

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

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

Name of Restaurant

JW's California Grill, JW Marriott Hotel Hongkong

Address of Restaurant

Pacific Place, Number 88, Queensway, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Tuesday, April 24, 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	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier --	None	Excellent	Poor

Total Cost of Meal

Very Expensive Moderately Expensive Very Reasonably Priced

Name of Director of Food and Beverage

None

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Remo Berdux

Comments

There are, now, 2 Japanese cooks, working in JW Marriott Hotel Hongkong, one dishing out only Japanese-style dishes at what is commonly called the ‘*Sushi Counter*’ and, one Japanese gentleman, dishing out European-Japanese dishes at JW’s California Grill.

The newest addition to the Japanese contingent, working at this Pacific Place hotel, is Mr Brian Nagao, whose name card reads: ‘*JW’s Chef de Cuisine*’.

TARGET () has not, really, made an attempt to sample the food at JW’s California, the only Western-styled outlet at this well-appointed hotel, for some time because, among other things, the air-conditioning in this hotel is abominable in the hot summer months.

Things have not changed, at least, not when **TARGET**’s duo turned up last Tuesday night at about 7:30 pm.

A word about the air-conditioning system in this hotel, first.

There is nothing really wrong with it, but for some stupid reason, it is kept at a very uncomfortable level of about 25 degrees Celsius (**TARGET**’s rough guess) – in the middle of the hottest days.

It makes little sense, financially, for Management to continue to do this because the savings to the owner of the hotel by keeping the public areas of the hotel at an uncomfortable temperature are only about \$HK1,000 per day per 2 degrees Celsius over the internationally recognised comfort zone of about 22.50 degrees Celsius at a humidity level of about 55 percent.

On the basis of keeping the temperature in the public areas of the hotel at an uncomfortable 25 degrees Celsius for 180 days per year, 10 hours per day, the savings to the owners of the hotel cannot be greater than \$HK360,000, annually.

On one occasion, about 3 years ago, when **TARGET** turned up for breakfast at 7:30 am, it was so hot at the Marriott Cafe, the coffee shop of the hotel, that this medium’s team did not even stay longer than 10 minutes before leaving ... for good.

(It is impossible to eat breakfast with perspiration, dripping down one’s face)

Last Tuesday night, the situation was exactly the same again, although, when leaving, **TARGET** noted that the temperature in the banqueting hall was set at a very comfortable level, unlike the temperature at JW’s California outlet.

The Chef de Cuisine Of JW’s California

Mr Bryan Nagao, the newly installed chef of JW’s California, is 47 years old and, formerly, he worked for Chez Moi in Arbuthnot Road, in Central Hongkong, for 3 months.

Before that, he told **TARGET**, worked in Denver, Colorado, as the chef of Mao Restaurant.

According to the Public Relations Department of The Peninsula Hongkong, Mr Bryan Nagao used to be Chef de Cuisine at Felix, the roof-top restaurant in this super-luxury hotel.

According to the lady with whom **TARGET** spoke at The Peninsula Hotel's Public Relations Department, he resigned a few years ago.

She would not give the reasons for his resignation.

Chef Bryan Nagao, an ethnic Japanese gentleman, appeared to be swapping bon mots with the Chinese kitchen staff when **TARGET** ate dinner there, last Tuesday, and things were, clearly, running very smoothly in the small open kitchen of this outlet.

On the day that **TARGET** showed up, unannounced, this was the food that was chosen:

Set Dinner Menu

MANDARIN ORANGE GLAZED PORK BELLY
black peppercorn and mango relish

TRADITIONAL LOBSTER BISQUE
finished with cognac and sour cream

GINGER AND SCALLION GRILLED SALMON
sweet miso and bleu cheese ginger sweet potato puree

OR

BRAISED BONELESS SHORT RIBS AND FOIE GRAS
green tea morel salad and potato fondant

CHOCOLATE ICE PARFAIT
lavender ice cream and white chocolate crystalline

\$498 PER PERSON

A La Carte Menu

Oysters Rockefeller	
Spinach Mascarpone and Bacon	\$HK138
Colorado Lamb Chops	
Dried Apricot Sauce and Red Current Vinaigrette	\$HK288
Sautéed Mushrooms	\$HK58

The one striking aspect that **TARGET** noted about all of the dishes that were sampled on our visit to JW's California was that the food was, for the most part, unseasoned strongly, and, many of the dishes were insipid – that is, of no discernable flavour, at all.

For people, suffering heart problems or high blood pressure, they will appreciate that this is the place for them to eat.

The first course on the Set Dinner Menu was the traditional (and very famous) Chinese dish, called (), which is similar to Kau Yuk ().

As a Chinese dish, it was very good.

But **TARGET** wondered: For what reason is this restaurant, presumably serving European food (perhaps modern California dishes), including this traditional Chinese dish when, a few floors below, there is a Chinese restaurant in the same hotel?

Whatever was the reason, **TARGET**, certainly, could not complain about the dish.

The second course on the Set Dinner Menu, the Lobster Bisque, was very traditional and although this reviewer has drunk better soup, it still ranked above 5 points out of 10 points.

The third course, the grilled salmon, was a pure indication that Mr Bryan Nagao is an ethnic Japanese gentleman because the fish was at least 75 percent raw.

Actually, for fresh salmon, this is not a bad idea, especially for a Japanese restaurant.

It was noted that there had been no marinate, added to the salmon, and the other complements were, almost, without any taste at all.

It was all very strange, but not particularly an irritant although, in many European restaurants, to reach for the salt would be considered a bit of an insult to the chef.

Mr Bryan Nagao, on the back of his name card, claims: *'Mixing philosophies, mixing cuisines. Breaking all of the rules of conventional dining.'*

Presumably, this means not adding much flavour to nature foods, among other things.

The A La Carte Menu

Contrary to that which **TARGET** had noted in respect of the Set Dinner Menu, the Oyster Rockefellers, as they were called, were swimming in coarse sea salt.

The oysters *'meat'*, themselves, had no discernable flavour because the sea salt camouflaged any suggestion that it was a member of the bivalve molluscs of the family of Ostreidae.

The Colorado Lamb Chops, however, were really excellent: They could not have been better.

The good thing about lamb is that if the raw produce is good, it is difficult to spoil it.

The dish came with some couscous, which was not shown on the menu.

As for the so-called sautéed mushrooms, once again, there was absolutely no taste to them, probably because they had been cooked in some kind of vegetable oil and, for sure, they had not been sautéed.

Before signing off on this restaurant review, **TARGET** would like to warn those who consider a visit to this restaurant that they may not share their food with a partner unless they are willing to shell out an extra \$HK100 for the privilege.

At the foot of the menu, there is this note:

'Please note there will be a split charge of HK\$100'.

It is obvious that this food outlet does not want any low-class diners or parsimonious patrons, taking up seats in JW's California.

The total cost of the above meal, including the tip, was \$HK1,302 – which, all things considered, was terribly expensive for the food and for the suffering endured in the heat and humidity of the outlet.

Finally, a word about the service: It was excellent, as it, always, is.

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