

The Hollywood Brown Derby at Disney's Hollywood Studios: A Walt Disney World Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

□ It's rare that my husband I disagree, when it comes to Disney dining anyway!

□ Usually we both love a restaurant, or if we have a bad experience there, neither of us wants to return. The Hollywood Brown Derby in Disney's Hollywood Studios is one of those rare places that does divide us.

□ I absolutely fell in love with the food there and the whole ambiance of the place the first time we went there for lunch, all the way back on our honeymoon in 1999. My view has never changed since then. However, for some reason, and even he can't put his finger on it, my husband has just never been enthused about the place. By his own admission, it's not as if we've had a bad meal there -- it just doesn't seem to do much for him. That's probably why it's taken us many years to get back there, as I almost had to get him there kicking and screaming. Ok, so that might be a bit of an exaggeration, but he certainly wasn't jumping up and down with enthusiasm, let's just put it that way.

□ On our most recent Walt Disney World trip, we headed to the Hollywood Brown Derby for lunch, and we had barely a wait before we were taken to our table. It turned out that we'd been seated in one of the coveted booths, and I can say that with confidence, as we saw a couple of parties come in, refuse tables, and specifically ask for booths.

□ For anyone who's unfamiliar with the story of the original Brown Derby, well really it was the place to be seen in Hollywood, as it was frequented by stars such as Charlie Chaplin, John Wayne and Bette Davis. As you might expect, the second you walk in here, you're transported back to the era of the 1920s or 1930s, and I have to confess I do feel a bit underdressed walking in here in just park gear, although in fairness, there is no dress code. However, the whole place has a regal feel to it, and you do feel a bit like Hollywood royalty in here, particularly if you're lucky enough to snag one of those booths!

□ We've always found the service to be very attentive every time we've

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eaten here, and our latest visit was no different. You get the feel with the servers that they really want to be here, and love working in this environment, and I can see why. Sure, it's busy, but somehow it's got a relaxed feel to it as well, and you don't worry if your meal takes a little bit longer. We were there for more than two hours, and it wasn't an issue at all, as the meal was very well paced, but something to bear in mind. You don't want to book Fastpass+ for an hour after you sit down, otherwise you may not make it in time.

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□ Now the famous dish in here is the Cobb salad, created one night when owner Robert Cobb raided the refrigerator, looking for a midnight snack for Sid Grauman. It's made up of finely chopped greens, turkey breast, bacon, egg, tomato, crumbled blue cheese, chives and Cobb dressing, although you can ask for ingredients to be left off if you have allergies or if, like me, you don't eat meat. One thing that's worth knowing is that if you order an appetizer side portion, as my husband did, they don't mix it up for you. If you get it as an entree, then it comes out with exactly the same presentation, but your server will then mix it in front of you, and I have to say, that is something worth seeing, as it's quite an art.

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□ As far as our other courses went, I started off with the crispy jumbo lump cakes over an English cucumber and plum tomato slaw with a sweet chilli sauce, but unfortunately two of my crab cakes were slightly overcooked, although there was a good amount of meat on them. Other options we could have chosen included pan-seared scallop and crispy pork belly over wilted Swiss chard and a celery root puree or celery root bisque with duck confit or a selection of artisanal cheeses.

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□ For entree, my husband went for the grilled Wagyu beef burger with gruyere cheese, pastrami, heirloom tomato, avocado, and a fried egg on a toasted brioche with cognac-mustard aioli, and hand-cut steak fries. Now Ok, while it was essentially burger and fries, it really was a step above what you'd usually get, and the presentation was superb.

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□ Both our entrees were taken from the signature lunch specials menu, which also included the original fettuccine Alfredo with prosciutto brittle and parmigiana-reggiano, a noodle bowl with wok-fried coconut tofu, soy beans, sugar snap peas, bok choy and shitake mushrooms in a red curry broth or andouille-crusted chicken breast with smoked bacon, white cheddar, and tossed arugula on an onion Kaiser roll served with vegetable slaw.

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□ This special lunch menu was certainly cheaper than the entree selection, where the additional items on that ranged in price from \$30 to \$47, as this is, after all, a signature restaurant. The selection included

Loch Duart salmon, pan-seared black grouper, pan-seared porcini powder-dusted pork tenderloin, and venison osso buco.

By the time we'd devoured all that food, we weren't convinced that dessert would fit anywhere, but our server persuaded us to look at the menu, and with good reason. All they offer here are a trio of desserts, and his description of each being about "the size of a golf ball", which was pretty spot on. We decided to share a platter, both sampling the amaretto flan and opalys white chocolate whip with an almond cookie, which was nice, but we'd have preferred the cookie sprinkled into the mixture, rather than being on top. I went for the chocolate sphere with hazelnut praline chocolate and orange white chocolate mousse, which was divine, albeit very rich. The final item was one my husband had -- the banana toffee cake on cocoa crunch and strawberry banana pearls, and I tried one of those pearls, and they were beautiful flavoured and very intriguing.

A meal here is not cheap -- we had some alcohol with our meal, which obviously bumped the price up, but even with Tables in Wonderland discount, it came to \$110. As I say, it's a signature restaurant on the Disney Dining Plans, and they never come cheap. However, I'd say it's worth every cent. It's a relaxing place to come and enjoy a meal in a park, and be able to take your time, which is a rarity inside the parks. And as for my husband, well he really enjoyed his meal, so hopefully we'll be returning on a more regular basis in the future.

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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