

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Zeffirino, Regal Hongkong Hotel

Address of Restaurant

Number 88, Yee Woo Street, Causeway, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Monday, July 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

Wine

Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	Very Expensive
Storage of Wine	Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

Total Cost of Meal

Very Expensive **Moderately Expensive** Very Reasonably Priced

Name of Director of Food and Beverage

Mr Sammy Lee

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Ray Yau

Chef of Zeffirino

Mr Marco Torregrossa

Comments

The best thing about Zeffirino, the Italian food outlet of Regal Hongkong Hotel, located in the heart of Causeway Bay, Hongkong Island, is not the food, but the serving staff.

Because the food is bloody awful!

The quality of the food, along with the presentation of the dishes and the obvious lack of expertise of the Chinese cooks, preparing the various courses in the kitchen of Zeffirino, was in keeping with **TARGET**'s first appearances of this 5-star hotel (!!!): A construction site.

Zeffirino was, formerly, on the top floor of Regal Hongkong Hotel, but, today, it is in the second basement, located in what used to be a function room.

The carpets of this room are absolutely filthy and the cigarette smoke from another food outlet, immediately next door, where smoking is permitted, permeates this so-called, Italian, fine-dining outlet of.

It took **TARGET**'s duo about 10 minutes to find the formal entrance to Regal Hongkong Hotel because the only proper entrance is, now, secreted near the opening of the car park due to wholesale construction of the entire ground floor of the hotel building, seen from most of the street level.

TARGET () arrived at the hotel at about 6 pm, last Monday, and was nearly run over by a herd of what appeared to be some tourists from Shanghai, the herd, looking for an exit from the hotel via a non-existent shopping arcade which is, now, a construction site.

After some enquiries, Zeffirino was discovered behind a cloud of cigarette smoke in the second basement.

A charming, young waitress brought the menus to **TARGET**'s table and, then, left the scene in order to do some work behind a small bar in the 60-seater outlet.

There was no question of '*Would you like a drink?*' probably because this young lady realised that, in a basement of this calibre, it was hardly conducive to drinking a decent wine with one's food.

Also, it was apparent that the restaurant engaged no services of a sommelier and, in any case, there was no suggestion of a wine list.

After studying the menu, it was determined that **TARGET** would sample some of the dishes of the Set Menu and order the following a la carte dishes:

Set Menu

Prosciutto del Gran Ducato con Perle di Melone

Insalata di Rucola Gamberi e Arancio

Zuppa alla Zucca con Granchio Fresco

Paffutelli alla “Pavarotti”

Rigatoni con Pancetta e Gamberi

Filetti d’ Branzino in Crosta di Pomodoro ed Erbe, Cape Sante
In Salsa di Vino Bianco Mostarda e Basilico

Tiramisu Della Case “Zeffirino”

\$HK438

A La Carte Dishes

Gnocchi alla Crema di Zucca e Gorgonzola
\$HK178

Ossabuco Brasato con Risotto allo Zafferano e Salsa ai Funghi
\$HK258

The first course on the Set Menu was the Parma Ham with cantaloupe.

Zeffirino’s people did not prepare this course and, merely, sliced 2, wafer-thin pieces of ham with 5, small slices of melon.

It was fine.

Then, came the fresh shrimps with rucola salad.

This dish was a lie: The shrimps had been frozen; they were not fresh.

No question about it.

This had to be the case because the centres of the flesh were, almost, ice cold; the meat was as tough as old boots.

Further, probably because of the age of these 3, marine decapod crustaceans, they were completely insipid.

However, the sweet orange sauce – sugar had, obviously, been value-added – into which the shrimps had been bathed, aided the otherwise terrible dish.

The soup was the next course and, as with the shrimp course, it was laced with sugar, value-added, into the pumpkin puree.

To be honest, however, **TARGET** did note some small flecks of crabmeat.

Then, it was time for the ravioli with minced meat.

This turned out to be the second, acceptable dish of the entire meal.

The 5 ravioli shells appeared to have been freshly made and, although there was no way to learn what kind of minced meat had been used, it appeared to be pork-based.

The main course was the sea-bass fillet.

Well, the only way to describe this piece of fish was to say that it had been cooked at least 3 times before it found its way to his

reviewer's table.

It was dry and tough and, because it, too, had been frozen (this was very apparent), it had absolutely no flavour.

As for the 2 scallops, they, too, had been frozen and their flavours were equal to that of the sea-bass.

The tiramisu was another failure.

It was so sweet that it was inedible.

The A La Carte Dishes

Gnocchi alla Crema di Zucca e Gorgonzola was served at about the same time as the shrimp dish of the Set Menu was served.

Now, gnocchi is made from a combination of flour, semolina or potato, with various people, using different ratios of flour to potato or semolina.

In the case of Zeffirino, it is clear that only flour is used in making the gnocchi!

So, what one is served is, in fact, a flour-and-water combination pasta, covered with a thick layer of a cheese sauce.

It was taken away after this reviewer's first taste because, if **TARGET** had wanted a Shanghainese, noodle-in-soup dish, one would have gone to a Chinese restaurant, not this joint.

The ossobuco dish was even worse than the gnocchi dish.

Actually, the meat of this oxtail would have been quite edible – if it has been cooked another few hours, at least – but **TARGET** is unwilling to eat portions of frozen, half-cooked oxtails.

The ossobuco sat atop a pile of what was supposed to be risotto, but, as with the portions of oxtails, the rice was almost raw.

Al dente is one thing; raw is another.

When one of the waiters, at this point, realised that something was wrong with the food at **TARGET**'s table, he came over to try to ameliorate the situation.

About the gnocchi, he said that that is the way that the Chinese cooks had been preparing the dish for the past 6 years.

About the ossobuco, this honest young man said that he was sorry.

Later, he admitted that he knew that the food in the outlet was of poor quality and asked **TARGET**'s duo (he had no idea that a food review was taking place) to fill out a comments form in order that Management be told of the true situation.

Throughout the meal, Mr Marco Torregrossa, the Chef of Zeffirino, walked in and out of the dining room.

TARGET was told that the current situation at this outlet will continue until at least the end of the year due to some technical problems at the hotel.

Technical problems, this hotel, clearly, has many.

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