

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

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

**Name of Restaurant**

Riva, The Park Lane Hongkong

**Address of Restaurant**

Number 310, Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay, Hongkong

**Date of Visit**

Wednesday, August 29, 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	Very 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 --	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 Jean Michel Lanusse

#### Name of Executive Chef

Mr Lam Ying Tat

#### Comments

It was by sheer accident that **TARGET** () discovered Riva Restaurant, perched atop The Park Lane, Hongkong, on the outskirts of one of the most-densely populated parts of the world: Causeway Bay, Hongkong Island.

**TARGET** had planned to survey another restaurant at another Causeway Bay hotel, last Wednesday night, but, when this reviewer was told to return after 9:30 p.m. because *'there is a private party in progress'*, it turned off this reviewer, completely.

The Park Lane, Hongkong, has never been a hotel, famous for its culinary arts.

But it is, today.

Of this, there can be no fight.

Riva, located on the 27<sup>th</sup> Floor of the hotel, specialises in serving French cuisine, **TARGET** was told by the receptionist.

This was contrary to that which the concierge had said at the lobby: *'It's Italian food, you know?'*

Riva seats between 80 guests and 90 guests in a very well-proportioned room, which is very tastefully decorated.

There were, on the day that **TARGET** showed up, quite unannounced, no Europeans in sight, either as employees of the restaurant/hotel or as guests of the outlet, and, although there were only about 15 guests at about 8 pm, the little Chinese hostess apologised that all of the window seats had been reserved.

That statement turned out to be falsehood, **TARGET** later discovered.

Having just placed this corpulent frame into a comfortable chair, a Filipino pianist showed up and started to play a rendition of songs, all very tastefully executed.

That set the tone for the evening and, with a gin and tonic in hand, this reviewer perused the menu, eventually deciding on the following for dinner:

#### Appetiser

*Pigeon Breast and Foie Gras Terrine with Teriyaki Jelly,  
Green Beans, a Raw Shaved Button Mushroom Salad and Green Apple Chutney*

\$HK188

#### Soup

*Parmesan Cheese Cream Soup with Breaded Egg and French Bread,  
Topped with Wild Sautéed Mushroom*

\$HK98

**Main Course**

*Salmon, wrapped in a Crispy Brick Leave (sic), with Sautéed Wild Mushrooms,  
a Ginger-Cilantro Risotto, surrounded by a Veal Reduction*

\$HK238

**Dessert**

*Mango Cream Mousse Stick, topped with Fresh Raspberries and a Puff Pastry*

\$HK78

With the above, **TARGET** selected a bottle of Guigal Cotes du Rhone, Vintage 2003, at the cost of \$HK480.

The description of the dishes belied the excellence of the entire meal because every course was, simply, amazing, in one form or another.

But before going into detail of the different dishes, as is **TARGET**'s custom, the bread basket was attacked in order to determine how fresh was the bread and what was the quality of the butter.

Well, the bread was, all, very fresh, every one of the 5 different varieties; and, the butter was President from France.

This medium maintains that if a restaurant cannot offer fresh bread to guests, then, it should not be in business because everybody nibbles at the bread while waiting for dishes to be served.

**The Appetiser**

The presentation of this dish threw this reviewer for a loop: It was a picture of perfection.

On a large plate, there was a slice of pate de foie gras, measuring about 3 inches by one inch, into which well-proportioned pieces of pigeon breast had been imbedded, during the cooking process.

The pate de foie gras, by itself, was as smooth as silk and it had a wonderful flavour of its own, but the inclusion of the pigeon breast caused there to be an added dimension to the dish.

It was as good as it gets.

**The Soup**

The Parmesan Cheese Cream Soup was the second surprise of the night because here was a broth, which, clearly, had been made by very deft hands, hands that had been trained over a long period of time.

The cheese flavour of the soup was not overpowering, as Parmesan Cheese can be when added to any dish, but it had just enough of a flavour to embellish the flavour of the soup base.

This was a first for **TARGET** because of the uniqueness of the soup; and, this reviewer has to admit to finishing the soup in its entirety.

**The Main Course**

The salmon, wrapped in a crispy brick leave (meaning leaf), was another very pleasant shock because, aside from this dish's appealing presentation – 3 pieces of pink, fresh salmon, wrapped in a transparent leaf, a 4-inch slice of risotto, topped with wild mushrooms, and a veal reduction to add even more zest – it was, without question, perfection on a plate.

And the taste? Out of this world!

The salmon was only about 50 percent cooked and **TARGET** assumed that the chef was a Chinese.

This turned out to be this reviewer's second mistake of the evening, the first mistake, thinking that The Park Lane was incapable of creating a fine-dining outlet of the quality of Riva.

It was, at about this time, that the waiter, serving **TARGET**'s table, remarked: *'You are only tasting, aren't you?'*

He, then, added: *'Would you like to meet the chef?'*

Clearly, the game was up: **TARGET** had been discovered.

But it mattered little because the meal was all but finished.

I told the waiter that I would like to talk to the chef after the dessert.

### **The Dessert**

This reviewer had not expected very much in the way of the dessert because very few restaurants go out of their way to prepare anything special, relying, mainly, on a cake from a bakery – often purchased around the corner – or a mousse from some other kitchen.

Not so at Riva.

On a large plate – this restaurant likes to serve its dishes on large plates, it seems – there were 2, 3-inch sticks of a freshly made mango mousse, surrounded by fresh puff pastry and topped with raspberries.

Fattening? You bet!

Good? Much too good!

One nibble, this reviewer speculated, was equal to about 100 calories ... and one is supposed to be watching one's food intake!

### **Chef Martin Becquart**

Chef Martin Becquart has the appearance of a Melanesian, with his smooth, chocolate-brown skin.

He hails from Laos, he explained, and has been the Executive Sous Chef of Riva for 4 years.

He is 35 years old and, unless he watches his food intake, he could be in real medical trouble in due course.

He has been cooking since the age of 16 years, having had training at St Martin, in Amiens, France.

His style of cooking is, clearly, French, to which he has added his own concepts, including, no doubt, some Asian ideas.

However, **TARGET** noted that the way in which he handles the cooking of salmon (and, it was assumed that that was the way that he cooked other fish dishes) was that of a Chinese.

He just smiled at this comment.

**TARGET** pressed him for what he would consider the perfect meal.

As he left this reviewer's table, having finished 3 glasses of the Cotes du Rhone, he was still pondering that question.

**TARGET** cannot state that Mr Martin Becquart is a very personable individual, because he is not, but his culinary arts speak for themselves.

The entire cost of this meal was \$HK1,310.

It was money well spent, considering the quality of the meal.

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