

More leftovers from Boathouse, the new Downtown Disney restaurant



Photos of The Boathouse, one of several new restaurants at Downtown Disney as the area transitions into Disney Springs. The Boathouse offers a menu of steak, chops, fresh seafood and a raw bar, and the restaurant showcases "Amphicars" -- vehicles that drive from dry land into the water.



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Here are a few leftovers I have from the Boathouse, the restaurant that opened at **Downtown Disney** -- the future Disney Springs -- on Monday:

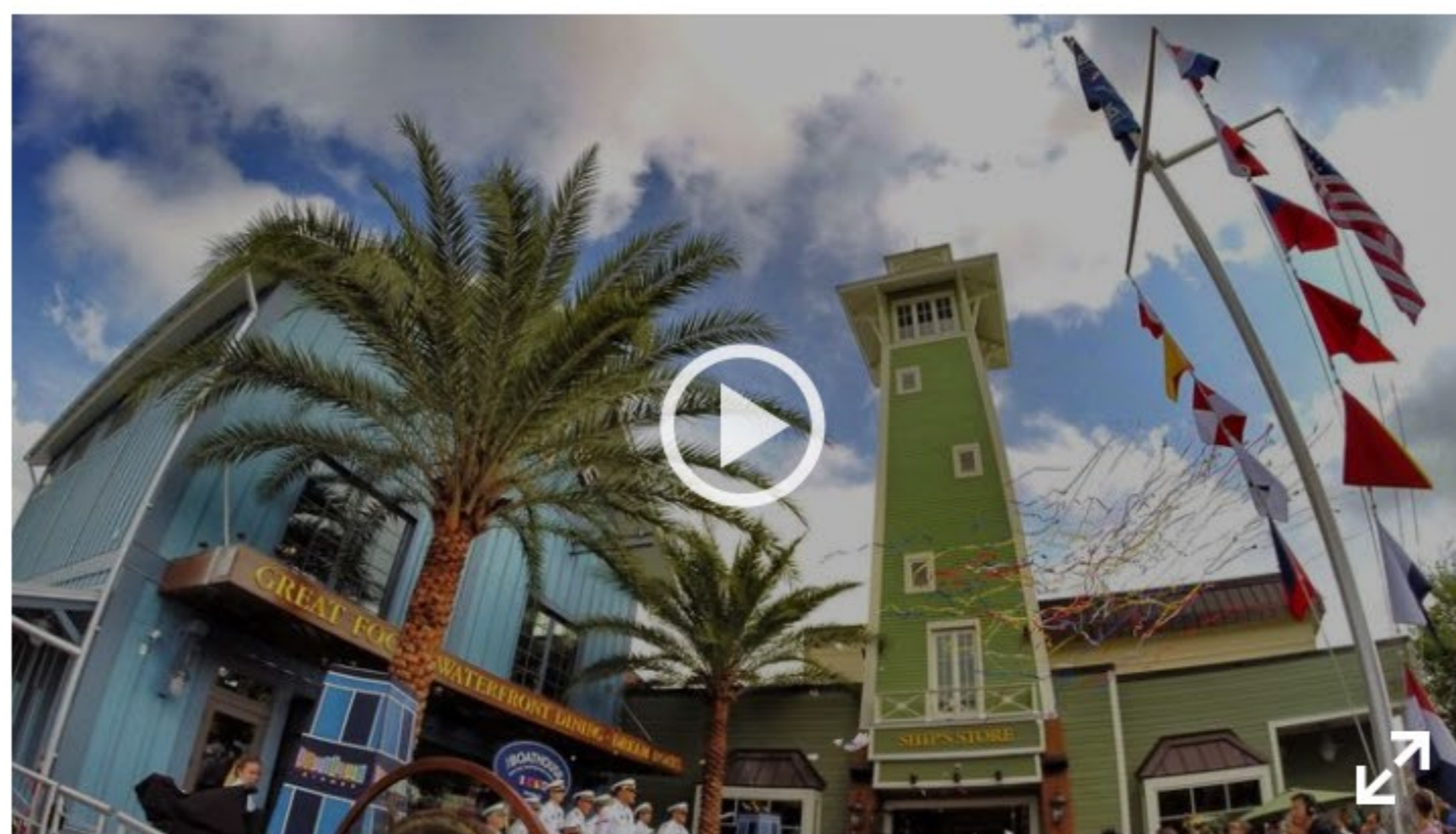
+ The interior décor is nautical, with a definite emphasis on engines, which are mounted high and low. There are a handful of booths built into Chris-Craft boats. They were comfy, but I felt like someone should be skiing behind us. I asked a worker if they had a proper name for this special seating, which is already in demand. "So far, it's just 'the boat.'" he said. Let's come up with something catchy, y'all.

+ Folks -- even non-customers -- can take a spin in amphicars -- for a price. The 20-minute trips around the lake cost \$125, including the services of a skipper/driver. I'm told the humor aboard is reminiscent of Magic Kingdom's Jungle Cruise.

+ Among the unique merchandise in the Ship's Store are personalized oars (about 2 feet long, in a variety of wood types) for \$60 and stylized rubber duckies for \$20. The Mr. Craft and Mrs. Craft duckies (she's decked out in sunglasses and scarf and so very Jackie O) are only sold at the Boathouse. Eventually, there will be an exclusive amphicar duck.

+ Four nautical flags are seen below the arched Boathouse logo. They stand for T, B, O and F. As in: The Boathouse Orlando Florida.

+ Executive chef Bob Getchell says he's proud that everything is made from scratch in the Boathouse kitchen. Although there's plenty of seafood on the menu, there are beef options. It comes from small farms in the midwest, he says. "We've asked them to cut our steaks in exact specifications, and they have an inspector on hand just for our food," Getchell says.



The grand opening of The Boathouse, the new restaurant and marina in the Disney Springs expansion at Downtown Disney, Monday, April 13, 2015. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel)

+ Folks might be surprised that the Boathouse's caviar comes from Volusia County, Evans Farm to be specific. Getchell says even non-caviar fans like their Anatasia Gold. "It's got such a depth of flavor and a buttery-mouth feel," he says. "It's just a delicious flavor."

+ The chef mentioned two items as attention-getters: the 32-ounce dry aged long bone rib chop (it's a plate-full) and the S'mores baked Alaska, built for four.

"It's a giant dessert. It's part of the Gibsons tradition of doing big desserts," Getchell says. "When one goes through the dining room, everyone is turning their head and watching it."

+ Steve Schussler, CEO of Schussler Creative, which developed the restaurant, is high on the quality of the food. "I think the foodies are going to experience another taste and another level of food that they haven't had before," he says. "I think that's going to surprise everybody."

+ Schussler also is proud of the 8,000-square foot kitchen, for which he says \$3 million was spent on equipment and installation. "I think that's unheard of in the restaurant industry," he says. (They spent \$2 million on boats, he says.)

+ The Boathouse opening is the latest step in the metamorphosis from Downtown Disney to Disney Springs. So, when does the official name change kick in?

"I think what's important for us is to make sure that we have enough mass -- enough retailers and restaurant tenants that are ready to open -- where we can really call it something different than it is now," says Theron Skees, creative director with Walt Disney Imagineering. "It's not today. It's on the horizon."

+ And what's that curved-top building going up between Boathouse and Paradiso 37?

"This is an exciting restaurant concept that we're going to be telling you about in the future," Skees says. We expect to hear more during Disney's Summer Media Preview at the end of the month.