

Tea at the Garden View Lounge at Disney: Dining Review

by Valanie Bradley, PassPorter Guest Contributor

My niece and I travel to Walt Disney World every year and one tradition that we both enjoy is our annual Ladies' tea at Grand Floridian's Garden View Lounge. We take at least one day away from the parks to see other parts of the World, and for lunch on one of those days we will go to the earliest possible seating for High Tea. At that time, we are no longer Texans or girls, but genteel ladies in beautiful summer dresses. It's like a fun game of dress up.

The first year, I had to convince my 9-year-old niece that this would be good for her. She would learn how to be a lady; use a napkin properly, keep elbows off the table, handle porcelain properly, drink real tea, and do it with her pinky up! I was excited, she wasn't really, but she had no say in the matter. Who takes a 9-year-old to tea? I do. And you know what? She loved it!

The Garden View Lounge is located in the lobby of the Grand Floridian, Walt Disney World's flagship resort. It is a beautiful Victorian hotel, and the lounge fits in perfectly with the theme. When you walk up the steps into the restaurant, you are immediately facing a row of glass windows that allow buckets of sunshine to stream in. They illuminate the entire room with crystalline rays of sun. I imagine it's even picturesque when it's raining outside. Directly opposite the outside windows are open windows that look out onto the lobby of the Grand Floridian. The decor is of course Victorian, with lots of floral patterns on the carpet and seating. The whole effect of the windows to the gardens and the floral decor transport you to a Victorian manor house in the English countryside. And with surroundings like those, you cannot help but feel as though you are English ladies (and gents) having a spot of tea.

We always make reservations and are always seated right away, this time in a booth that faces the outside windows. The first year, we ordered the Mrs. Potts Tea for my niece, Vi. This came with some tea sandwiches made just for kids - PB&J, ham and cheese, and tuna salad. Considering that there was no way she would have eaten a sandwich with watercress and cream cheese or cucumber, this was really a great option. Mrs. Potts Tea traditionally comes with chocolate milk instead of tea, since most children do not drink hot tea. Being from the South, however, she had been introduced to iced tea, cider, and coffee, so it was not a stretch for her to try hot tea. She read through the menu of teas and selected the jasmine green tea because she is a fan of Jasmine,

the princess from Aladdin. I tried to explain that she might prefer a fruit-flavored tea, but she was determined to try this one out. Our server was very gracious and said that if she didn't like it, she would bring her a different one.

We each received our own porcelain teapot in a tea cozy. We were also both introduced to loose-leaf and tea strainers. Real honest-to-goodness loose tea. Awesome! Vi flavored her tea with the sugar cubes, took a sip and has never looked back. She loved it! Each time we go, she wants jasmine tea. She talks about it when we are here in Dallas. I tasted some of her tea and had to admit that I liked it better than my choice of lemon verbena. It had a flowery exotic kind of flavor. She made a good choice.

I ordered the Grand Tea, which comes with traditional tea sandwiches, lovely jam tarts, and delicious warm scones with Devonshire cream (heaven in a bowl, people). As stated before, I ordered the lemon verbena tea, which I thoroughly enjoyed and had always wanted to try. But the jasmine tea was even better! The Grand Tea also comes with your choice of Domaine Ste. Michelle sparkling wine or sparkling grape juice. I opted for the wine, which arrived in a fluted glass with accompanying strawberry. A toast! To smiles and happiness.

Both the Grand Tea and Mrs. Potts Tea come with your choice of freshly baked tea pastries. We were chattering away about something or other, when we both noticed our server approaching us with the most yummalicious vision. (Please note: That word is reserved for yummy, delicious things that go far beyond the standard of yummy or delicious to exceptional yum/delish! Please use with caution.) A 3-tiered silver plate rack full of chocolate-covered strawberries, chocolate-filled swans, cream-laden puff pastries, delectably moist-looking cakes, flaky tarts, and many more mouth-watering goodies than I can describe! To our excitement and torture, we had to choose from these delectable-looking treats. A choice of two for the Mrs. Potts tea! I believe I had three with the Grand Tea, but I was in such a state of bliss that I cannot remember. However many it was, I am sure it was not enough. I just remember my tongue tasting the yum-diddly-umptious! What torture to have to pick… But how much fun to have your choice from such a beautiful display. If you prefer, you can opt to get the English trifle instead of the pastries. I tried that on my second trip, and will testify that you cannot go wrong with either option.

The pace of the high tea is very slow and relaxed. We were first brought the charming teapots and cups. Next came the sandwiches, then the tarts and scones. Finally, we were presented with the pastries. One course at a time, and only when we had finished the previous one. If the tea started to run low, another pot of hot water was brought out. It was

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totally unhurried. I had time to listen to my niece talk about things that were important to her and we discussed our adventures in the World. We spent a lovely afternoon, in a charming garden spot being proper English ladies. The beginning of a new tradition. And isn't that what makes some of our fondest memories?

About The Author: Valanie Bradley is an avid Disney vacation planner, deal hunter and admitted Disney-phile. She travels each year to the Walt Disney World and assists people in making their dreams come true.

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