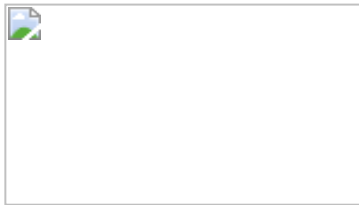


THE BEST AUSTRIAN FOOD IN TOWN:



Contrary to popular belief in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), one can obtain genuine and expertly prepared European dishes in the territory.

But it is not easy to find a free-standing restaurant or an outlet at a good hotel where a European chef is in attendance to prepare a good European lunch or dinner.

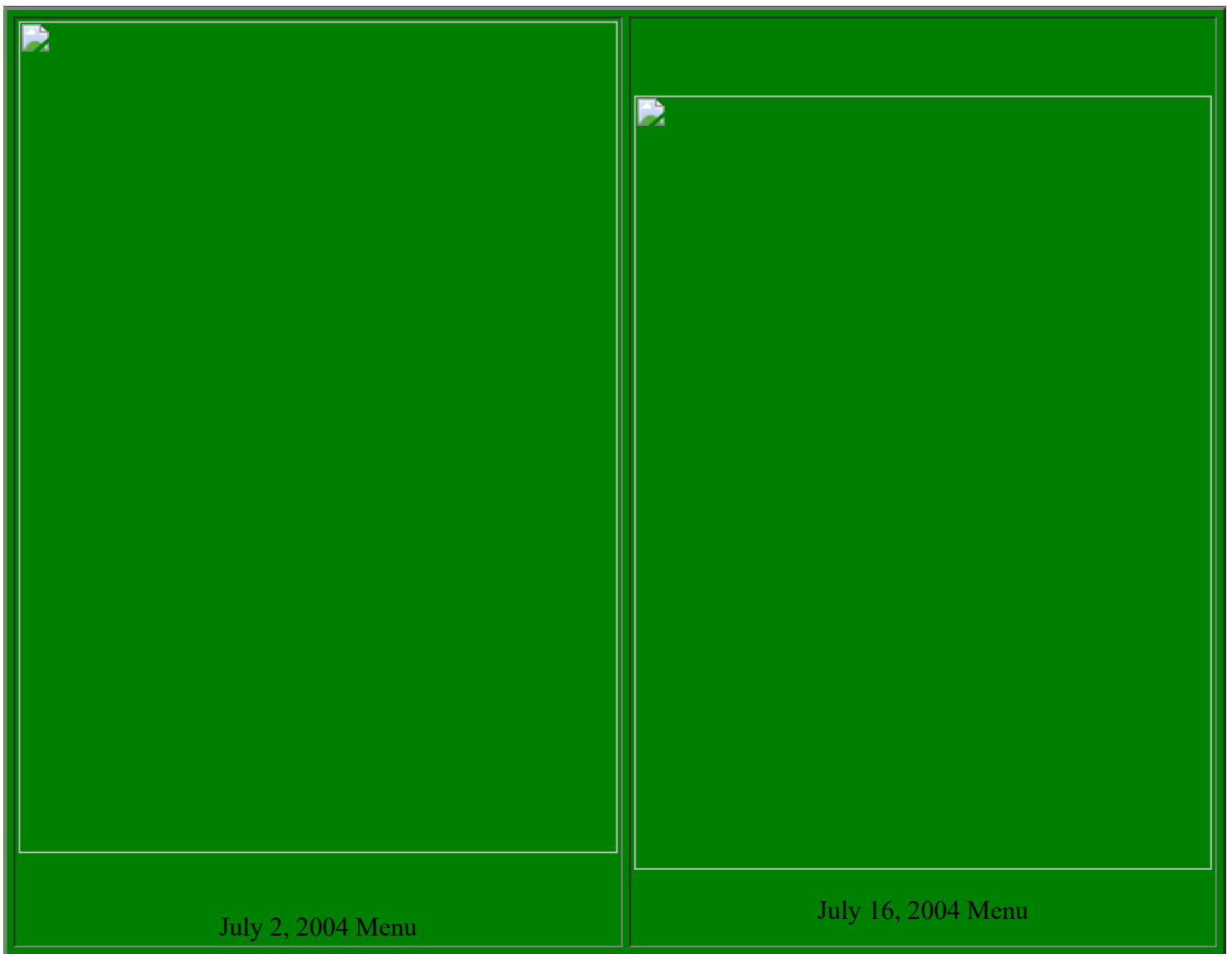
While many of the so-called, 5-star hotels of the HKSAR, those which charge the earth for their dishes, claiming to serve, say, Italian food, without even having an Italian chef to supervise the preparation of this European cuisine, let alone, actually having an Italian chef, getting even close to the kitchen area, there are, also, a number of fine-dining establishments, operating in top-flight, 5-star hotels, which pride themselves on having on staff, some extremely talented European chefs.

One such chef, in **TARGET**'s opinion, is Mr Thomas Rebler, Executive Chef, JW Marriott Hotel, located at Pacific Place.

On a number of occasions, on learning that this rather rotund gentleman was of Austrian descent (some people claim that Austrians are, in fact, second-class Germans), **TARGET** requested of Chef Rebler to prepare for this medium some completely authentic Austrian dinners to 2 people.

TARGET gave to Chef Rebler cartes blanches.

The following are the menus for these 2 dinners, which he personally set and cooked:



TARGET's introduction to Chef Rebler followed our observations of him, standing in front of the open kitchen of JW's California, the premier food outlet of JW Marriott Hotel.

It appeared to this reviewer that Chef Rebler was spot-checking nearly every dish, exiting the kitchen area.

Further, more often than not, **TARGET** observed Chef Rebler, mucking in with the Chinese cooks, teaching them this and that, or correcting something or other.

His physique is quite unmistakable; his food, unquestionably among the best of its genre in the HKSAR; and, his personality belies his great talent.

Hadrian, the Roman Emperor (76 A.D. to 138 A.D.), who is credited as being one of the first Europeans to write a comprehensive cook book, remarked, in his book, that the mark of an excellent cook was that the finished product contained the following elements: Appearance; smell; and, taste.

That being the case, Chef Rebler qualifies for the august title of a master chef, as far as Emperor Hadrian and **TARGET** are concerned.

Which he is, without question, having recently been selected by the international Marriott Hotel chain as being their top chef of the year.

This fact was garnered from an employee of JW Marriott on Chef Rebler's recent return from Washington, D.C., where he was requested to prepare some dishes with an Eastern accent for the current Chief Executive Officer of the Marriott chain, Mr J.W. Marriott, Junior.

In an attempt to learn some of the background of Chef Rebler, **TARGET** telephoned, on Wednesday, July 28, at 9.30 a.m., the Public Relations Department of JW Marriott Hongkong and spoke to a Ms Wendy Chan.

After identifying ourselves and explaining that this medium was requesting a CV (Curriculum Vitae) of Chef Rebler, **TARGET** was told by Ms Wendy Chan:

'I want to know what you are going to write, beforehand (this department sends you the information). Fax the content to me (for my approval).'

TARGET suggested that that smacked of censorship.

Pity!

Anyway, during a casual conversation with Chef Rebler, who had no idea as to the reason behind our enquiries, **TARGET** discovered that he is 32 years old and hails from a small town, about 30 minutes from Salzburg, Austria, which is not far from the German border.

He started off his career by entering an apprenticeship programme in Austria when he was young.

He spent 4 years in the kitchen, learning how to cut up vegetables, initially, and, then, graduating, during the course of his training, to being a junior chef.

He explained to **TARGET** that, in those days, a young Austrian candidate for an apprenticeship programme could opt to spend 2 years in the kitchen and 2 years in the restaurant, learning the art of serving, but he chose to spend all of the 4 years in the kitchen '*... because I liked cooking, so much.*'

Clearly, he has all of the attributes of a person who likes his food, resplendent as he is with a plentiful array of tummy lard, proof positive of his ability to ingest copious quantities of food.

He spent some time in Burma (now known as Myanmar) where he fell in love and married a Burmese lady, who bore him a daughter, who is, today, 9 months old.

The Food Of Thomas Rebler

The dates of the above-mentioned dinners were July 2 and July 16.

And this reviewer, whose origins are Russian/German, can still remember the subtle textures of many of the dishes.

For anybody who knows anything about Austrian food, Paniertes Holstein Schnitzel auf Erdapfel-Vagerl Salat is well known, but is, perhaps, more commonly known in other parts of the world as Wiener Schnitzel à la Holstein (Wiener, of Vienna, the Capital City of Austria).

The English and Americans would call this dish, simply, a breaded veal cutlet.

The preparation of the dish is that a thin slice of veal is coated in egg, dipped in flour and breadcrumbs, and then shallow fried in about one centimetre of vegetable oil.

Sounds simple?

Well, maybe for somebody of Chef Rebler's talents, but for the average person, without much formal training in a kitchen, it is not advisable to try to think that one could prepare this dish to the degree of expertise of Chef Rebler's.

For instance, one must, continually, move the pan in order to make certain that the oil continues to splash over the cutlet, during the cooking period.

Everybody in the world, at some time or other, has prepared a soup, but Legiertes Hühnersüppchen mit Petersilien-Obershaube (Demi Tasse of Chicken Cream, topped with Parsley Cream) is the soup to beat all soups.

The problem with this soup is that it is extremely rich and, as a result, one could form the habit of drinking it, far too often.

Which is bound to result in one being as rotund as Chef Rebler, during the passage of a month.

Because the soup is just too good!

Legiertes Hühnersüppchen mit Petersilien-Obershaube is made by having a strong chicken stock, cooled, which is, then, thickened with butter and flour, creating, what is known as a roux.

It is, then, brought to the boil and allowed to simmer for about 20 minutes.

The reason for the long simmering time is to eliminate the taste of the flour.

The finishing touches comprise the adding of cream and egg yoke, which gives the soup a silky texture (velouté).

And this makes it very smooth ... and very fattening!

Clearly, **TARGET** cannot spare the space to explain every dish, which Chef Rebler prepared for this medium, but one more must be included.

It is one of this reviewer's favourites: Gratinierte Topfenpalatschinken.

This is a pancake, stuffed with quark cheese, topped with a type of custard sauce, to which raisins are added, and, then, the entire creation is baked in an oven.

Timing is essential because, if one bakes it for too long a period of time, it dries out.

If it is not baked, sufficiently, it takes on the consistency of a sweet, mushy soup.

This dish is the most fattening of all: Beware ladies!

JW's California

JW's California is the premier outlet at JW Marriott Hotel.

It seats about 124 guests and is staffed by an able team of waiters and waitresses, under the control of Ms Juliana Cheung, the Restaurant's Manager.

There are a total of 8 cooks, preparing the food for the guests, all of whom are Chinese, with the lone exception of Mr Patrick Barrett, the British-born chef of the outlet.

The décor is not luxurious, but, at the same time, it is adequate, neat, with a clear division between the smoking area and the non-smoking area (which **TARGET** demands before even considering to take a seat in a restaurant).

The outlet, also, has 2 private rooms for people, who desire more privacy. The total capacity of these 2 rooms, if made into one, large room, is 22 people.

JW's California may have started out, serving California-style cuisine (whatever that may have been), but, today, for discriminating diners, one is able to enjoy some of the best European cuisine in town.

Chef Rebler, for all of his size, is about as gentle as a giant can be and appears, always, to be available to answer any question from any of the guests.

He exudes humility, although **TARGET** cannot understand the reason for this because only mediocrity demands humility – and Chef Rebler is far from being mediocre.

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