

The Fantasmic Dinner Package at River Belle Terrace: A Disneyland Dining Review

by Jane Wood, PassPorter Guest Contributor

What do you do after spending three LONG days at the D23 Expo?

Spend the day celebrating Disneyland's 62nd Birthday at the park of course! Once we figured out that Disneyland's birthday was the day following D23 Expo, we changed our plans and decided to just enjoy the day at the park.

We knew the park would be busy, but being annual passholders we don't have to ride attractions to have a good time. We knew ahead of time that a several of our friends would also be spending the day in the park so we all agreed to meet up and have dinner together at River Belle Terrace. I was lucky to be able to get a reservation for 6:50 pm for our group.

Then, just a few weeks prior to our trip Disneyland announced that Fantasmic would be returning on July 17th for Disneyland's birthday. What a bonus! We LOVED Disneyland's version of Fantasmic (sorry Walt Disney World) so we made that our "must do" of the day's trip. As we planned we started thinking of how early we would need to line up to get into the Fantasmic viewing area or if we could all get FastPasses in the same area. Then Disneyland announced "Fantasmic! Dining Packages" that provide reserved viewing area! Sweet! Reservations for the packages opened on July 6 and I tried changing our standard reservation to the dining package online, but the online system wouldn't let me change the reservation. So I called Disney Dining and after a short wait I was speaking to a wonderful cast member who was able to change our reservation to the Fantasmic! Dining Package with viewing area.

The River Belle Terrace offers two dining packages:

- 3 Course dinner (starter, entree and dessert)
- Access to a reserved viewing area for a designated showing of Fantasmic!
- Cost is \$45 per adult, \$25 per child (3 to 9); tax and gratuity not included

OR Upgrade to:

- 3 Course dinner (starter, entree and dessert)
- Stay in your seat at the River Belle Terrace outside patio to see

the 8:00 pm showing of Fantasmic!

• Cost is \$60 per adult, \$40 per child (3 to 9); tax and gratuity not included

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□ We chose the \$45 package with the reserved viewing area and it worked out very well for us.

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□ We arrived at the River Belle Terrace podium at 6:30 pm and were promptly seated inside the restaurant. Since the upgraded reservations are for the patio we did not have the option of seating outside. But it was a hot day and we were actually quite grateful for the A/C inside the restaurant. There is a special menu for the dining package.

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□ My husband and I had the salad which was yummy with a very good balance of savory and sweet. Our friends ordered the corn chowder and loved it. With each entree, you could choose two side dishes. The options were: Baked beans, potato salad, cole slaw (with vinaigrette sauce), or green beans. We asked if there was bread served with the meal, but our server said not with this package, but it was included in the upgraded service. We don't know if the menu is different for the upgraded \$60 package, but apparently you DO get bread! Our table's selections were BBQ Ribs (not spicy at all and I'm a wimp), Pulled pork, beef brisket and two "catch of the day" (Arctic Char). Everyone was very happy with their entree and the portions were good sized. My husband was very pleased that I couldn't finish my ribs!

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□ The people at the table next to us were just slightly ahead of us in their service so we were lucky and got to see the desserts before we ordered. My husband and I decided to divide and conquer and each get a different dessert and split them. I chose the Maleficent Dragon and he ordered the Strawberry Shortcake. I guess I got distracted and missed the "spiced dark chocolate" from the description. The Maleficent Dragon definitely had a bit of a kick to it. Remember I said I was a wimp with the BBQ sauce? Well, this was almost too spicy for me. Luckily the Strawberry Shortcake was there to cool my pallet. This was the winner in the dessert contest for the entire table!

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□ We were pleasantly surprised that we were able to get a 10% Annual Passholder Discount on the dinner. After paying our check we were given our tickets to the reserved area for the 9:00 pm show. We then headed out to the mass of people outside the restaurant which had grown substantially. We were directed by the cast members where to go to get into the viewing area. As instructed on the ticket, we could enter the area any time after 8:00 pm, so we showed up at about 8:15pm. The entrance to the viewing area was just past the keel boat dock for Tom Sawyers Island. Once you enter that area we circled around the back of

a couple of other non-reserved, standing-room-only groups to our reserved viewing area. (picture of viewing area) We gave our passes to the cast member at the entrance and found spots. The reserved viewing area was slightly to the left of the stage as you look at Tom Sawyer's Island. There was plenty of space available, and when we arrived there were only two "rows" of people in front of us. We all staked out our spots (put down our backpacks) and then took turns going back out to use the restroom. The cast member controlling entry gave us new tickets so we could get back to the area.

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□By the time we got back and settled in, it didn't seem like a very long wait for the show. You could tell everyone was SO excited to see the new Fantasmic! Just prior to 9:00pm we were treated to some jazz music and the two Disneyland Ambassador's riding on a raft to reintroduce Fantasmic to the crowd. Of course, it wouldn't be a birthday celebration without the birthday song so we all sang Happy Birthday to Disneyland and then the show started.

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□While the original Fantasmic! will always hold a special place in my heart, the Imagineers made some wonderful upgrades to this new version. There are more projections, more lasers and some new characters! I loved it and still got teary when the Mark Twain came around the bend. It was a great way to spend the day at Disneyland!

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□Here are a couple of tips:

□• Book the package for the 9:00 pm show -- you can stay in the viewing area after Fantasmic! and watch the fireworks (they bring back the water screens and add projections).

□• Bring something comfy to sit on. The cobblestone walkway is hard and in July was still quite warm.

About The Author: Jane has been a DVC Member since 1993 (Old Key West is her home resort), volunteers at the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco and currently has annual passes to both Disneyland and Walt Disney World. She is looking forward to going "home" in October for the Epcot Food and Wine Festival.

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