

New Disney Dining Plan Restaurants for 2012: 2012 Dining Plan Update

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

☐ One thing you can always guarantee about Disney, it's full of surprises.

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☐ So perhaps it should really have come as no surprise when they announced changes to their popular Dining Plan for 2012.

☐ The Disney Dining Plan has been run for a number of years, most recently with three plans to choose from. The first, the Quick-Service Dining Plan, gives you two counter-service meal credits and one snack credit per person per night of your stay. The Basic Dining Plan comes with one snack credit, one counter-service meal credit, and one table-service meal credit for each night of your stay for each person. The final plan, the Deluxe, gives you three meal credits, usable for either counter- or table-service meals, and two snack credits per person per night. All the plans also come with a refillable beverage mug (refillable at your resort only) for each person on each plan.

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☐ How you use these credits is entirely up to you, but until details of the 2012 Disney Dining Plan were revealed, there were a number of restaurants that had never been options before. In particular, Downtown Disney was lacking in Dining Plan restaurants, something which had always personally disappointed me. That's now been corrected.

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☐ Taking a look around Downtown Disney, there are two new Signature restaurants added to the line-up. Signature Dining Experiences require using two table-service meal credits per person, and these are generally the finer dining options at Disney. The two new Downtown Disney additions are no exception, although they don't come with the same dress codes that some of the other Signature restaurants do.

☐ The first is Fulton's Crab House, a place that serves up, as you'd suspect from the name, the most amazing seafood. The prices are pretty amazing too, particularly on the dinner menu, which has always put us off from anything but lunch. You can bet we'll finally be trying out dinner, compliments of the Dining Plan. Fulton's has some superb views across the lake at Downtown Disney. The last time we were there for lunch, it was lovely to be able to stare out across to the

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Rainforest Cafe and take in the beauty of the location. The only negative is that we did find it quite noisy, with its wood flooring.

□ The other Signature Dining option here is the Wolfgang Puck Dining Room, which is upstairs from Wolfgang Puck Grand Cafe. It's been a number of years since we last ate here, but our dinner was quite something. The Dining Room lends itself more to the atmosphere of a traditional Signature restaurant, as it was fairly quiet on the night we ate there. We found it to be a very romantic location, with a wonderful menu. Perhaps this is another one we'll head back to.

□ All the other Dining Plan additions at Downtown Disney are one-credit locations, and there's certainly a mixture of cuisines and atmospheres to be found here! I'm delighted to see T-Rex join the Dining Plan line-up, as we've been more impressed than we thought we would be by their food, and the atmosphere is superb in here. Even if you don't want to dine here, you should at least have a look inside to see what they've done. The portions are certainly filling, and I have to be honest, you either need to head here hungry or have a big appetite to make full use of your dining credits. I'm personally satisfied with the Supersaurus appetiser sampler, and nothing else, as I find the entrees too much to manage.

□ Their sister restaurant, also operated by Landry's Restaurant, is the Rainforest Cafe, and both their Downtown Disney, and Animal Kingdom locations have been added to the Dining Plan. We've never dined at either at Disney, although we've visited the London location several times now. Again, it's another fun family location for a well-themed meal that will keep the family entertained.

□ The next two options are very different, offering some unusual cuisine. The name, Bongos Cuban Cafe, gives you just a small clue as to the cuisine you can expect to get here. Never having tried Cuban cuisine, I was unsure about it when we visited a couple of years ago, but I was pleasantly surprised by the combination of flavors we experienced. It wasn't a bad meal at all, although my abiding memory is how quiet it was, although admittedly we were eating at a traditional "off" time, during the late afternoon. Perhaps its introduction on to the Dining Plan will help to deal with that issue?

□ Paradiso 37 features cuisine from the 37 countries of the Americas, and during our lunch there, we enjoyed our meals, again finding them full of flavor and unusual, although the service left a bit to be desired. I thought at the time that it was an interesting concept, but did wonder about how widespread its appeal would be to Disney's audience. Like Bongos, perhaps that's why it's joined the Dining Plan?

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□The House of Blues is a more traditional option, offering Cajun and Creole dishes, although sadly my memories of our meal here are mixed, as I wasn't feeling well during our dinner, meaning I was restricted to a salad. However, there were certainly good comments about the food my fellow diners enjoyed.

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□To me, one of the hidden gems at Downtown Disney is Portobello, which specialises in Italian dishes. We've had a couple of wonderful meals in here, and we've found the atmosphere to be very pleasant, while the food is superb. Again, we've found it to be quieter than we expected, and hopefully this place will now become known to a much larger audience with its addition to the Dining Plan. It's certainly worth checking out, as in our experience, you won't be disappointed by what you find.

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□The final table-service restaurant to be added to the 2012 Dining Plan is another signature restaurant, and one that, to date, we've never sampled. Bistro de Paris is located in Epcot's France, and is hidden away upstairs from the hustle and bustle of Chefs de France. I've heard nothing but good things about this place, although its lack of inclusion on the Dining Plan has been one reason for not trying it. I've already made it clear to my husband that this is going to change on our December 2012 trip, as I can't wait to try it!

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□Hopefully this gives you an idea of what you can expect to find at the new table-service additions to the 2012 Dining Plan. I'm delighted at this pleasant surprise, and can't wait to sample what some of them have to offer on our next trip.

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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