

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Brasserie-On-The-Eighth, Conrad Hongkong

Address of Restaurant

Number 88, Queenway, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Saturday, September 15, 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
Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
<b><u>Wine</u></b>			
Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	Very Expensive
Storage of Wine	Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier --	None	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 Giovanni Viterale

**Name of Executive Chef**

Mr Alfred Moser

**Comments**

Conrad Hongkong has engaged the services of a new Executive Sous Chef for the hotel's Italian outlet, Nicholini's.

And what a chef he is!

Mr Sandro Falbo cooked an 8-course meal for **TARGET** () on September 15, 2007.

This was his choice of a meal:

*Warm Goat Cheese Pears and Honey*  
*Salmon and Scallops Carpaccio*  
*Tuscany Tomato Soup with Buffalo Cheese Crouton*  
*Gnocchi Pancetta, Vodka and Asparagus Sauce*  
*Pink Snapper on Salt Crust with Seasonal Vegetables*  
*Seasonal Fruit Spoom*  
*Roasted Baby Pig "Roman Style"*  
*Chicken Cacciatore*

To describe each and every dish would require this medium to write a tome, so **TARGET** will concentrate only on courses 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**Course Number 2 – Salmon and Scallops Carpaccio**

The Salmon and Scallops Carpaccio was not only excellent, but it was art on a dish.

Shaped to resemble an open flower, the petals were created from wafer-thin pieces of succulent salmon while the stigmas comprised paper-thin pieces of lemon-marinated scallops.

This dish was served at room temperature.

One felt as though it was something of a sacrilege even to eat this dish, but, when one is hungry, what is one to do?

In flash, the dish was consumed and only the memory of the salmon and the drenched, lemon wafers of scallops were left.

**Course Number 5 – The Pink Snapper**

Originally, this dish was planned to be Pink Snapper on Salt Crust with Seasonal Vegetables, similar to a very famous Sardinian dish, according to the menu, however, Chef Sandro Falbo was able to obtain some special cooking paper and so he produced his

fresh snapper, encrusted in carta fata (the cooking paper) instead.

In order to create this delicacy, this 41-year-old Italian, who, clearly, has a passion for cooking, removed all of the scales of the fish and filled the belly of the aquatic vertebrate with garlic, Italian parsley, thyme, lemon salt and pepper.

Around the carcass of the fish, the chef arranged thin slices of potatoes and seasoned the potato slices with salt and pepper.

After the fish has been in the oven, wrapped loosely in the carta fata for a short while, the entire fish was doused in some Pinot Grigio (a white, Italian wine – naturally, it had to be Italian wine).

As the chef cut open the carta fata, which enveloped the entire creation, the aroma of the aquatic vertebrate animal and the spices in which it had been poached almost permeated the entire room.

The snapper was partially cooked so that the meat only just fell away from the skeleton.

And the taste! Only the gods of Epicureanism could describe it.

This reviewer had, always, maintained that the Chinese best know how to cook fish; now, there is a change in thinking because Chef Sandro Falbo joins the company of the best.

The flesh of the snapper literally melted in one's mouth and the flavours of the spices added to the zest of the fish meat.

### **The Fruit Spoom**

In-between courses, when one is indulging in a banquet – that was the only way to describe this meal – it is common to clear one's taste buds with either a granita, a sorbet or a spoom.

Few eateries in Hongkong and, probably, very few restaurants in the United States, know that there is a difference between a sorbet and a spoom although they, probably, can guess that a granita is, merely, crushed ice, flavoured with fruit or fruit juice.

The difference between a sorbet and a spoom is that a spoom has folded into it the white of an egg.

This makes the spoom's texture smooth and '*softens*' the acidic flavour of the fruit, used to flavour the dish.

### **Course Number 6 – Roasted Baby Pig “Roman Style”**

This dish, which in Italian is known as Porchetta, was incredible by any standard one may wish to apply.

Chef Sandro Falbo, donning his tall, white chef's cap, brought out a 2-kilogramme piglet, roasted to absolute perfection.

At the centre of the piglet, this creative chef had stuffed sliced green apples and, then, seasoned the little piglet with rosemary, thyme, fennel seeds, mustard, salt and pepper.

The piglet had been marinated overnight.

As the piglet was sliced open, after having been slow-baked for a little more than 6 hours, out popped the spices and the slices of green apple.

Because this dish has been roasted slowly, there was little to no fat.

And, to add another personal touch to this dish, the chef had fashioned a '*brush*', made of fresh chives, exclusively to be used to mop up a little more of the sauce of the piglet dish, that sauce, having been placed in little bowl by the side of the meat on one's plate, just in case one was desirous of adding a little more flavour to the meat.

As one brought a piece of the piglet to one's mouth, it was noted that the meat was as tender as had been the snapper which, by this time, only lingering in one's memory banks.

As for the taste, it was a toss-up between a tender piece of veal and roasted duck.

The uniqueness of this dish was only supplanted by the wonderful flavours of the meat of the piglet to which the chef had added his rendition of spices and stuffing.

The days of dieting were a fading memory.

### **Course Number 7 – Chicken Cacciatore**

A ‘*cacciatore*’, is, actually, only an Italian sauce, formerly created to flavour wild game, although, today, it has come to mean a myriad of things to various people, around the world.

In truth, it is quite simple to create, having been discovered by bands of hunters of Italy of centuries past, bands which, while on a scouting trip, would stop to cook a stew from any of the available fresh produce, from birds to wild animals to the vegetables of the forest to the fungi in the fields to whatever else was at hand.

Today, chicken has become the preferred fowl for most *cacciatore* (also spelt *cacciatora*) and Poulet a la Romano (chicken, Roman style) graces many a fine-dining menu.

In truth, the description of this dish is a bit of a misnomer because Rome, the centre of culture of Italy since the days of the Caesars, prior to the birth of Christ, could never have served this dish because there are no forests or hunting areas in this historic city – unless one is a young man, in search of female companionship, of course.

Nevertheless, today, chefs from just about every country of the world take liberties and create this dish and label it, accordingly.

Chef Sandro Falbo created his *cacciatore* – which means, literally, ‘*hunters*’ style – from young, fresh chickens to which he added fresh tomatoes, onions and mushrooms.

Unlike some restaurants that load up this dish with ketchup because either the cook is lazy, stupid, or a bit of a crook, at Conrad, Chef Sandro Falbo uses only small, fresh tomatoes.

The end result is near perfection.

It is hardly any wonder that many Italians, as they age, become obese – they enjoy their own food much too much!

### **The Wines**

The wines, chosen for this meal by **TARGET**, comprised:

Champagne, Louise, Vintage 1989, a Champagne from Pommery  
Frescobaldi, Attems Cocinis, Vintage 2004  
Luce, Vintage 2001

### **The Price**

Don’t ask **TARGET** about the price of the above meal: Ask Chef Sandro Falbo whether or not he will cook the meal again.

This medium will, however, admit that it is much more expensive than the usual fare.

However, whatever is the price, it is a bargain!

After all, how many Epicurean delights are there left in this world of ours?

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