

Spoodles: A Dining Review

by Thomas Cackler, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Before our recent trip to Walt Disney World, my wife and I puzzled over which new restaurant to try. Since we were introducing family members to some of our favorites, we knew that this trip we would only have time for one new restaurant. After narrowing the list down to a handful of choices, we asked several of our Disney friends to make the choice for us. They chose Spoodles, located in Disney's BoardWalk entertainment district, for our new dining experience.

Based on their recommendation and other reviews we had read, my wife Julie and I, along with our five-year-old nephew, Joey, were looking forward to our first visit to Spoodles. Given the restaurant's location, we decided that we would tour Epcot's World Showcase during the day and use our meal at Spoodles as part of our transition to the Extra Magic Hours at the Disney-MGM Studios. Since it is a quick boat ride from both Epcot's International Gateway and Disney-MGM Studios, Spoodles provided a nice retreat that served to recharge us for more theme park fun.

Spoodles takes its decorating cues from the areas that inspire its menu; Spain, Italy, and Greece. We noticed immediately that Spoodles presents a tasteful yet reserved decor. We enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and found it like visiting a friend's house for a meal. We arrived about 30 minutes early for our reservation and as it was an early dinner, had no problems getting a table quickly. Our host walked us through one smaller dining area and then past the kitchen before showing us to our table.

Our server greeted us and asked if we had any questions about the menu. As we did not, we gave our drink order and started making our decisions. One thing Julie and I both enjoy about most menus at Walt Disney World is we have just the right amount of choices. Spoodles was no different. With only seven appetizers to choose from and six entrees, the variety was just right to capture whatever mood a diner might be in, yet not overwhelm with too many choices.

Soon after we placed our order, a basket of bread arrived with olive oil for dipping. This was very tasty and would have made an excellent appetizer alone; however, our 'real' appetizers soon arrived. Joey had the chicken noodle soup, which looked very tasty. I'm not sure that most children would have enjoyed it as much as he did, but he is an adventurous eater and enjoys his vegetables. Julie and I ordered the calamari and the four-cheese flatbread. While the calamari was

extremely well done, tender and not over-cooked as many places tend to do, the four-cheese flatbread was simply incredible. The crust was crispy and light and the overall flavor was tremendous. The flatbread now ranks among my top five appetizers on both the Disney Cruise Line and at the whole of Walt Disney World.

For my entree, I had the steak kabobs with multigrain pilaf. The chefs did a nice job with my steak, cooking nearly to perfection, and served it with a drizzle of harrisa, a Tunisian hot sauce. The multigrain pilaf had a pleasant nuttiness that offset the spiciness of the kabob nicely. While I did not finish my entire meal, I found that the portions on this offering to be just about right and I certainly did not let any of my steak go to waste!

Julie had the garlic shrimp linguini and based on her response along with the small sample I tasted, the chefs did another fantastic job. If you don't care for garlic, however, you probably should avoid this dish, as they certainly did not hold back on the garlic. We both love garlic and found it a well-seasoned meal. The portion was huge and splitting this dish would have probably satisfied both of us. Julie ate until she was full and then shared part of the remainder with Joey.

Joey's meal was probably the only disappointment of the entire experience. He had the kids beef kabob; it was dry and flavorless in the small bite I took. He appeared less than enthused with the kabobs as well, as he ate only a bite or two before quitting. He did eat a reasonable amount of Julie's leftover linguini, so I'm doubtful his decision to not finish the kabob was because he was full. In retrospect, I wish we had insisted he stick to his original choice of a beef and pasta dish.

Our deserts were very good, although we had a clear-cut favorite. Joey had the kid's ice cream sundae. While it was virtually the same sundae he had throughout trip, he loved every minute of building and eating his own creation. Julie ordered the white chocolate orange cake and we both found it a nice end to a meal. I ordered the Chocolate Apricot Pistachio cake and while it was good, it was a bit heavy after my meal and I didn't finish it. I also had a scoop of raspberry gelato with my cake, which we all agreed was the best of the desserts served.

Our server did a solid job. While not the best service we have enjoyed at a Disney eatery, it was also far from the worst. Polite and prompt perhaps best describe the service and certainly lived up to the high standards we have come to expect while at Walt Disney World. Normally, we engage our server in conversation, but we never had the opportunity to do so while at Spoodles. We did hear him in a lengthy conversation with another table about his hometown baseball team, so

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this may be attributable to our weariness rather than any deficiencies on his part.

Had we not been using the Magic Your Way Dining Plan on this trip, we would have spent approximately \$125 for our meals, including all gratuities, and a glass of wine for both adults. A similar party could enjoy Spoodles for far less as we noted that most portions were large and easy to share. For the quality and quantity of food, however, we feel the meal would have been a reasonable value for Walt Disney World if we had paid out of pocket, and is a tremendous value for those using the Dining Plan.

We really didn't know what to expect when we made our reservations for Spoodles, but I do think it safe to say that we enjoyed our meal tremendously. From the pleasant atmosphere to the wonderful food, Spoodles offers a wonderful dining experience to those who are willing to make the short jaunt to the BoardWalk. Based on the positive experience of this meal, we need to listen to our Disney friends' recommendations more often!

About The Author: Thomas is a web site coordinator and freelance web designer. A veteran of five trips to Walt Disney World and one Disney Cruise since 2002, Thomas is a member of several online Disney communities including the PassPorter forums where he shares his knowledge and love of the Disney Parks with anyone who will listen. He lives in Iowa with his wife Julie and nephew Joey.

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