

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

**THE BEST  
RESTAURANTS OF HONGKONG ...  
AND THE WORST !**

**Name of Restaurant**

Mandarin Grill and Bar, Mandarin Oriental Hongkong

**Address of Restaurant**

Number 5, Connaught Road, Hongkong

**Date of Visit**

Thursday, January 11, 2007

**Category****TARGET's Rating****Service**

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
Cleanliness of Uniform and Serving Staff	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

**Ambiance**

Lighting	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Music -- None	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
General	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

**Food**

Presentation	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

<u>Wine</u>				
Choice		Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost		Reasonable	Unreasonable	Very Expensive
Storage of Wine		Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier --	None	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

### Total Cost of Meal

Very Expensive	Moderately Expensive	Very Reasonable Priced
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### Name of Director of Food and Beverage

Mr Paul Jackson

### Name of Executive Chef

Mr Sean O'Connell

### Comments

The Mandarin Grill and Bar must be one of the best, if not the best, steak house in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), today.

Beyond question, The Mandarin Grill and Bar leaves Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in its wake.

However, this food outlet of Mandarin Oriental is not fine dining: It is hardly the place where one would want to spend a romantic evening.

Having said that, the food is outstanding as is the service and the ambiance.

On the day that **TARGET**'s team visited The Mandarin Grill and Bar, this is that which was ordered:

**Oyster Chowder,**  
freshly shucked oyster, potato \$HK128  
**Slowed Roasted Rack of Lamb,**  
Western Australian Grain Fed (Half Rack) \$HK268

**Veloute of Sweet Leeks,**  
smoked salmon, coriander leaves \$HK128  
**Beef Rib Eye – US Prime Omaha,**  
Corn Fed Beef Rib Eye (350 grams) \$HK368

**TARGET** entered the restaurant at about 6:15 in the evening of last Thursday and had to wait 15 minutes in order to be seated because service does not begin until 6:30 pm.

On entering the dining area at the appointed time, it was noted that the cooks in the open kitchen area were shouting so loudly that **TARGET** asked to be moved from our assigned table further to the east of the restaurant in order to escape some of the unwanted silly jokes and vulgar language, emanating from the mouths of the kitchen staff, both Chinese and European, and the constant whirring sounds, caused by machinery in the kitchen.

Even the burley European Executive Chef, Mr Sean O'Connell, who was standing outside the open kitchen, was yelling at the cooks, mostly jestingly, adding to the general din and clatter with which one had to contend.

Then, from time to time, an Australian female cook would call out in her high-pitched voice: 'Service!'

**TARGET** learned, later, that this youngish Australian lady is, in fact, Ms Sarah Briegel, the Chef of the

outlet.

While she is a charming little thing, even adorned in her silly looking cook's hat, it is not very pleasant to be verbally assaulted by periodic, stentorian outbursts of '*Service!*' and it is extremely irritating to be shocked out of one's seat, periodically, if one wanted to have a confidential chat with one's companion.

Add to this that, from time to time, cellular telephones would go off as diners took time out from filling their faces with delicious food to answer telephone calls and one does not need to have a very active imagination to understand that the dining experience was somewhat muted.

Strangely, there was no music, emanating from the speaker system, on the day that **TARGET**'s team visited this restaurant so that the only sounds that one heard were those of knives and forks, doing justice to generous chunks of meat or pieces of fish, plus the constant banter from the European and Chinese kitchen staff and some conversation from the seated diners.

As **TARGET** has, already, stated, this restaurant is hardly the place for a romantic evening.

In respect of service, in this 70-seater outlet, there is some 25 serving staff, **TARGET** was told by our waiter.

That is a ratio of 2.80 serving staff to every customer – which must be among the highest ratio in the HKSAR, today.

Also, **TARGET** counted 8 Europeans, working as cooks in the open kitchen.

(How long with this situation last?)

During the meal, the fire alarm was sounded and some of the diners wondered whether or not it was time to make a dash for the exit or to wait to see what would happen.

Within minutes, a very polite, black-coated European (manager?) made the rounds of the tables, informing customers that it was a false alarm and '*We apologise for the inconvenience.*'

**TARGET** did not order a bottle of wine to accompany the excellent beef and lamb dishes, which were ordered, because the prices of what this reviewer would consider a decent bottle of wine was way out of line with the going rates, today.

In short, the cost of reasonable bottle of wine at this restaurant is outrageous.

But the food and the cooking skills of the kitchen staff at this outlet are, to be sure, on a par with the best of the best – anywhere.

The steak, especially, was among the best that **TARGET** has ever tasted in the territory: It could be cut, literally, with a fork.

It was ordered to be medium rare and it came to the table, medium rare.

As one sliced open the meat, its juices flowed: A telltale sign of near perfect cooking.

As for the Australian lamb, it, as with the Omaha beef, was sheer delight.

However, there was no mint jelly to accompany the lamb!

As for the soup, it was fine, but hardly anything special.

There was no plain cheesecake on the menu, so **TARGET** ordered it as a desert.

It came in a flash.

No question: '*I can get it for you,*' our waiter said.

**TARGET** was pleasantly surprised to find that the ice-cream, served in this outlet, is homemade:

Unusual.

In **TARGET**'s opinion, the cheesecake at Mandarin Oriental is among the best in the territory, but it is terribly fattening, representing at least 1,000 calories per mouthful.

It is difficult to believe that any free-standing restaurant in the HKSAR, today, can compete with The Mandarin Grill and Bar and, in **TARGET**'s opinion, there is unlikely to be any outlet at any 5-star hotel to be able to compete.

As for cost, the price of a steak at this outlet is cheaper than at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse where a 12-ounce Louisiana steak (according to the lady with whom **TARGET** spoke over the telephone) costs \$HK410, without the trimmings.

Mandarin Grill and Bar has only been reopened for about 3 months so that a return will be in order, later in the year, in order to learn whether or not things have changed.

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