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

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Frette 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 serene 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.

With just 18 tables in the main dining room and the private Fireplace Room with five tables, you instantly know you’re in for a treat as your host and hostess start their butler-style service for guests ages 10 and older. 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.

You’re 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 a farmer in Ohio who grows herbs and lettuces especially for the restaurant. And much of the early afternoon is spent on the phone with purveyors — "from fishermen on the boat to find out when bluefin tuna 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 miniature chocolate pyramid with warm almond chocolate timbale and orange chocolate napoleon.

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

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, often decadent, of everything from Almaz Persicus golden osetra caviar to Kobe beef with seared Hudson Valley foie gras. The exquisite dishes are paired with wine and spirits for a memorable experience. Multiple desserts feature the creations of Chef Herbitschek, starting with a divine "pre-dessert" trio of chocolates.

Just when you 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**:*

- There are two seatings daily September through June, one seating daily July through August. Chef's Table seating is 6 p.m. daily.
- Dinner is $125 per person (tax and gratuity not included), $185 with wine pairing; Chef's Table is $175 per person, $245 with wine pairing.
- For reservations, 407/824-1893. Reservations can be made up to 90 days in advance for the dining room and 120 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 2001-2009
- *Mobil Travel Guide* Four Star Award 1990-2009
- *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"
- *Orlando Magazine* 2007 Best Romantic Rendezvous
- *Orlando Sentinel* "Best Restaurant Overall" Critics Choice, 2007 Foodie Awards
- 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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