



This Disney Resort Has Nearly 30 Sommeliers on Staff

Here's where to find the good wine after a day of waiting in theme park lines.

By Megan duBois

Published on May 16, 2024

Wine and theme parks don't usually go hand-in-hand since what's served is often a boring house glass from a bar overrun by tired parents and screaming kids.

But at Walt Disney World, wine seems to be taking over the post-fireworks conversation. In fact, right in the heart of the Orlando property, the [Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin](#) is a hidden gem for wine connoisseurs on vacation. The trio of hotels that make up the Swan and Dolphin complex boasts a whopping 29 sommeliers, 15 of which are women.

One highlight of drinking or dining at any of the 11 dine-in restaurants at the resort complex is that each restaurant boasts at least one certified sommelier who can assist guests with making decisions about wine, or any other drink, to go with a meal or to simply sip at the bar.

"Having our team go through the [sommelier] process and learn gives them confidence," says Jason Bradley, director of beverage for the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort. "These are not small wine lists we're dealing with. There's a lot of product on this property. There's a lot of wine and a lot of staff that knows their stuff well."

Every restaurant manager at the three hotels is at least level-one certified. Even better is that some restaurants, like Shula's Steakhouse, Il Mulino, and [Todd English's bluezoo](#), have multiple sommeliers working so no matter when someone walks in they will be taken care of.

"It's incredible because we know our guests are getting the right service," says Bradley.

One of the managers who went through the sommelier program at Swan and Dolphin is Carli Miller, the restaurant manager and one of three sommeliers at bluezoo. The sommelier classes start with an application and interview process before being selected to participate in a six- to seven-month course. Miller was chosen to move forward. "Every Wednesday for two hours we do a blind tasting of two wines," she says of the class. "What you get out of it is what you put into it, and you get a little bit more confident every week."

For Miller, the experience has elevated her expertise, which gives her comfortability guiding guests. "I'm not a Master [Sommelier], but I feel much more confident in going to a table and talking to them about [wine]. Especially [at bluezoo], where we have so many different wines and it's super cool to know all of them and speak to everybody about it," she says.

Guests who want the ultimate wine experience can head to [Shula's Steak House](#) at the Walt Disney World Dolphin. The 450-section, 17-page long wine list includes everything from [Champagne](#) by the glass to bottles of Château Petrus from 2014 costing a staggering \$11,800. Going through the impressive wine list that's won Wine Spectator's Best of Award of Excellence since 2011 can be overwhelming for some. That's where Joe Lopez, general manager of Shula's Steak House, steps in to assist guests.

Lopez is a certified level-two sommelier and has been going through a training class with the Court of Master Sommeliers to test and work toward being level-three certified. During a meal at Shula's, Lopez shared with me that his goal is to be a [Master Sommelier](#), and he's working rigorously to achieve the title. While dining, he paired my meal with interesting wine choices, including a glass of dry Champagne with a pork belly appetizer, where the effervescence and acidity of the wine cut through the rich fattiness of the pork without overwhelming my palate.

Swan and Dolphin ensures that guests can trust the staff as they order wine. "We have wines that everybody knows, but we bring in five [Greek wines](#), for example, it's all about the education of [staff] to make sure they get a taste of it and they understand where it's coming from and how it tastes so they are able to pass that on to the guests sitting in the chairs," says Olivier Zambaux, director of banquets.

So next time you're at Walt Disney World and looking for a great glass of wine that goes beyond the same old red or your go-to white, head to any of the restaurants at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort to try something new with the almost 30 sommeliers to guide you.