discovered another huge difference in character meals here, compared to Walt Disney World. At places like Ohana and the Crystal Palace, the characters have a regular celebration, but in truth, they don't get that energetic, not like they do at Disneyland Paris. Watching Eeyore and Gepetto, both doing high energy dancing to the music that night, was something that will stay with me for the rest of my life. It's nothing like the experience at Walt Disney World, perhaps something to do with the fact that the temperatures are a lot cooler here, so perhaps it's easier to do here?

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□It's something we also noticed at Hong Kong Disneyland, when we dined at the Enchanted Garden restaurant at the Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel. Although the characters made a lot of sense--essentially the "Fab Five," i.e. Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy, and Pluto--they were certainly full of energy. Pluto, like any good dog, wanted constant attention, and we had an absolute ball with them, in a way that we don't necessarily get to enjoy in Walt Disney World. It may be a cultural thing, but there's a lot more physical interaction in Hong Kong, with Goofy hitting me on the head for example, than you tend to encounter in the American parks.

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□Something else that's very different if you visit Disneyland in California, that we haven't seen in any other Disney theme park, is the communication with the characters. Forget sign language, these guys go one step further, writing messages to you on the paper table cloths that they have here. We were staggered when we had an entire conversation with Chip on our first Disneyland trip, carefully covered up any time his handler walked past, only to have a similar experience with Captain Hook on our return last year. It certainly makes for a lot more fun, although obviously it does slow the circulation of characters down, making for a longer meal.

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□If you are heading to any of the other Disney theme parks around the world, I can highly recommend a character meal at any of them. It may not be what you're used to from Walt Disney World, but that's part of the fun and entertainment of them.

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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