

Choosing Your Disney Dining Reservations: Walt Disney World Dining Planning

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Every time we visit Walt Disney World, one of the highlights for us is the amazing selection of dining on offer.

But with so many places to choose from comes a problem. How on earth do you decide? We're fortunate in that we usually spend longer visiting Disney than many people do, but even on a two-week vacation, you're not going to be able to fit everything in, and you're going to have to make some tough choices. So how do you do it? Well, here's how we set about it.

We very rarely dine anywhere but table service restaurants at Disney. We like being able to sit down and take a break from touring the parks, and table service allows us the opportunity to rest our feet for an hour or so, while sampling some wonderful cuisine. Our usual pattern is two full meals a day, mostly lunch and dinner (as we're not huge breakfast fans), with a snack for the third meal. As such, the Disney Dining Plans don't entirely match our eating habits. However, the closest is the Deluxe Dining Plan, offering three table service credits and two snacks per night of your stay per person.

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□ This means if we want to use the Deluxe Plan, we need to have some meals at Signature restaurants included, to make best use of all our credits. So the first question to answer for each vacation is whether we're going to use the Deluxe Dining Plan or not, as that will affect the type of meals we're going to go for. Well, this time, we did want to do that, mainly because of the new addition of restaurants to the Dining Plan this year. I already knew, as soon as those changes were announced, that I wanted to sample dinner at both Fulton's Crab House, and Bistro de Paris. Although we've been to Fulton's before for lunch, dinner has been too pricey for us, while we've never been to Bistro before, so that will be a new experience for us.

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□ Aside from that, we had the old favorites that we just have to go back every single time, and I'm sure you do, too. For us, that's Boma, Beaches and Cream, the California Grill, the Crystal Palace, 'Ohana, and Teppan Edo, so all of those went on to the list. Now you start to see how quickly our days fill up!

The next step was to settle down, and go through The List, so called

because it's a spreadsheet we've made with every single Walt Disney World restaurant on it. We look at each one, and think about whether we want to eat there or not, also considering how long ago we last dined there. We go through this process together, saying "Yes," "Maybe," or "No" to each one. After that, you've hopefully got a short list, although inevitably, it's never as short as you'd like.

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□The next step in the process is to automatically include the restaurants we said yes to, provided there aren't too many of them. Then we look at how many more slots we have, and start filling them up with the "maybe" options. We tend to find that dinners fill up very quickly, particularly if we're going to be eating at Signature restaurants, as many of them are open only for dinner. That means that if we have a question mark over our "maybe" restaurants, if they're open for lunch, then they've got a much better chance of making the final list.

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□It's at this stage that we start to look at which resorts we're going to stay. We learned a couple of vacations back that it's much more enjoyable to have dinner at your resort once in a while, as then we can share a bottle of wine and not worry about how we're going to get back to the resort. After all, if you're in nice clothes, you really don't want to be getting on Disney buses. As our tour of the resorts will take us to Animal Kingdom Lodge and Bay Lake Tower, that accommodated two of our favorites for dinner, Boma, and California Grill. Into that, we added Jiko into the mix, along with 'Ohana, with the Polynesian easy enough to reach from the Contemporary.

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□Next, we start looking at which parks we're going to be in on which days, and start adding in restaurants to those days. That's how places like Yak and Yeti, Mama Melrose's, and the Liberty Tree Tavern found their way on to the selected list.

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□Before we knew it, the list was closed off -- after all, we have only got eight full days on property on this upcoming trip, and there was a waiting list just in case any other gaps should come up. And wouldn't you know it? One space did open up, with the surprise news that we would be returning to Walt Disney World for one final lunch after our cruise on the Disney Fantasy. I was ready with a set of options to fill that gap.

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□Despite all my careful preparations, I'd managed to miss one key restaurant -- one that currently isn't even open -- Be Our Guest in the newly expanded part of Fantasyland. As to whether, and how, we'll fit that one in remains to be seen, but already my mind is working on that one, and I have a few ideas....

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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