

**UPDATING FOR
THE HOLIDAYS**

Behind the scenes at Walt Disney World's Holiday Services.

CHILL OUT
WITH

ICE!



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ORLANDO Attractions MAGAZINE

T-REX

stomps its way onto Downtown
Disney's restaurant scene.

A'LURE

SeaWorld's Sea Sirens
summon acrobatics
in a new show.

DISNEY'S AMBASSADORS

Representing the Mouse House is a
challenging and rewarding task.

ICY COLD HOT SPOT

Stay cool while the night heats
up at Orlando's new ice bar.

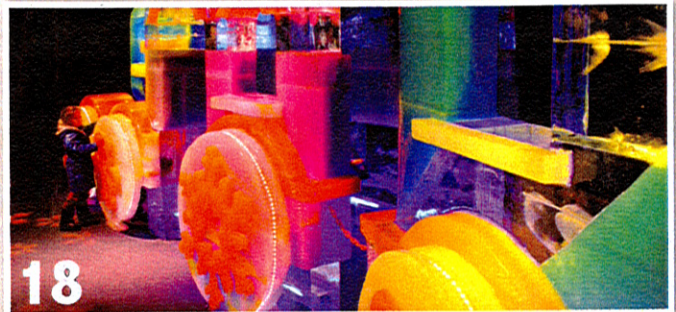
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AN OLD AND NEW DINING EXPERIENCE at T-REX

Written By Mike Reilley
Photos by Matt Roseboom



When did you experience your most recent meteorite storm? When did you last walk through an ice cave? You say it's been a while since the kids dug for the bones of a dinosaur?

Well, at a time when you might have thought a really fresh, new and exciting idea in dining was a thing of the past, the T-Rex Cafe lands at Downtown Disney. But as exciting as the "wow" factor is at T-Rex, the best part may be the food.

When you first arrive, don't let the 125-foot-long skeletal argentinasaurs scare you as you enter what is being billed as, "a prehistoric family adventure: a place to eat, shop, explore and discover." But once you are (safely) inside, the world as you know it will seem to have slipped way back in time.

T-Rex is a world of dinosaurs, the ice age, hundreds of beautiful

fish, colorful waterfalls and even the resurrection of the woolly mammoth. In all, the restaurant has 23 life-sized animatronic prehistoric creatures, including tyrannosaurus rex (of course), stegosaurus, triceratops, pachycephalosaurus and more.

Upon entering the restaurant, once you make your way past the two giant lifelike t-rex animatronics, you can't miss the colorful Shark Bar to your left with its 5,000-gallon saltwater shark tank. Another eye catcher is the Ice Cave, home to the woolly mammoth and her three offspring, who reside among walls made of glowing faux-ice. There's also plenty to see in the Fern Forest, the Sequoia Room and the other interesting and unique areas throughout the spacious eatery. Even the bathrooms have something special to offer: real fossils hang on the walls.

T-Rex is a 600-seat 30,000-square-foot interactive prehistoric destination where you can dine and learn. The

concept is the result of three companies: Landry's Restaurants, Schussler Creative and of course, Disney.

Kevin Lansberry is the vice president of Downtown Disney and he's very excited about this new destination, which is described as being built around water, fire and ice.

"I've been with Disney for about 13 years and I cannot think of a project with more anticipation than the opening of the door of T-Rex. Steve Schussler [Schussler Creative] and the Landry's team have developed a great new creative concept here that's going to thrill and wow our guests," said Lansberry. "The Rainforest Café has been doing that for the past 10 years and this concept takes it one step further. It's the next generation."

Lansberry added that the new T-Rex turned out even better than he had imagined. "I didn't expect anything quite this grand, but it is really fantastic. It's great that the kids

are going to be able to learn as well as eat healthy food, comfort food; there's a little bit of everything here. But they can really learn about dinosaurs, artifacts and fossils. The kids can even dig-up fossils in the boneyard. It's really going to be a lot of fun for families. T-Rex will definitely be a shining star for us."

While Lansberry believes the amount of attention to detail associated with the construction of T-Rex is "over the top," Steve Schussler, the brainchild of the T-Rex Café and founder of Schussler Creative out of Golden Valley, Minn., said it is all about one thing ...

"Passion! Because we are passionate about education and passionate about entertainment," he said. "There's literally something for everybody here, young and old. Even when you go into our bathrooms here you'll find tens of thousands of dollars worth of fossils on the walls. Why would we spend that kind of money to buy these fossils that are tens of millions of years old? Because we like to educate and we like to entertain."

Not that you'd become bored within the restaurant's elaborate surroundings, but to ensure you're entertained, T-Rex features special shows that begin at one-, two- and four-minute intervals, as well as the key show in the form of a meteorite shower that occurs every 20 minutes.

"Obviously, the meteorites came and destroyed the Earth and destroyed the dinosaurs," said Schussler. "So at T-Rex all the dinosaurs get upset. There's a meteorite shower and the icescape changes colors; going from blue to orange to red and it flashes, and so does our incredible ice bar. That show goes for a minute and a half and involves all the creatures and all the animals in the entire place. All the vignettes do their own show every four minutes. And every two minutes there's a sectional show, like in the ice age room, the sequoia room."



UNDER THE SEA: The Shark Bar surrounds a 5,000-gallon saltwater shark tank and features a larger-than-life moving octopus overhead.

At 60-second intervals the animated animals begin blinking, turning their heads or performing other actions designed to stimulate the children watching.

"You might hear a child say to their parents or grandparents, 'Did you see that? T-Rex just blinked at me,'" added Schussler. "There's also a constant show involving the 38-foot-in-diameter octopus. Its tentacles go up and down like a piano. Every tentacle goes up and down through the entire day. There's so much going on that if you miss something you'll catch something else and it's so carefully orchestrated, it's like a Walt Disney production."

Part of that Disney-like entertainment can be found in the restaurant's Discovery Dig Site just outside the gift shop where kids can unearth a

T-Rex themselves. It's called the Paleo Zone. Children can dig for, find and identify T-Rex bones.

Schussler calls the whole T-Rex experience edutainment. "This place is the epitome of creativity," added Schussler. "T-Rex was built with energy, compassion and devotion."

He explained how scientists now know that some dinosaurs had feathers, and so Schussler Creative took it from there.



MANEATER: What would a restaurant called T-Rex be without its namesake dinosaur?

Restaurant Report



"Because they have feathers, we have creative license to make colors like yellow and red and pink and blue," he said. "When I grew up, dinosaurs were brown, green and black; very very dark and boring."

Kids may also be amazed with Build-A-Dino inside the gift shop, where they can build and take home their own personal dinosaur. This feature is the result of the minds behind T-Rex working hand-in-hand with the people who brought us Build-A-Bear Workshop.

Build-A-Bear Workshop founder and "Chief Executive Bear" Maxine Clark was thrilled with the joining of the two. "We have enjoyed the creation of this new concept (Build-A-Dino) and working with Schussler Creative and Landry's Restaurants. It has been a great partnership," said Clark.

In explaining the partnerships, Schussler calls himself the "proud papa" of the T-Rex Café. "Landry's is my partner, not only providing some of the financing, but they're also our operators, taking care of daily operations," said Schussler. "And with Disney giving us the opportunity to open this restaurant

up, I feel like I've won the trifecta."

At the T-Rex grand opening ceremonies (Oct. 14), Schussler spoke of Walt Disney.

"Walt, I know you're up there watching over us. I want to say I feel like the luckiest man in the world," said Schussler. "This wasn't a year of construction, it was 10 years of dreaming, planning and creating."

"To be at Walt Disney World and to be given the opportunity to create magic is a very special thing," Schussler added.

This is the second T-Rex café, the first being a much smaller, yet very similar one in Kansas City, Kan. It's interesting to note that Walt Disney and his sister attended grammar school near there. Additionally, it was also noted that some of the earliest dinosaur bones have been found in the Kansas City area.

But as Schussler and others will tell you, the "great" in the T-Rex Café doesn't stop at dinosaurs and prehistoric times. It is, after all, a restaurant and they are so very proud of their menu.

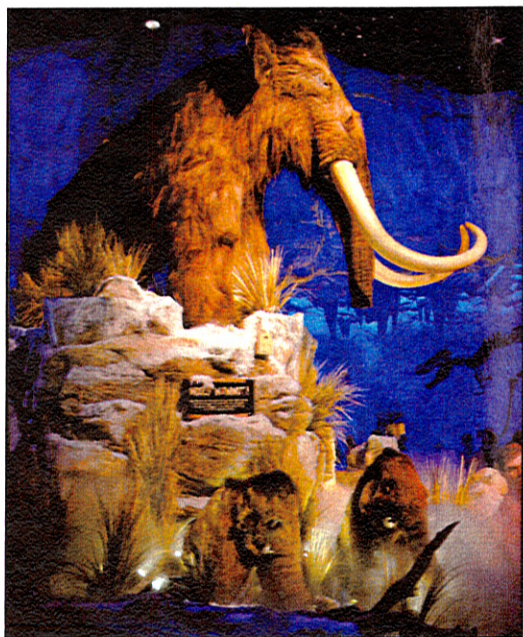
You'll find plenty of interesting items on the T-Rex menu with prehistoric names such as the Ceasarsaurus Salad



CUTE DINOS: Build-A-Dino allows Cretaceous customization of plush creations.

(Caesar salad). You might enjoy the Layers of Earth Lasagna or the Mammoth Mushroom Ravioli. If you'd just like a sandwich there's plenty from which to choose. You might enjoy the Stegosaurus Steak & Cheese or the Prehistoric Panini. Dinner entrees include the

BRRRR: A woolly mammoth family graces the Ice Cave entrance where guests dine among glowing color.



Raptor Ribs and the Woolly Mammoth Chicken. But if you're in the mood for your basic all-prehistoric meal, try their popular Gigantosaurus Burger, "A true carnivore's delight."

They reference the dessert menu as, "The end is near" and at that end you can find many lovely attractions, including their Ice Age Indulgence with layers of ice cream sandwiches, fudge sauce, whipped cream and Heath Bar Crunch.

There's the kid's menu with selections such as the Prehistoric Pop'n Shrimp and the Jurassic Chicken Tidbits. For dessert the kids can enjoy the Saber-tooth Sundae. Children will also enjoy the T-Rex Prehistoric Playbook they receive when they enter.

According to Landry's Keith Beitler, it was important not to serve the same food as the nearby Rainforest Cafés and Yak & Yeti, which are also operated by Landry's.

"The good thing about our menu is that we can evaluate it every 30 to 45 days," said Beitler. "Our tradition at Landry's is that we evaluate all of our menus twice a year. Our 13 corporate chefs are always looking for new fresh things. We also have two great chefs here in Orlando who run T-Rex, the Rainforest and the Yak & Yeti concepts."

The key to their success, according to Beitler, is their concentration on detail. "But you must know that we focus just as much, if not more, on the service and the food here," he said with emphasis. "Too many times someone will build a restaurant like T-Rex; you come in, you're 'wowed' by it, but the food is just mediocre to average. But we took over a year putting the T-Rex menu together. Believe me, the food is not secondary."

Beitler is very proud of what they're calling their "Kitchen of Fire," which sits open in an area where everyone can see what's going on inside.

At the grand opening, which was



FIERY GOODNESS: The "Kitchen of Fire" is not just a name – it summarizes what T-Rex guests see and feel during food preparation.

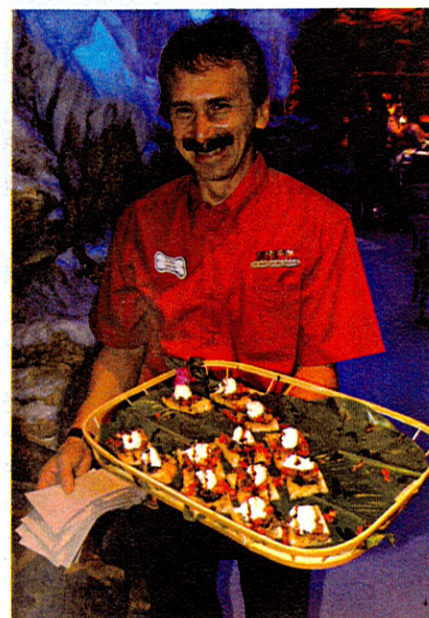


COZY COVE: T-Rex seating provides comfort around the creatures.

not unlike a Hollywood premier, Beitler acknowledged the great support Landry's received from Disney and he also recognized Schussler, whom he called a "dream maker."

"I'd like to thank Steve Schussler for his creativity to bring T-Rex to life," said Beitler. "T-Rex is proud to employ 600 of Orlando's finest and we are extremely excited about opening up this new project to be part of the Downtown Disney family."

There could be more T-Rex Cafés



DIG IN: The brachiosaurus bruschetta is no fossil – only the freshest ingredients are used.

in the future. They're hoping to build one in Reno, Nev. and there are also many inquiries apparently coming from Europe and elsewhere.

To make reservations you'll have to use your 21st century telephone and call 407-828-TREX (8739). The Café is open daily at 11 a.m. and closes Sunday to Thursday at 11 p.m. and Friday and Saturday at midnight. Entrée prices range between \$12 and \$30. The retail shop opens daily at 9:30 a.m. Their Web site is www.trexcafe.com. 