

The Benefits of Late Dining on a Disney Cruise: A Disney Cruise Line Review

by Michele Dakho, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Rotational dining on the Disney Cruise Line has so much to offer.

As your server team rotates with you each night to a different dining room, they get to know your family and tend to each and every food whim you may have during your vacation. For the purposes of efficiency and crowd control, Disney Cruise Line offers two dining times; first seating is at 5:45 pm and second seating at 8:15 pm. While the first seating is at dinner the second seating is watching the nightly show, and while the second seating is having their dinner the first seating is watching the show.

Many families insist on the 5:45 time slot, as it is closer to a "regular" dinnertime. Families with small children especially find that 8:15 is too late to start dinner with the little ones, who end up asleep in their appetizer.

□ Before you jump on the bandwagon for first seating dining, consider the benefits of second seating dining and you might discover it is the better choice for your family.

□ Consider how it fits in to the rest of your day: There is more to your dining time than just your dining time; you have to consider how it fits in to the rest of your day. Imagine it's a beautiful sunny day on deck and you're enjoying the afternoon, maybe reading a book or having coffee in the Cove Cafe, riding down the AquaDuck, or relaxing at the quiet pool... ahhh, paradise! But now you have to cut your time on deck short and rush to get ready for dinner at 5:45 pm. Oh darn, bet you wish you had second seating now!

Enjoy the show first: Second seating diners see the nightly show while the first seating is at dinner. If you are nervous about having topics to discuss with your new tablemates, the show you just came from can give you a lot of material to break the ice.

□ Tip: Yes, often times families will be combined at dinner, before you run away screaming "Stranger danger, stranger danger!" give it a chance; some of the best friends made are cruise friends, and you already have something in common... you're on a Disney cruise! Disney Cruise Line does their best to place families and individuals together

that have common interests (for example children are similar ages, adults are in similar age groups, may be fellow Disney Vacation Club members, etc.)

□ A quieter dining experience: While you will not find an intimate dinner for two (usually) in the dining room, the hustle and bustle of the dining room experience is a nice backdrop for your nightly dinner. The soundtrack at the earlier dining however, may leave something to be desired. Of no fault of their own infants and small children generally don't enjoy sitting still for long periods of time, and the early seating is naturally popular for families with small children. This usually means a symphony of wailing little ones and their frustrated parents. If you are having an adults-only vacation or have children who are old enough to sit still, do yourself (and your ears!) a favor and select second seating!

□ A more leisurely dinner: While I haven't personally heard anyone complain about the dining experience on a cruise being rushed, some at the early seating may feel a bit of pressure to exit the dining room after their meal is finished. The early seating has to be cleared out of the dining room and the dining room has to be completely reset for the 8:15 seating. This means having another cup of coffee after your dessert and carrying on with conversation isn't exactly welcomed.

□ These are a few reasons to consider second seating. If any of these appeal to you, give it a try and see how it works for your family. Sometimes it's nice to go against the grain and be a little rebellious on vacation, so break the mold and eat late! Carpe diem!

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