

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

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

Name of Restaurant

L'Atelier

Address of Restaurant

Shop 401, 4th Floor, The Landmark, Number 15, Queen's Road, Central, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Friday, February 23, 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	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	
Expertise of Sommelier	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

Total Cost of Meal

Very Expensive	Moderately Expensive	Very Reasonably Priced
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Name of Director of Food and Beverage

Mr Joel Robuchon

Name of Executive Chef
Name of Sous Chefs

Mr Phillipe Groult (on holiday)
Mr Cedric Gavaille
Ms Florence Dalia

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Comments

There's a new 'guy' on the block.

His name is 'L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon' and he lives at Shop 401, The Landmark, Central Hongkong.

Watch out all you pretenders to the world of fine dining because this French restaurant will give you, all, more than just a run for your money!

TARGET () visited this fine, stand-alone restaurant, last Friday, at about 6:30 p.m., and was delighted with the total experience.

Last Friday evening, really, started the night before when **TARGET** telephoned the restaurant in order to make a reservation.

The lady, who answered the telephone, said that **TARGET** may make a reservation for 6:30 p.m. but must surrender the table by 8:00 p.m. (**TARGET** did not divulge for whom the reservation was being made)

Alternatively, **TARGET** may reserve a table at 8:30 p.m. and, by so doing, may stay until the restaurant closes.

When this medium asked what would happen if the service was slow at the first seating or that the meal had not been finished on time, the lady said that this was a new policy ... and that ... *'Please wait a moment ... it's OK if you are not finished, you can eat more ...'*

This reviewer was somewhat put off by this first encounter with a staff member of this restaurant, but determined that one should not allow one's personal feelings to interfere with a professional judgment.

On arrival at L'Atelier at the appointed time, **TARGET** was shown to a table which was terribly small and which faced a gaggle of Chinese ladies, all of whom were having the time of their lives, eating and drinking – and talking and laughing, very loudly.

When asked whether or not the proposed **TARGET** table could be changed, at first, a Chinese serving staff member said something to the effect *'I'll check'* and, then, disappeared.

Mr Danilo Nicoletti, the Maitre d'hotel, then, showed up at **TARGET**'s proposed table (which had been rejected) in order to ascertain whether or not there was a problem.

Then, there was no question about a change of seating.

'Of course, you may change tables!' said Mr Danilo Nicoletti, showing the **TARGET** duo to another table of the same size, but one with no gaggle of ladies in earshot and no neighbour to crowd us.

'But I must beg you to let me have this table by 8:30 p.m. because I have a party of 6 at that time. The other table (pointing to the area of the gaggle of Chinese ladies), you can have all night, if you like,' he added somewhat apologetically.

TARGET explained that we would surrender the table at the agreed time, provided the food was served on time ... *'d'accord ... naturellement! ... Our service is never late!'*

Having ordered 2 bottles of wine, **TARGET** accepted the recommendations of Mr Danilo Nicoletti with regard to the meal for the evening.

It comprised the following:

The Food, Recommended by Mr Danilo Nicoletti

Le Jambon <<Iberico de Bellota>>	
"Iberian Bellota" Ham served with toasted bread and tomato	\$HK210
Le Foie Gras D'Oie	
Smoked Goose Foie Gras layered with Caramelised Eel	\$HK320
L'Amadai	
Delicate Amadai Fillet on Crispy Skin and Aromatic Champagne Nectar	\$HK560
La Caille	
Free-range Quail with Foie Gras, served with Truffled Mashed Potatoes	\$HK420

TARGET's Choice of Wines

Alois Kracher	\$HK1,400
Billecart-Salmon, Brut Rose, NV	\$HK900

The first courses were, in a word, superb.

The Iberian Bellota Ham ('Le Jambon') was, in **TARGET's** opinion, as good as, if not better than, the best 'Parma' Ham (actually, nearly every little hamlet in Italy claims to make a ham which the hamlet labels as being Parma Ham).

The Iberian Bellota Ham is a little more fatty than Parma Ham, but it has a flavour that just won't go away.

(**TARGET** was advised to eat the ham with the fingers, a finger bowl, being provided.)

As for the Smoked Goose Foie Gras with Caramelised Eel, it would be difficult to imagine how this dish could be improved.

The succulent morsels of foie gras and eel melted in one's mouth and the sweetness of the Kracher was a perfect accompaniment to complement this dish.

Danger! This dish is extremely fattening!

The Amadai Fillet, **TARGET** was informed, came from Japan; its taste was similar to sea bream, but being, perhaps, a little more chewy.

The preparation of the dish was, exactly, as was described on the menu and deserved top marks.

The free-range quail, however, had a slight edge over the Amadai, due, in part, to its multiple flavours and the caramelisation of the meat of the bird.

However, one could not fault either dish because they were both excellent.

The Champagne went down well with both the fish and the quail.

As for desert, one is told that there is an assortment of imported fine French cheeses.

As it turned out, this was a bit of a joke – pass the cheese dish, folks, it does not exist.

The soufflé, however, was a complete surprise because, in **TARGET**'s opinion, it ranks among the best in town.

All in all, the meal was very satisfying as was the total dining experience.

At a fine-dining restaurant, the preparation and presentation of the food, of course, is important, but it is the complete package – the total experience, if you will – that is the hallmark of the best of the best.

In a conversation after the meal with Mr Danilo Nicoletti, **TARGET** learned that L'Atelier is owned by the fourth wife of Mr Stanley Ho Hung Sun (), Ms Angela Leung Oi Kei ().

On the day that **TARGET** visited this eatery, it appeared that this lady had, already, been on an inspection tour of the restaurant with some of her lady friends.

It seems that the restaurant is a hobby of this multi-billionairess.

She has, without question, very good taste if this restaurant is to be considered an example of her taste in food, decor and ambiance.

If this 70-seater restaurant can maintain its present standards, it will knock the socks off certain fine-dining establishments of 5-star hotels of the territory.

The Executive Chef of L'Atelier is Mr Phillipe Groult, who is, presently, on holiday in France.

On the evening that **TARGET** ate at this restaurant, the Sous Chefs were Mr Cedric Gavaille and Ms Florence Dalia.

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