

A Culinary Adventure at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — A fusion of cultures and history, the cuisine of Africa tells an important part of the story at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge.

Because Africa borders both the Indian and Atlantic oceans, seafood is abundant, and the multi-cultural influences — grilled meats from the British, vineyards from the French, curries from India and Asia, stews from the native Africans — create a tremendously versatile cuisine.

The two main restaurants at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, **Jiko-The Cooking Place** and **Boma-Flavors of Africa**, are an integral part of the resort's design, so that the sights and scents enhance the guests' sensory experience, says John Clark, chef de cuisine for Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge.

Boma-Flavors of Africa

The lodge's lobby overlooks Boma-Flavors of Africa, where wood-burning grills create sensational aromas from morning until night.

Boma in Africa is "an open, natural space that provides safety and shelter in the bush." The 270-seat "marketplace" restaurant is open for breakfast and dinner, featuring an exhibit kitchen and bakery that allows guests to walk up to a half-dozen side-by-side cooking stations and have their entrées freshly prepared. Curries, chutneys and other Indian and Asian influences add fabulous flavors to grilled fish, meats and vegetables. Diners find authentic soups, stews, tossed-to-order salads and other market-fresh fare on the daily menu.

Soups, from hearty chicken corn porridge to smoked tomato, are a highlight, along with salads such as avocado, grapefruit and papaya, or roasted chicken with chili-cilantro vinaigrette. Entrees include seafood, slow-roasted ribs and whole-spiced chicken, accompanied by couscous, saffron rice or sweet potato pancakes. Add chutneys, a peppery sambal or a sweet-and-sour chile papaya sauce for a delightful international treat. Breads, too, are African-inspired, including golden-brown *naan*, light and flaky *chapatis* or a blue cornbread.

Cultural representatives from Africa serve as hosts and hostesses, greeting guests as they enter the thatched-roof eatery. "This personal interaction helps our guests understand African culture," says Clark. "Diners will find food they're used to, but also new and unusual versions of African cuisine." For children, there's a separate cooking station with its own chef.

Boma is open daily for breakfast and dinner. Reservations are recommended; call 407/WDW-DINE.

Jiko-The Cooking Place

The warm colors of an African sunset create a sophisticated ambience at Jiko-The Cooking Place, with cuisine and wine that celebrate the flavors of Africa.

Young hosts in native attire, many in the United States from Africa for a yearlong cultural exchange, welcome guests to a casually sophisticated dining room inspired by Disney's "The Lion King," with stylized white birds suspended from the ceiling, beautiful wood-burning ovens and muted earth tones, the work of noted restaurant designer Jeffrey Beers.

Jiko means "cooking place" in Swahili, and the restaurant's masterful dishes pay homage to the African theme: Swahili curry shrimp with artichokes and coconut rice; roasted lamb loin with herbed couscous, figs, sun-dried cherries and red curry sauce; and pan-seared scallops with cucumber raita salad and grilled pappadam. Regulars recommend the clean flavors of the cucumber, tomato and red onion salad with arugula, cottage cheese and watermelon vinaigrette.

A winsome array of teas and after-dinner drinks end the perfect meal. For sweets, the indulgent Tanzanian chocolate cheesecake or the pistachio crème brûlée are tops.

Jiko offers the largest offering of South African wines anywhere in the United States, with more than 65 of South Africa's boutique wineries showcasing their vintages at the restaurant. The restaurant has attained AAA Four Diamond status and was awarded *Wine Spectator's* Award of Excellence. The restaurant was honored with *Nation's Restaurant News* prestigious "Menu Masters Best Independent Operator Award for 2006," among "industry innovators who have wowed customers with sizzling menu promotions and bold culinary initiatives."

The 235-seat restaurant includes the private Cape Town Wine Room with seating up to 40. For reservations, call 407/WDW-DINE.

More Dining Opportunities

The poolside express restaurant, **The Mara**, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner with everything from fresh soups and burgers to egg rolls on the menu. "Even in our quick-service restaurant, we want to give guests the opportunity to try something creative," says Clark. For instance, the spices and sugar trade in the South African town of Durban inspired the Durban-spiced chicken skewered on sugar cane. Menu boards explain new and unusual creations to diners.

Victoria Falls, the mezzanine lounge overlooking Boma, serves gourmet coffee, teas, South African vintage wines and international beers and cocktails.

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