

Carthay Circle Restaurant: Disney California Adventure Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The re-theming of Disney California Adventure brought many changes, with the addition of a whole new area, Cars Land, revamped and new attractions in the Paradise Pier area of the park, and a totally new look to the park's entrance.

Situated at the end of Buena Vista Street is Carthay Circle, with the landmark here being a re-creation of the Carthay Circle Theatre, which houses a restaurant of the same name.

The original Carthay Circle Theatre has a rich history to it, having been the location where Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs premiered on December 21, 1937 (incidentally to become my birthday a mere 35 years later!), and Disney's version certainly pays homage to that. The second you step inside to the lobby, there are photographs reminding you of that historic day, which are fascinating to look at.

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□ However, one thing I should say is that getting inside this restaurant is interesting. There's a Cast Member located outside, and you either give your reservation details to her or ask to eat in the lounge downstairs, before you're admitted. It does add a feeling of exclusivity to the whole thing, making you feel like a VIP before you've even settled down to enjoy any food.

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□ You then check in at the podium downstairs, and like us, you may have some time to sit downstairs and take in the atmosphere before you're escorted upstairs to your table. From the second the door closes behind you, you don't feel as if you're in Disneyland anymore. Instead, it feels as if you're in a classy Hollywood venue back in the 1920s or 1930s. As you sweep up the stairs there are various images of Walt Disney from his heyday, which were just wonderful to see.

However, the beautiful theming to this restaurant was only just beginning. When we got upstairs, we were presented with a ceiling that replicates scenes from the enchanted forest in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, which I thought was a lovely touch. We were seated by this, and near to the kitchen, although I took the opportunity to wander around the restaurant, and there are several seating areas, including one that was for a large party all on its own. Now I really would feel special dining at that table!

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□ We were dining there on the World of Color dining package, which

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meant we got either an appetizer and entree or an entree and dessert. We opted for the latter, after considering one of us going for appetizer, and the other for dessert, so we could share those two courses, but although many of the starters could be shared, sadly the desserts didn't really fall into that category.

□ Had we wanted appetizers, choices included Thai winter squash broth (appropriately enough, as we dined there on Christmas Eve), Fire Cracker duck wings, Chenel goat chese-stuffed grape leaves, crispy portobello mushroom gorditas, and the Carthay signature fried biscuits with white cheddar, bacon, and jalapeño served with apricot honey butter.

□ The second I opened the menu, I was impressed with the options. I don't eat meat, and most restaurants offer me some choices, but not a huge amount. The fact that I had to ask our wonderful server Holly for advice tells you a lot. As well as vegetarian winter mushroom risotto and Skuna Bay salmon, there was also citrus seared Pacific wild swordfish with a relish of roasted red bell pepper, caperberry, and orange, which was my pick. They weren't flavors I thought would go together, but my goodness, they did!

□ My husband went for Colorado rack of lamb chop and braised lamb osso bucco, and when he said it was better than the lamb he's had at Palo on the Disney Cruise Line, I knew it was high praise indeed. Other options included the roasted organic chicken ruby red grapefruit salad, grilled quail Spanish barbacoa style, and short rib raviolis sauteed in sage brown butter. It is certainly a very creative menu.

□ I'll say a word here about the wine selection. There's a good choice here, including wines that have links to the Walt Disney family, which was very interesting to see. Soon it was time for dessert, and I opted for the Cordiella chocolate decadent layer cake, definitely the right name for this thing! Thank goodness it came with raspberry sauce, which helped to offset its delicious richness. My husband opted for the warm Enchanted Apple upside down cake (love the Snow White reference), which he enjoyed just as much as I enjoyed mine. We could have also chosen from the toasted lemon pound cake, warm winter pear and persimmon country pie or the warm rocky road brownie sundae.

□ One final thing I will say about the World of Color dining package is that if you dine here, you get the best location for the World of Color show, absolutely center on to the lagoon. Mind you, that does seem only fair. The food here, while amazing, certainly isn't cheap, and our meal, without drinks, tax or gratuity, came to \$100 for the two of us, but it was worth every cent.

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□ It almost seemed a shame when it was done to head back outside into the real world, even if that real world was still Disney! This restaurant has become a new must-do for our every visit to Disneyland, and is a superb addition to their dining repertoire.

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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