Yamabuki: A hidden Jewel

by Terry Dagdagan, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Wondering where to go for a restful mid-day break without leaving the Disneyland property? Yamabuki is a hidden gem in the far corner of the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim.

This Japanese restaurant is found in Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel. It is a bit of a walk, but well worth the trek if some peace and quiet and incredible food are what you crave. My family and I have eaten there on our last three visits, and we were never disappointed!

The peaceful Japanese setting and low crowds make it the perfect respite in the middle of the day. The majority of our fellow diners were dressed in business attire, so their purpose at the Disneyland Resort may not have been to visit the parks. For this reason, if you have toddlers that do not do well with a regular sit-down meal, you may want to skip this restaurant for now.

If your children are a bit older, however, they may enjoy this cultural dining experience. While the menu is complete with freshly rolled sushi and traditional Japanese dishes for adults, there is also a children's menu. The children's menu offers items like chicken or beef teriyaki, shrimp tempura, and udon soup (which my children consider to be a Japanese version of chicken noodle soup). The children's menu also comes complete with coloring activities on the menu itself, as well as covered cups for beverages. Covered cups are always a plus in my book!

Now if the thought of chasing your food around the plate while attempting to capture it with a pair of pointy sticks brings visions of starvation to mind, don't be put off. While this is a traditional Japanese restaurant right down to the chop sticks and green tea, they do offer Western cutlery when requested. You might even try your hand at a pair of training chops sticks, which involves a rubber band and rolled up bit of paper. The waitress offered these to my children, who were nine- and ten-years-old at the time. They declined (without being too insulted) since they were already old pros at the whole chopstick thing.

The menu selections are nothing short of delicious! Both my husband and I prefer the Bento Box lunch. This is a traditional Japanese meal which includes miso soup, a salad consisting of lettuce with ginger dressing, steamed white rice and your choice of meat or seafood. The meat and seafood choices include teriyaki and tempura. There are also selections of freshly rolled sushi on the menu. If you want to be up close

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to the chefs in action, you might enjoy a seat at the sushi bar.

In keeping with the Disney tradition, the service at Yamabuki is excellent. On one visit my daughter ordered teriyaki chicken from the children's menu. As with most kids, dunking food is a sport when it comes to enjoying her meal. She quickly finished the sauce but still had meat. The waitress noticed this and promptly brought her two more bowls of dipping sauce so she could dunk to her heart's content.

Another plus to remember is that this restaurant does offer discounts from time to time for various members such as Disney Visa Card holders and Annual Pass holders. On our first visit when we went to pay for our meal with our Disney Visa card, the waitress saw this and reminded us of the ten percent discount offered. She was more than happy to redo the bill to reflect our discount.

There are a couple of different routes you can take from the parks to get to Yamabuki. If you are leaving from the Disneyland theme park, you can turn right as you exit the park and walk through Downtown Disney. Another option if you are a guest of a Disneyland resort would be to take the monorail to the Downtown Disney stop. Once again you would still turn right upon exiting the monorail station.

At the end of Downtown Disney, you will turn left before entering the Disneyland Hotel. As you continue on the sidewalk, you will arrive at the back entrance to Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel. Simply walk through the hotel and its lobby, and go out the front entrance. Turn right and you will come to Yamabuki's door.

Another possible route would be from Disney's California Adventure Park. You may use the park exit across from the Grizzly Rapids ride that leads into Disney's Grand Californian Hotel. (You may also go this way from the Disneyland Park if you have a Park Hopper Ticket or Annual Pass that allows you entrance to both parks on the same day.) This way is my favorite because it takes you through the lobby of Disney's Grand Californian Hotel, which is nothing short of amazing.

Once through the park exit, you will go to the end of the walkway and turn right. At the end of this short walkway you will turn left and head toward the lobby. Along here you will see the Storytellers Cafe on your right and the pool area on your left.

Enter the lobby of Disney's Grand Californian Hotel and walk straight through to the front entrance. Once outside you simply follow the sidewalk to the left until you reach Disney Way. Cross the street and turn left. Go past the front entrance of Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel, and

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you will find Yamabuki.

This restaurant does accept Priority Seatings up to 60 days in advance (Disney Dining 714-781-3463), so you may make a reservation if you wish. We used Priority Seating two out of the three times we went there, but found it wasn't necessary for lunch. Yamabuki only serves lunch Monday through Friday, so plan accordingly. The lunch hours are 11:30 a.m. -- 2:00 p.m. If you decide to try Yamabuki for dinner, Priority Seating reservations are recommended. The dinner hours are 5:30 p.m. -- 9:00 p.m. every day.

Overall this is a delightful and relaxing option for a lunch away from the parks. So be a little adventurous - grab those chopsticks and enjoy!

About The Author: Terry and her husband Gene live in Las Vegas with their two daughters. They were excited to be aboard the Disney Wonder for its first 10-night Southern Caribbean Cruise last September, and look forward to their next stay at the Disneyland Resort this summer.

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