

# Reimagined California Grill Takes Disney Restaurant Scene to New Heights, Reopening Sept. 9

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – With sweeping views of Walt Disney World Resort from the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of Disney's Contemporary Resort, California Grill opens its doors on September 9 following a major makeover that redefines Disney's culinary scene.

The spacious dining room is transformed with a modern style that captures the spirit of California throughout the design scheme.

Cuisine, too, has been reimagined with seasonal ingredients and a lighter touch, such as baked local prawns with charred lemon and wild Columbia River salmon with Zellwood sweet corn pudding. And the sushi bar expands featuring pristine seafood.

"Food and beverage offerings at Walt Disney Parks & Resorts have evolved considerably over the years and play an integral role in the memories guests make with us," says Maribeth Bisienere, vice president of Food & Beverage and Merchandise for Walt Disney Parks & Resorts.

"More than ever we are applying the same principles of creativity and attention to detail that guide our theme park experiences to the development of our food and beverage offerings. The new menu, décor and ambiance at the iconic California Grill continue that evolution."

Across four theme parks and 25 resort hotels Walt Disney World Resort boasts an amazing and diverse portfolio of dining experiences. From healthy offerings to celebration foods, from a quick bite to an elegant table service meal, guests have a variety of choices unrivaled among vacation destinations, enjoying an experience only Disney can deliver.

## **Eye-Catching Interior**

When guests step out of the elevator on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, the postcard-perfect panorama view is the first sensation. Whether watching the sun dip slowly over the Seven Seas Lagoon or the bird's-eye perspective of the Magic Kingdom, diners know it's going to be a memorable evening.

"The wall of windows and the vast horizon reminded the interior designers of mid-century modern California residences high up on hilltops," says Eric Jacobson, senior vice president of creative development, Walt Disney Imagineering. Mid-century modern describes mid-20<sup>th</sup> century design from about 1933 to 1955, a form that flourished in the 1950s and '60s.

"The prime position atop Disney's Contemporary Resort really spoke to us," Jacobson continues. Warm oranges and yellow hues inspired by the magical sunsets of both California and Florida are foundational colors. A touch of Disney from that era is incorporated into the carpet design reminiscent of the sketches of artist and Disney Legend Mary Blair, who created the character designs for Disney attractions such as it's a small world, and inspired the 100-foot-high colorful mosaic tile art on the fourth floor of Disney's Contemporary Resort. Reproductions of Blair's original artwork also are displayed.

A show-stopping wine display as guests exit the elevator houses 1,600 bottles in a dramatic, climate-controlled,

state-of-the-art showcase. Focal piece at the entry is an oil painting of California's Napa Valley by California landscape artist Ann McMillan.

Stretched fabric artwork also adorns the walls, expanding the color palette with bright, fun prints. Replicas of mid-century modern ceramics, as well as all-new custom lighting with colorful globes complement the vibe.

One of the most challenging renovations was replacing the massive windows with new ones that block ultraviolet light, and installing electronic shades for ultimate guest comfort. At night, the Magic Kingdom fireworks still are part of the show, with music piped in at two outdoor viewing areas – one on the northwest side, another new deck on the southwest side.

The onstage kitchen is all new, including space to hold the stack of wood for the wood-burning oven, “bringing organic nature into the space,” says Jacobson. The popular sushi bar has been expanded with beautiful new display cases that show off the beauty of the fish.

Dining room highlights include two new communal tables, each seating 10, strategically positioned at the north end of the dining room for optimal fireworks viewing. The 10-foot teak tables get a touch of color from hot pink chairs with leather seats, a bold departure from the rest of the room with linen-draped tables and wooden chairs.

Servers in crisp silver shirts, black slacks and classic mahogany bistro aprons with silver pinstriping add an air of casual elegance to the dining room. The Napa and Sonoma private dining rooms are still available for private functions, and the private, glass-walled wine room in the main dining room has been renamed the Monterey Room.

## **The Menu**

“California Grill always will be a place that's creative, seasonal, sophisticated and fun,” says Chef de Cuisine Brian Piasecki. Piasecki spent nearly a year perfecting a new menu “that's all about the composed dish, tastes that are designed to complement each other” he says. For instance, Pacific halibut with parsnip silk, roasted heirloom beets, arugula, macadamia vinaigrette and beet syrup: “taste the silky puree, the salt-roasted beets, the delicate fish, crunchy macadamia nuts . . . together it's a symphony,” says Piasecki.

The new menu updates longtime favorites, such as Pork Two Ways, now grilled tenderloin and lacquered pork belly with goat cheese polenta and mushrooms. The oak-fired filet of beef is served with heirloom tomato risotto, marinated baby vine tomatoes and basil. Sonoma goat cheese ravioli returns in a tomato fennel broth with crispy shiitake mushrooms.

From the wood-burning oven, a “Surf & Turf” includes New Smyrna, Fla., clams, saffron-infused fennel, chorizo butter and bone marrow. Baked local prawns are served with charred lemon, arugula, and tomato and cippolini onion relish. Signature meatballs come with picholene olives, herbed orzo and chimichurri. Flatbreads are still on the menu, including a version with beefsteak tomatoes, mozzarella di bufala and balsamic vinegar, and a pork pate flatbread with roasted garlic, mascarpone cheese and Royal Trumpet mushroom chips.

Pastry Chef Jeff Barnes has a whole new menu of sweet endings, such as a light, refreshing Meyer Lemon cheesecake, chocolate pudding, and his favorite, the Sundae Sampler, a trio with a Coke float, strawberry sundae and caramel corn sundae. “Such great flavors on one plate,” he enthuses.

Barnes also created two new breads just for California Grill – a whole-grain sourdough and a lavender-infused focaccia made with fresh California lavender, olive oil and herbs.

## **Wine & Cocktails**

Known for its solid wine list, California Grill, under the guidance of sommelier Michael Scheifler, has expanded selections, with about 250 wines on the list, 72 percent from California, another 22 percent Old World wines and 6 percent New World wines.

“We'll have something for every palate,” says Scheifler, “from a first-growth Bordeaux to a boutique wine from Oregon or South Africa, there are some really special, highly allocated bottles.”

There are 80 wines by the glass, expanded from 50 on the previous menu. More than 20 sommeliers on staff will make pairing easy. The expanded sushi bar gets an expanded sake list, with nine varieties, from a light, sparkling sake to cask strength, says Scheifler. And there are eight kinds of craft beers and ciders on the new menu, mostly from California.

And signature cocktails are recipes created by staff mixologists, from a bold sake martini to a breezy cucumber drink and a San Fran Pisco Sour – and the California Grill is the only Disney restaurant that serves the creations.

Cheese boards pair nicely with beverages, including Point Reyes (Calif.) blue; sharp, earthy Petit Agour from the French Basque region; Cypress Grove (Calif.) black truffle cheese; MT TAM triple cream from California, and SeaHive from Utah.

California Grill opens at 5 p.m. daily for dinner. For more information or to book a reservation, visit [www.disneyworld.com/dine](http://www.disneyworld.com/dine) or call 407-WDW-DINE (939-3463).