

**MORTON'S HAS RUTH'S CHRIS BEATEN BY A WIDE MARGIN**

The major difference between Ruth's Chris Steak House and [Morton's of Chicago Steak House](#) is that Morton's is superior, by a very wide margin.

At least, that is the case in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), in TARGET's opinion.

Morton's is superior in so many categories that it would take far too long to list all of the very positive aspects of Morton's that makes it that much better than Ruth's Chris.

The steaks at both restaurants, this reviewer has been told, come from the same supplier, most of the time, all the steaks, being US Prime, so that the major differences in the 2 steak houses lie in the cooking procedures, the presentation, and the variety of dishes, available to patrons.

TARGET, having appraised the newly opened Morton's in January, and since Morton's and Ruth's Chris are direct competitors, it seemed only fair to visit the competitor in order to determine which of the 2 American steak houses was the better.

The first thing that one notes, when going to Tsimshatsui East and on entering Empire Centre, where Ruth's Chris is located, is that the ground floor of this commercial building is not just a little run down: It is fast obtaining the appearances of a slum commercial building.

That was the situation on January 30.

One cannot help but compare Empire Centre to that other Kowloon building, Chung King Mansions, minus the hoards of ethnic Indians, pimps and prostitutes, lounging in the entranceway, waiting to pounce on an unsuspecting tourist.

On January 30, at about 6:45 pm, some of the Empire Centre's ground floor shops were undergoing renovation, with sawdust, rubbish and dirt, strewn in all directions.

The areas, not under renovation, were dirty and looked tired – a lick of paint would not go amiss.

This compares very poorly to the newly renovated lobby of The Sheraton, where one must wander through in order to obtain private entrance to Morton's, via a special lift, giving one the feeling that one is entering a fine-dining establishment, not just another steak house.

On entering Ruth's Chris, leaving the hammering, sawing and banging outside, one is impressed by the efficiency of the service staff – which is equal to the service staff at Morton's.

The 195-seater restaurant separates the non-smokers from the smokers, with 40 seats, reserved from non-smokers.

The statistics are in: Smoking will, definitely, kill you, sooner rather than later.

But The Mandarin Oriental Hongkong, it seems, still has not learned of these statistics, or refuses to accept them, making it difficult for this reviewer to revisit the excellent The Mandarin Grill, where cigar smoke can be so thick as to make it very unpleasant, even to enter the outlet, let alone eat a meal there.

**The Menu**

A steak house is a steak house. And steak is, just about, all that one can expect in such an establishment.

In view of what this reviewer had eaten when visiting Morton's, TARGET attempted to duplicate the courses.

It was not possible.

Ruth's Chris does not serve freshly baked bread, but serves a type of narrow loaf of French bread, known as a baguette. It is purchased somewhere in the neighbourhood, TARGET was informed.

This baguette was not fresh and was a poor imitation of the original.

At Morton's, in contrast, one is served a piping hot loaf of freshly baked bread, in itself a meal (so one should not try to eat too much of it).

Score One for Morton's.

One is left alone as soon as the menu is placed on the table, unlike at Morton's where one has to listen to a server, who has memorised, word for word, an entire speech about what special foods were available on the day of one's visit.

The little introduction to the foods on offer, from 20-ounce steaks, to Maine lobsters, to California asparagus, etc, is entertaining because one realises that the poor server has spent hours in rehearsing the introduction.

And the servers present the little introduction with a cute little smile, which could easily be construed as being mischievous.

At Ruth's Chris, one notes the sparse menu, makes one's choice, and then calls over the waiter.

TARGET ordered the following dishes:

***Fresh Asparagus  
\$HK60***

***Louisiana Seafood Gumbo  
\$HK70***

***Ribeye Steak, 8ounces  
\$HK200***

***Idaho Baked Potato  
\$HK50***

### **The Most Interesting Dish**

The most interesting of all the dishes was the Louisiana Seafood Gumbo, which was, just about, what one could expect to have in Louisiana, USA.

This reviewer has, in fact, visited Ruth's Chris in Lafayette, Louisiana, a number of years ago, but cannot remember seeing this dish on the menu.

However, that matters little since the Louisiana Seafood Gumbo was good, and tasted very much like the gumbo that one obtains in numerous restaurants in Louisiana

This dish is extremely rich and, being originally a West African dish, it is heavy in both seafood and spices, and is laced, heavily, with okra, which tends to make it very thick.

On a scale of one to 10, the Louisiana Seafood Gumbo scored about 7 points.

The asparagus was of a poor quality, being thin and stringy.

According to the waiter, the asparagus had been flown in from California – which was what the staff of Morton's said, also.

However, Morton's asparagus was about 50 percent thicker and much juicier than that of Ruth's Chris.

Five points for the asparagus.

The Ribeye steak was good, but not very good.

There was nothing wrong with the meat, or the way that it was cooked: It just had little to no flavour.

Whereas in Morton's, the steak was tasty to the point that one wanted to finish it to the last mouthful, at Ruth's Chris, one could easily leave half of the meat and never bat an eyelid.

And that is, precisely, what this reviewer did: Eat only half of the meat.

Five points out of 10 points for the steak.

The desserts on offer at Ruth's Chris are not worth eating, unless one has an exceptionally very sweet tooth.

At Morton's, in contrast, one is offered, among other things, a delicious soufflé, topped with mountains of fresh cream (goodbye, weight-watchers), and one is tempted to return to this restaurant if, for no other reason, than to stuff oneself on soufflé.

All in all, Ruth's Chris Steak House is miles behind Morton's, at least in today's Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

Of course, Ruth's Chris has been in the HKSAR for the past few years, whereas Morton's has not been in operation for more than 4 months.

One will see what time will bring.

According to Mr Billy Ng, the very charming, but very businesslike General Manager of Ruth's Chris, the restaurant will be moving, or establishing another outlet at Lippo Centre, Central, later this year.

It will be interesting to note whether or not changes are made to the new outlet.

Whereas TARGET is unlikely to return to Ruth's Chris, a return visit to Morton's is well on the cards.

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