

# 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 three main restaurants at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, **Jiko-The Cooking Place**, **Boma-Flavors of Africa**, and **Sanaa**, 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 chowder 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.

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.

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: "Mozambique-style" tomato salad with heirloom tomatoes, peaches, avocado, mache, arugula and feta cheese, and pan-seared yellow tail snapper. Regulars recommend the wood-fired flatbreads such as roasted chicken with lime chakalaka, lamb chopper cheese and pickled sweet bell peppers.

A winsome array of teas and after-dinner drinks end the perfect meal. For sweets, the indulgent cheesecake with spice cake crust and sautéed apples in caramel or the Kenyan coffee creme brûlée are tops.

Jiko has one of 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.

## **Sanaa**

Guests can experience the art of African cooking with Indian flavors as exotic animals roam the Sunset Savanna at Sanaa, an East-African inspired eatery.

Appetizers such as lamb kefta sliders with goat cheese, piquant peppers and pickled shallots, and a sampler of unusual salads like chickpeas with cucumber and tomato and watermelon, cucumber and fennel start the dining experience.

Entrees include the tandoori-roasted meats, curries and sides such as dahl (stewed lentils), basmati rice, seasonal slaw and coriander khichdi. Indian-style flatbreads including naan, kucha, and pappadum are paired with chutneys, Indian-style pickles and raita (yogurt-based dip).

For guests who prefer more American flavors, there is a grilled pork chop and club sandwich at lunch and grilled flank steak at dinner.

Sweets are the final adventure, including warm bamboo rice pudding, coconut cheesecake, Tanzanian chocolate mousse, and a banana kulfi sundae.

The restaurant is open from 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. and from 5-9 p.m. daily. An adjacent 24-seat lounge serves African wines, beer and spirits. For reservations, guests can 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. 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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