

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

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

Name of Restaurant

The Mistral Restaurant,
InterContinental Grand Standard Hongkong

Address of Restaurant

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Number 70, Mody Road, Tsimshatsui East,
Kowloon, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Saturday, February 24, 2007

CategoryTARGET's RatingService

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
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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 --	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
<u>Total Cost of Meal</u>			
Very Expensive	Moderately Expensive	Very Reasonably Priced	
<u>Name of Director of Food and Beverage</u>			
Mr Ellen Tang			
<u>Name of Executive Chef</u>			
None			

Comments

The Mistral Restaurant at Intercontinental Grand Stanford Hongkong does not have a Chef de Cuisine.

It, sorely, needs one.

This is supposed to be an Italian restaurant, but on the day that this medium visited the eatery, it reminded **TARGET** () of the old, British Hongkong, back in the early 1960s, when restaurants made claims to being Russian, French, Greek, Italian, German, etc, but, in fact, they were a Chinese person's imagination of other countries' cuisine.

TARGET visited The Mistral Restaurant on Saturday, February 24, 2006, in order to learn how this restaurant had progressed over the years since it was first established in 1984.

When it first opened, the food was good.

But that was 23 years ago.

This is another Italian restaurant in 3 different, luxury hotels in Tsimshatsui East, all within spitting distance of each other.

The other 2 Italian restaurants are located at The Royal Garden Hotel (Sabatini – Please see **TARGET** Intelligence Report, Volume IX, Number 32, Pages 4 through 8) and Kowloon Shangri-La Hongkong (Angelini – Please see **TARGET** Intelligence Report, Volume IX, Number 22, Pages 6 through 10).

Of the 3 Italian restaurants, The Mistral Restaurant comes in at the very bottom of the barrel.

On the evening that **TARGET** showed up for dinner at The Mistral Restaurant, a very charming Chinese lady, who is the Restaurant Manager, explained that our team was a little early – it was, in fact, 6:45 p.m. and the reservation had been made for 7:00 p.m. – but, nevertheless, Ms Ellen Tang suggested that **TARGET** nosh on some munchables (hors-d'œuvre) while everything was readied.

This young lady is a real credit to this restaurant and would be a credit to any restaurant, in **TARGET**'s opinion, as this reviewer learned during the course of the evening.

As is **TARGET**'s wont, the menu, chosen for the evening, was the Set Menu and 2 à la carte dishes.

This was **TARGET**'s order:

Set Menu

Il Carpaccio di Manzo con Ruchetta e Scaglie di Parmigiano Reggiano

Beef Carpaccio with Rucola and Parmesan Cheese

Orechiette con ostice, pomodoro fesco e rucola
Orechiette, served with Boston lobster, Cherry Tomatoes and Rucola
“Mistral Buon Ricordo dish”

Il Cartoccio d’orata con Verdure alla Mediterranea
Cartoccio style Sea Bream with Pan-fried Vegetables

Panna Cotta

Il caffè ‘Illy’ con Il cioccolato Amedei

\$HK550 per person

À La Carte Dishes

La Pizza Ragazzi	
(Pizza with Tomatoes, Mozzarella Cheese,	
Porcini Mushrooms, Parma Ham and Rucola)	\$HK198
L’Ossobuco alla Milanese con Gremolata e Potate Pura	\$HK290

The pizza came cold.

One slice was tasted – and it was sent packing.

As it was sliced up, it was clear that this was not a fresh pizza, at all, but one that had been sitting around for some time, waiting for an unsuspecting buyer.

This pizza was on a par with the pizza, tasted at Angelini of Kowloon Shangri-La Hongkong: Zero points.

The major difference between the 2 pizzas was that the one, served at Angelini, was hot whereas, the one, served at The Mistral Restaurant, was cold.

However, both pizzas suffered from the same insipidness.

This was where Ms Ellen Tang came back into the picture, again.

When **TARGET**’s waiter was told to clear away the pizza from our table (only one slice had been half eaten), he enquired as to whether or not it should be put into a box to take away.

Upon hearing that it was not worthy of being eaten, at any time, the waiter, almost immediately, told Ms Ellen Tang of the statement.

Ms Ellen Tang investigated and approached **TARGET**’s table within minutes, apologising for the pizza and saying that there had been a mistake in the cooking process and, as such, there would be no charge for the failure of the kitchen staff.

It was not that which this young lady had said that was important, but more the professional manner in which this embarrassing matter, for the restaurant, was handled.

TARGET was impressed with the maturity of the Manager of this restaurant.

After the pizza, came the Beef Carpaccio.

It was fine.

What can one say about a dish which is raw beef with slices of Parmesan Cheese except that it was either tasty or tasteless.

The second, Set Menu dish, was the pasta dish.

This dish was excellent, the orechlette, having been cooked al dente, and the cherry tomato sauce, although a little too tart for some people, was perfect for this reviewer's taste buds.

But that was the only cooked dish worthy of note for this meal because the sea bream, which following the orechlette, was bordering on going bad – at least, that was how it tasted.

This dish was a kind of fish stew, containing just one kind of fish with some pan-fried vegetables, all of which had been wrapped in tin foil and heated in an oven.

It tasted something like yesterday's supper.

As for the Panna Cotta, it was a poor rendition of this dish although there was little wrong with it – except that it was a type of mousse concoction and not panna cotta.

The ossobuco was interesting because some of the meat was tender while some of the meat was extremely tough.

Guessing, **TARGET** suggests that the kitchen had run short of ox tail and so had added partially cooked pieces of meat to completely cooked pieces of meat.

An alternative suggestion could have been that the ox tail had been frozen just before being plopped into the meat sauce.

Whatever happened to the poor meat, it will be up to somebody else to sort out because **TARGET** shall not be returning to this restaurant until a competent chef is found.

This 120-seater restaurant looks exactly as it did when it first opened, even to the terracotta tiles on the floor.

There were 4 Chinese cooks on the day that the **TARGET** team visited this restaurant, all of whom were having a very nice time, talking and joking in the open kitchen, seemingly paying scant attention to the job of preparing food.

Which accounts for the quality of the food preparation.

It seemed to **TARGET** that the main difference between The Mistral Restaurant of Intercontinental Grand Stanford Hongkong and Angelini of Kowloon Shangri-La Hongkong was that Angelini is equivalent to fast-food, Italian dining while The Mistral Restaurant is more like dying than dining.

For certain, though, the service in The Mistral Restaurant is much better than that at Angelini and the serving staff really try their best.

It is a real pity that the expertise of the serving staff is not mirrored by the handful of people, standing around in white uniforms in the open kitchen.

The lack of accountability is really telling in the quality of the food at this restaurant.

Conclusion

Having, now, experienced all of the 3 Italian restaurants in the 3 luxury restaurants at Tsimshatsui East, this is **TARGET's** opinion:

1. Sabatini has it all over The Mistral and Angelini for just about everything;
2. Angelini is far superior to The Mistral, but, if Sabatini scores 7 points out of 10 points, then Angelini's score is about 3 points out of 10 points; and,
3. The Mistral does not score, at all.

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