

Dining and Wining ... Where To Go ... Where Not To Go

THE BEST

RESTAURANTS OF HONGKONG ...

AND THE WORST !

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| <u>Name of Restaurant</u> | Amber, The Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hotel |
| <u>Address of Restaurant</u> | 7/F, No. 15, Queen's Road Central, Hongkong |
| <u>Date of Visit</u> | September 21, 2006, Thursday |

| <u>Category</u> | <u>TARGET's Rating</u> | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Service | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| First Impression | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Attentiveness to Customers' Needs | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Flexibility | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Product Expertise of Serving Staff | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Speed of Service | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| <u>Smoking and Non-Smoking Areas</u> | Smoking | Non-Smoking | |
| <u>Ambiance</u> | | | |
| Lighting | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Music | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| General | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| <u>Food</u> | | | |
| Presentation | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Taste | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| Quantity | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| <u>Wine</u> | | | |
| Choice | Extensive | Limited | Unbalanced |
| Cost | Reasonable | Unreasonable | |
| Storage of Wine | Good | Poor | |
| Expertise of Sommelier | Excellent | Acceptable | Poor |
| <u>Total Cost of Meal</u> | | | |
| Very Expensive | Moderately Expensive | Very Reasonable Priced | |

**Name of Director of Food and
Beverage**

Mr Christopher Pointaux

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Richard Ekkebus

Comments

One is told that the food, served at Amber Restaurant, the fine-dining outlet of The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, is *'modern European'*.

Well, as far as **TARGET** is concerned, it's time for a revival, folks: Please bring back that *'old time religion'*.

Mr Richard Ekkebus, the Executive Chef of Amber, may be considered a creative chef by the Mandarin's Director of Food and Beverage, Mr Christophe Pointaux, and Mr Richard Ekkebus may well have been trained in the classical European school, but his culinary experiment at the small, fine-dining outlet at Landmark Mandarin Oriental is a failure, in this medium's opinion.

TARGET's team visited Amber on Thursday, September 21, 2006, in order to learn, after all the hype about this restaurant, just how good it was.

The answer: The food is outrageously expensive for what one gets and it is insipid, for the most part.

This was **TARGET**'s menu on the day of our visit:

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|-------------------------|---------|
| Organic Vine Tomato | \$HK190 |
| Duck Foie Gras | \$HK260 |
| Sardines | \$HK210 |
| Challans Chicken Breast | \$HK390 |
| Meagre | \$HK310 |

The Appetizers were something of a disaster area because the sardines smelt and tasted as though they were *'off'*: After a small taste, the waiter was informed that they were not edible.

As for the Organic Vine Tomato Appetizer, the appearance of the 3, very small dishes of tomatoes – a puree, the chopped-up variety, and what had the appearance of a tiny salad – was really excellent, but the appearance was about all one could say for this very pretentious combination.

The Duck Foie Gras was good, by itself, but it clashed, badly, with the Smoked Freshwater Eel, which had been pressed between 2 slabs of thinly cut Duck Foie Gras.

No points here.

TARGET's team chose 2 Main Courses, both of which were mediocre.

The meagre, which this medium learned later, on consulting a dictionary, is a large, carnivorous scaenid fish, found mainly in The Mediterranean, was nothing about which to write home to mom and **TARGET**'s reviewer could care less whether or not it was ever tasted again.

There was nothing wrong with the fish dish, but there was little to say about this dish, too.

In fact, the memory of this dish eludes **TARGET** to this day because it had no distinctive flavour or texture – and the method of cooking the fish did little to help it along.

With salmon, there is a distinctive taste, as there is with tuna, garoupa, parrot fish, etc, but the way in which Amber cooked the meagre left **TARGET**'s team absolutely cold.

As for the Callans Chicken Breast, it was completely insipid: One would never have known that it was chicken if the lights were turned off.

This dish should have been a high point of the meal, but it turned out to be a zero point ... as was most of the meal.

One of the **TARGET** duo is allergic to red peppers and Chef Richard Ekkebus explained that, if the red peppers had been added to the chicken breast dish, it would have been much better.

What **TARGET** assumed by this comment was that the chicken breast required the flavour of red peppers because the chicken, by itself, had no flavour.

But Challans is famous in France for the flavour of its chickens among other things in Pays De La Loire!

TARGET was quite prepared to skip the desserts, completely, because nothing, really, appealed, but on learning from our waiter that we were not too happy with the meal, when asked whether or not crêpe suzette was possible, it appeared on the table in about 10 minutes.

And it became the high point of the meal!

If **TARGET** never returned to Amber, it would be too soon.

The **TARGET** team was hungry at 8 pm on Thursday, September 21, 2006, and the **TARGET** team was hungry at 10 pm on Thursday, September 21, 2006, when it left Amber.

This restaurant is pretentious and does not match up against its rivals except, perhaps, with regard to the prices that it charges because it is not good value for money.

A word about the training of the serving staff in general: Excellent.

One major negative comment about the service is that the man, who appeared to be some kind of Captain of the waiters, appeared to be completely oblivious of any of the other guests, other than his friends or a person, not known to be a member of the hoi polloi, so that, when there was any requirement for assistance at a table, next to where he was having a little tête-à-tête with one of his favourites or somebody of importance in the world of Hongkong business, he merely continued with his exchange of bon mots.

That, really, is not on when one is paying top dollar for a dinner, is it?

By the way, aside from the first peak of that maître d'hôtel, whoever he was, **TARGET**'s team never saw him anywhere near our table, but it was noted that he was chatting with obvious friends of his in the restaurant, throughout our visit.

Another rather interesting aspect about Amber was that there appeared to be no sommelier on duty on the evening that **TARGET** paid the restaurant a visit.

The list of wines was very extensive, however, and all appeared to be reasonable priced, considering the relatively high cost of the food.

Conclusion: On the day that **TARGET** visited Amber, it was half empty: There appeared to be a good reason for this situation.

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