

Vegas dining with a theme

By Nikki Neu

Vegas.com

Long live the gimmick.

It attracts your attention, draws you in and gives you something to look at while you're sucking on the long straw sticking out of your souvenir cup.

In Las Vegas, restaurants with themes go above and beyond the norm. It's not just about the boring pictures on the wall or a plant in the corner. Everything is bigger, better and brighter.

Did we mention bigger? Like the 15,000-pound motorcycle that's projecting out of the Harley-Davidson Café or the life-sized elephant inside the Rainforest Café.

These restaurants join the ranks of fun restaurants that do thematic dining with Vegas style. After all, it's not everywhere you can dine with an elephant eyeing your hamburger.

Rainforest Café at MGM Grand:

"Volcano!" yells a guy at the top of his lungs while his fellow servers dodge the sinfully delicious ice cream treat—and their co-worker. It's all part of the experience at Rainforest Café.

The restaurant is transformed into a tropical rainforest filled with foliage and lush greenery, animals that come to life during the tropical thunderstorm, and a croc pond featuring an 18-foot crocodile where guests can throw pennies.

"When you walk in, it's not just pictures on a wall, you really feel like you walk into this rainforest," says General Manager Douglas Chippewa.

The restaurant is a family friendly environment, where guests from 8 to 88 are welcomed. The highlight for all is when the tropical thunderstorm starts, about every 25 minutes.

And that volcano? Made of a huge brownie, piled high with ice cream, caramel, chocolate syrup and a sparkler on top, it's sure to be devoured by a family of four, no lava required.

Margaritaville at Flamingo Las Vegas:

Never-ending tequila.

What a great way to waste away at Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville, which sits directly on the Las Vegas Strip. While the drinks flow



Margaritaville.

steadily and there's a never-ending party vibe, Margaritaville also offers some hearty dishes to satisfy your appetite.

A juicy Mexicali burger is a spicy delight, served with a fire roasted tomato salsa and jalapeños. For seafood lovers, Alaskan king crab and shrimp salad is a good choice, tossed with rotini pasta, olives, tomatoes, carrots and lemon-herb vinaigrette.

Jimmy's Jammin' Jambalaya is a crowd favorite, with chunks of shrimp, chicken, andouille sausage and simmered in a spicy broth.

Of course, when you go to someplace called Margaritaville, the name doesn't disappoint. The extensive lists of margaritas includes the Off to See the Lizard, a blend of tequila, melon, and margarita mix. Other margaritas include the Last Mango in Paris, Pink Cadillac, and the Who's to Blame, which is the traditional house margarita.

Toby Keith's I love this Bar & Grill at Harrah's Hotel & Casino:

Country music is playing, drinks like the Georgia Peach and Who's Your Daddy



Harley-Davidson Café



Rainforest Café.

margarita are flowing and memorabilia from Toby Keith himself gives this bar and grill a down-home feeling.

Toby Keith's I love this Bar & Grill serves Southern-style comfort food and bar food in a warm and inviting setting.

Patriotic touches, like the use of the American flag and sandwiches served with "freedom fries" add to this place's appeal.

When dining, you'll love this bar as you sample heaping portions of dishes like Toby's barbecue pulled pork sandwich and freedom fries or the fried bologna sandwich. Save room for desserts including sweet potato pecan pie and bourbon ice cream.

Harley-Davidson Café on Las Vegas Strip:

Gentlemen, start your... hogs?

At the Harley-Davidson Café, cars just

don't make the cut. It is motorcycle mania, with Harley-Davidson memorabilia on display, a 28-foot high Harley coming out the front of the building, and an American flag made of a staggering 44,000 chain links.

"We have a very diverse customer base," explains Kate Minshall, director of events. "Locals and people from all over the world visit the café from the Harley-Davidson enthusiasts, to executives, golfers, tour groups, families and food and beverage industry folks."

And the diverse group of guests at Harley-Davidson Café can feast on items like the Hog sandwich filled with Carolina BBQ pulled pork; chicken pot pie and macaroni and cheese.

If you're looking to get married, but can't choose between your honey and your hog, consider the Chopper Chapel. Overlooking the Las Vegas Strip, the Chopper Chapel is available for weddings and vow renewals.

Whether you're loving this bar, or wasting away in Margaritaville, it's all here to enjoy. While some of these restaurants are available in other locations, bigger, better versions can be found in Las Vegas. Just in case you don't have one near you, all these restaurants have gifts you can take home with you. Nothing can beat the fun, carefree spirit of Las Vegas and that includes where you go for dinner. Dining with a theme makes food fun again.