

From Wine to Cocktails, Coffee and Tea, Disney Expands Beverage Program

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – As baby boomers – the first generation to grow up with Disney theme parks – return to Walt Disney World Resort, they are seeking a new level of sophistication, especially in the realm of dining.

And the sophistication includes beverages, where the art of mixology has taken cocktails to a whole new level.

Many of the new cocktails are made with “better for you” ingredients such as organic spirits, fresh fruits and herbs that have been procured locally when seasonally available, and lower calorie no-sugar-added fruit purees.

The Raspberry Rain Cocktail, for instance, is made with Rain Organics Red Grape Hibiscus Vodka, Chambord, freshly muddled raspberries, lychee and fresh lemon juice. The Superfruit Martini features Van Gogh Acai-Blueberry Vodka, pomegranate liqueur, cranberry juice, organic agave nectar and fresh lemon juice.

Top sellers include the Agave Nectar Margarita which is made with organic blanco tequila, freshly squeezed lime juice, and organic agave nectar. The Antioxidant Cocktail continues to be one of the most popular drinks, made with Finlandia Wild Berries Vodka, Absolut Berri Acai Vodka, pomegranate, lychee and freshly squeezed lemon juice. The most popular dessert cocktail? The Godiva Chocolate Martini, made with Godiva Chocolate Liqueur, Stoli Vanilla Vodka, Crème de Cacao and Frangelico Hazelnut Liqueur.

And plenty of cocktails come sans alcohol. “We think it’s important to provide the opportunity for adults to enjoy the unique and complex flavors of our drinks even if they choose not to consume alcohol,” said McGuire.

“Over the past few years we have provided focused training and developed beverages that have elevated the role of the bartender to that of ‘mixologist,’ said McGuire. “We also use mixologist tools of the trade such as muddlers, fresh-fruit hand squeezers, mixing glasses and tins, drink strainers and mixing spoons.

An extensive selection of craft beers rounds out the new menu offerings. In 2010, Disney Parks and Resorts won the coveted VIBE Vista Award recognizing the beer program as best in the country in the chain hotel and resort category.

Stellar Wine Program

A solid list of 250 wines that’s updated annually – 70 percent New World (from the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) and 30 percent Old World (from Spain, France, Germany and Italy) – are available at Walt Disney World Resort.

Select fine-dining restaurants in Walt Disney World theme parks and resorts have the latitude to expand and refine the core list. For instance, Artist Point at Disney’s Wilderness Lodge has a wine list that’s primarily from the Pacific Northwest, while Jiko-The Cooking Place at Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge offers only wines from South Africa – the largest South African wine program for any one site in the United States. Narcoossee’s at Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort & Spa includes favorites to accompany seafood, while the sommelier at Yachtsman Steakhouse at Disney’s Yacht Club Resort is focused on first-rate pairings for beef. AAA Five-Diamond winner Victoria & Albert’s at Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort & Spa has 700 selections on the menu and 4,200 bottles in its cellar. And The Wave . . . of American Flavors at Disney’s Contemporary Resort features a large selection of screw-cap New World wines.

With wine such an integral part of the Disney dining experience, Walt Disney World Resort has more than 300 sommeliers who have completed the Introductory Exam offered by the Court of Master Sommeliers. Twelve have passed the Certified Exam at the next level.

Expanding Coffee, Tea Offerings

In the world of coffee and teas, Walt Disney World restaurants are expanding the offerings of premium press pot loose leaf teas and custom blended coffees. For example, at restaurants at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, guests can enjoy Kenya AA coffee and 12 varieties of loose leaf tea, many from South Africa. At The Wave...of American Flavors at Disney's Contemporary Resort, organic Columbian "certified bird friendly" coffee is on the menu. (This means that the coffee beans were used without the use of netting covering the plants. Unfortunately many coffee growers in this region use nets, which frequently lead to injury or death of birds in the area.) Kona Cafe at Disney's Polynesian Village Resort features coffee grown and roasted in Hawaii.

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