

California Grill Celebrates 15 Years at the Top

At Disney's Contemporary Resort

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — From the 15th floor of Disney's Contemporary Resort, California Grill has been, literally and figuratively, at the top since its opening on May 15, 1995.

Illustrious chefs have come and gone, and today Chef Brian Piasecki is at the helm in the kitchen, continuing the Walt Disney World restaurant's run as an award-winning dining destination.

Aluminum, glass, marble and wood combine to create a sleek modern look, and the room has a spectacular view — diners can see Magic Kingdom and Seven Seas Lagoon, and get a picture-perfect view of the Magic Kingdom fireworks.

Countless awards, including a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence and Florida Trend's Golden Spoon, confirm the restaurant's enduring appeal.

California Grill classics, like the popular roast pork and polenta, have been on the menu since opening day. All meals are made from scratch in a stage kitchen divided into seven stations, including a sushi bar, a brick pizza oven, a wood-burning grill and a dessert shop.

Among staff there since the beginning is Yoshie Cabral, one of just a handful of female sushi chefs in the United States. Her creations are one of the most-requested menu items — on a good day she'll make more than 2,000 pieces of raw fish and rice into pristine morsels for diners, and train her protégés to slice and dice.

The restaurant's general manager, Bridget Sherren, is a graduate of the Advanced Course of the Court of Master Sommeliers and is currently preparing for the Master level.

"Wine is an essential element in the dining experience at California Grill," explains Sherren. "And education without intimidation is one of our major goals." She updates daily a 100-item wine list, with every wine available by the glass.

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