

Crystal Palace: Dining Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There are places in Walt Disney World filled with magic and for all of us. There are some real favorites, where you know you can head every time to immerse yourself in the spirit of Disney. For me, one of those places is at the end of the Magic Kingdom's Main Street U.S.A., just as you head over to Adventureland: Crystal Palace.

The Crystal Palace is an iconic building, bridging the gap between two lands in the Magic Kingdom. Its architecture is fascinating and if you think you've seen something similar before, you could well be right. It draws from a number of other existing buildings around the world, including our very own Kew Gardens in London, along with the Crystal Palace in New York and the Conservatory of Flowers in San Francisco.

It's something that's definitely worth taking the time to look at, particularly from the main path over to Adventureland from the Hub in front of the castle, as usually the Disney gardeners have some beautiful and exceptionally colorful flowerbeds laid out in front of it, which make for some wonderful photos.

But don't spend too long admiring the building from the outside. The real treat is inside! But be warned; Advanced Dining Reservations (ADR's) are definitely needed here. It's only on very quiet days that they're likely to be able to fit you in if you decide on the spur of the moment that you want to eat here.

And the reason why is the popularity of a certain bear and his friends. The Crystal Palace is the best place at Walt Disney World to find Winnie the Pooh, along with Tigger, Piglet and my personal favorite, the ever so wonderfully gloomy donkey Eeyore. They reside here all day long for breakfast, lunch and dinner, just disappearing off towards the end of lunch, as they've got to get ready to appear in the afternoon parade. Fair enough.

So why do we love this place so much? Contrary to popular belief, it's not just because my favorite character resides here, although I'll be honest, that does help! The magic for us is more the fact that every time we come to eat here, be it for breakfast, lunch, or dinner and whether it's just the two of us, or with a couple of friends or a big group of people, we always seem to have a good meal and, perhaps just as importantly, a wonderful time with the characters.

There have been some truly special memories here over the years -

from Eeyore presenting me with my birthday cake and wishing me a happy birthday to Pooh Bear desperately trying to get past our table and getting stuck behind one of our group's chairs and then having to be pulled free, to the incident with Piglet, where my wayward husband, who's never been much of a fan of the poor pig, was eating bacon as Piglet arrived. Mark set to work on Piglet's arm with knife and fork, which required a full blown apology down on his knees before he was forgiven. Even writing that just brings the memories back and brings a smile to my face. Somehow the characters here always seem to go above and beyond the call of duty to really have fun with you and to make it a truly special meal.

And then there's the other important ingredient to any meal -- the food. It's an eat as much as you like buffet throughout the day, with the food obviously changing between meals and the prices doing likewise, increasing as the day goes on. Breakfast is pretty much as you'd expect it to be, with lots of traditional items, but also a great selection of fruits and cheeses, alongside the hot items. We're not huge breakfast fans, preferring instead to snack and then have big lunches and dinner and, for us, that's where the Crystal Palace really comes alive.

Lunch and dinner have similar menus, albeit with some items only appearing at one meal or the other. For example you'll only find the peel and eat shrimp and soups on the dinner menu. Having said that, both meals bring some wonderful salads and dressings, along with a selection of cold meats and cheeses, a wide range of vegetables, some good pasta, rice and noodle dishes, with a stunning range of main courses. You wouldn't necessarily expect to find items such as green Thai curry chicken or fruit and vegetable tofu curry at a character meal, but we have found them here, and there are more straightforward dishes for less adventurous eaters, such as chicken, steak, pork and salmon. The fish here has always been superb and I'm told by those who eat meat that there are no complaints on that front either.

Then there are the desserts and it's definitely worth saving some room to sample these. The kids will love the sundae bar (in fact they'll probably enjoy all the offerings on the children's buffet) and as an ice cream-loving adult, that's another area I can recommend, but don't miss the other desserts. Choices are likely to include delicacies such as mango flan, banana bread pudding, apple cobbler or perhaps some of my favorites, like the double chocolate brownies and pineapple upside down cake.

Suddenly, having remembered all the fun interaction with the characters and the wonderful food, I find myself wondering how long it is to our next visit there. Then I remember, by the time you read this, I'll

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be at Walt Disney World and may very well be enjoying the offerings at Crystal Palace as you read!

Breakfast, costing \$18.99/adults and \$10.99/children aged 3-9, is open from 8:00 am until 10:30 am, followed immediately by lunch (\$20.99/adults and \$11.99/children) between 11:30 am and 3:00 pm, and finishing with dinner (\$27.99/adults and \$12.99/children) from 4:00 pm to park closing (rates during Holiday Season 2007 are temporarily higher).

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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