



# Meet Gary Jones



—Disney's man with the food-allergy plan

BY JENNIFER HARRIS

**W**hy does visiting Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, give me all the feels? Is it because Mickey is there? Is it because I get to spend time with my family acting like a kid? Or is it because I don't have to worry about food? Yes, that's it. I can go almost anywhere on the property, including the hotels' restaurants, and dine on gluten-free options like waffles, pancakes, beignets, French fries, chicken tenders, macaroni and cheese and even lamb shank with house-made naan and a bevy of dipping sauces. The attention paid to not just offering but preparing allergen-free cuisine is exemplary, leaving you free to relax and enjoy time at the parks—all thanks to the direction of one man, Gary Jones.

Disney treats you as a "Guest" with a capital "G" rather than a customer. It truly wants everyone to have a magical experience—including dining—which sets it apart from other theme parks. Another aspect that elevates Disney is the attention to food allergies. Stepping foot on Disney property is like hitting the food-allergy jackpot because the chefs can prepare meals for those allergic or intolerant to wheat, gluten, peanuts and tree nuts, soy, eggs, corn,

dairy and lactose, shellfish and fish. All top eight allergens are covered, and the menus also feature items that satisfy multiple allergies, like both gluten- and dairy-free, etc.

Disney breaks down dining into groups: table service, quick service and carts/kiosks. Each of these food and beverage locations is equipped with allergy-friendly menus and a knowledgeable chef. When ordering, simply inform the server that someone in your party has a food allergy, and a chef will appear armed with a book of menus and a wealth of knowledge. Ponder the options—which are plenty—place an order, and it will be prepared by said chef from start to finish. The same is true when attending a buffet, where chefs will point out safe options, then offer to prepare a plate in the back to avoid any possible cross-contamination issues.

The culinary dietary specialist for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Gary Jones, has been manning the helm of its Special Diets Department since 2011. Working to meet the food allergy needs of guests is his No. 1 priority. Gary oversees the special diets menus for the Orlando, Florida, location, created and maintains the list of

