

Sublime Dining at Victoria & Albert's At Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – Italian linens, Riedel crystal, Cristofle silver from France — and the chef still wears a traditional toque as he stops by tables to chat with diners.

With fair-weather clouds painted on the ceiling, soft lighting and a celestial harpist, Victoria & Albert's dining room embodies a spirit of luxury and romance. Located at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa at Walt Disney World Resort, it's the only AAA Five-Diamond restaurant in Central Florida, and was named among the Top 5 restaurants in the United States in the 2014 Trip Advisor Travelers' Choice Awards.

Geared to diners aged 10 and older, there are just 18 tables in the main dining room and only eight seats in the more private Queen Victoria's Room. Guests know they're in for a treat as their host and hostess start butler-style service. Described as a nostalgic trip back in time when the ritual of dining out was civilized and lavish, Chef Scott Hunnel and his culinary team prepare modern American cuisine with the best-of-the-best from around the world.

Diners are handed a seven-course, seasonal menu, customized daily by Chef Hunnel. Here, food is an art form, featuring vivid colors and textures, with exquisite wine pairings offered with each course. Hunnel is at the top of his game, and his standards rival those of the finest restaurants worldwide. He is friends with local farmers who grow produce and deliver eggs to the restaurant. And much of the early afternoon is spent on the phone with purveyors — “from fishermen on the boat to find out when wild turbot will be landing to the guy who grades and procures the finest caviars in the world,” said Hunnel.

But for Hunnel, the best part of the job is his carefully chosen team. “I work with passionate people who understand the continuous evolution of food and wine, who never settle for anything less than excellence,” said Hunnel.

The restaurant's wine cellar has been recognized by *Wine Spectator* magazine with an “Award of Excellence.” With more than 700 selections on the menu and 4,200 in the cellar, the sommeliers can match any of Hunnel's imaginative creations.

The experience ends with the artful creations of Master Pastry Chef Erich Herbitschek, like a sensational soufflé or Plant City strawberry ice cream gâteau. Chocolate fans rhapsodize about the Tanzanian chocolate timbale with orange-scented milk chocolate gelato.

To remember it all, a personalized menu is given to guests to carry home, along with a long-stemmed red rose for women.

Queen Victoria's Room

Queen Victoria's Room is behind closed doors just off the main dining room. With just four tables, restaurant manager Israel Perez promises attention to guests' every whim. They've brought back French gueridon service — a gueridon is a beautifully styled trolley that goes from table to table for customized service and “wow” factor — a flourish of Himalayan sea salt atop a filet, a decadent wine sauce or a lavish display of cheese, for instance.

Anyone who's tasted Chef Scott Hunnel's exquisite creations knows this is a memorable affair. How often do you savor perfectly seared Kurobuta pork tenderloin and belly, or butter-poached lobster with bisque and lobster roe foam? And vegans and vegetarians are Hunnel's favorite challenge. The sommelier happily will pair something delicious with each of the 10 small courses. Plan on three to four hours of leisurely dining.

Chef's Table in the Kitchen

In an alcoved space at the back of the kitchen, diners at the coveted Chef's Table get a front-row seat for the slicing

and dicing in Hunnel's well-orchestrated kitchen. Less formal than the dining room, Hunnel starts the evening with a Champagne toast and asks for likes and dislikes so he can craft a personal menu. This is his chance to be creative.

With up to 13 courses, the experience offers small tastes, with exquisite dishes paired with wine and spirits for a memorable experience. Multiple desserts feature the creations of Chef Herbitschek, finishing with a Peruvian chocolate timbale with white roasted chocolate gelato.

Just when diners can't imagine another course, the evening ends. The experience lasts nearly four hours, the time filled with marvelous tastes and Hunnel's banter between courses. For foodies, it's never long enough.

Before you go (Prices subject to change):

- Regular Seating – \$150
- Regular Seating with Wine Pairing – \$215. (\$150 + \$65)
- Chef's Table – \$250
- Chef's Table with Wine Pairing – \$355 (\$250 + \$105)
- Queen Victoria Room – \$225
- Queen Victoria Room – \$330 (\$225 + \$105)
- For reservations, 407/939-3862. Reservations can be made up to 190 days in advance for the dining room and 190 days in advance for the Chef's Table.
- Jackets are required for men (tie optional) and "dinner attire" for women.

Victoria & Albert's Awards:

- AAA Five Diamond Award 2001-2014
- *Forbes Travel Guide* Four Star Award 1990-2014
- *Trip Advisor* 2014 Traveler's Choice Awards, Top 5 Restaurants in the U.S.
- *Zagat's* National Top 10 Restaurants Award
- *Florida Trend* Magazine Golden Spoon Hall of Fame Member (Florida's Top 20 Restaurants)
- Distinguished Restaurants of North America Award
- *Wine Spectator* "Best of Award Excellence"
- John Mariani's *Cheers* Best New Restaurants of America in both *Esquire Magazine* and *USA Today*
- *Robb Report*, Top Ten Tables Internationally, by John Mariani
- Gault-Millau *Best of Florida*, published by Prentice-Hall
- *Epicurean Rendezvous* "Top 25 Most Romantic Restaurants"

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