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Strike Vote Scheduled at Restaurants inside Walt Disney World; Union Launches Website to Alert Disney Guests About Restaurant Labor Disputes

Vote Could Lead to First-Ever Worker Strike in Parks at Disney World

Lake Buena Vista, FL — Today, restaurant workers at EPCOT's Italy Pavilion who work for restaurants run by subcontractor Patina Group announced that they are scheduling a strike authorization vote. If workers proceed with a strike, it will be the first time in Disney history that employees have gone on strike inside the Disney World parks.

At the same time, their union UNITE HERE Local 737 unveiled a new website to help guests stay aware of potential labor conflict before they dine: DisneyWorldFoodAlert.org.

The site allows visitors to see whether the restaurant they're considering is fair for workers and covered by a union contract that prevents disruptions, or if it is currently under a labor dispute.

"I deserve to have a good life. That isn't so much to ask – we are only demanding what we deserve," said Ismael Gonzales, a cook at Tutto Italia in EPCOT. "I have worked here for 18 years, but the expensive health insurance makes it hard to afford the medicine I need. I need the insurance to be free. I'm ready to do what it takes so that we get what we need!"

Most restaurant workers at Walt Disney World are Disney Cast Members. They are employed directly by Disney, but some restaurants inside Disney property are subcontracted to outside operators. The three restaurants at the Italy Pavilion at EPCOT – Via Napoli, Tutto Italia, and Tutto Gusto – are operated by Patina Group, a subsidiary of Delaware North, and are under a union contract that expires on September 30th.

The results of the strike authorization vote will be announced on September 10th. The vote authorizes the bargaining committee to call a strike at any time once the contract expires.

If a strike moves forward, it will be the first time in history that restaurant workers have had a strike in Disney World. There has been no strike of any employees who work in Disney World in over 20 years.

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UNITE HERE Local 737 is the proud union of workers in Walt Disney World Food & Beverage and Housekeeping, Palmas Services, Patina Group, the Buena Vista Palace Resort & Spa, the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel at the Entrance to Universal Orlando, and Sodexo at the Orange County Convention Center.