

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Outback Steakhouse

Address of Restaurant

2/Floor, JP Plaza, Number 22-26, Paterson Street, Causeway Bay, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Sunday, October 28, 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
<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

None

Name of Executive Chef

None

Comments

While, in the opinion of **TARGET** (), US beef is, generally, superior in taste to that of Australian beef – corn-fed beef versus grass-fed beef, respectively – Outback Steakhouse serves up a much-better, Australian steak dinner than that of Lawry's, the last-named restaurant, claiming to serve only US prime beef (a statement which this medium is beginning to question, these days).

TARGET's team visited Outback Steakhouse in Causeway Bay, last Sunday at about 6:15 p.m., and, because no reservation had been made, beforehand, the hostess at the door warned: *'You must be gone by 7:45 pm. We are fully booked, you know!'*

It appeared to **TARGET** that 90 minutes was a sufficient length of time to sample the food at this steak-house, which claims to be an Australian restaurant chain, and so an agreement was reached that this medium's survey team of 2 people would leave on time.

(One was not told what would have happened if the **TARGET** duo overstayed, past the appointed time 7:45 p.m., however.)

Seated at a wooden table, which was as basic as one could imagine, without even the trapping of a tablecloth, one of the first things that was noted was that the artificial leather covering of the seat on one side had an 18-inch rip, exposing the stuffing of the seat.

There had been no attempt to camouflage this eyesore.

At Lawry's, on the other hand, this restaurant's appearance is, really, very impressive (Please refer to **TARGET** Intelligence Report, Volume IX, Number 196, Published on Wednesday, October 17, 2007).

But appearances aside, it is here that Outback Steakhouse leaves Lawry's, eating its dust – because, all in all, this Aussie-styled eatery is far and above Lawry's.

On scanning the menu, one is almost awestruck by the silly inclusion of a so-called wine list – Long Flat Shiraz; Summerhouse Sauvignon Blanc; Maxwell "Ellen Street" Shiraz; Devil's Lair 5th Leg Cabernet Blend; Louis Perdrier Champagne (?) – but, then again, one must remember that this is, after all, an Australian steak-house.

After a little giggle about the wine list, **TARGET** ordered the following dishes:

Bloomin' Onion

'An outback original! When our special onions are delivered to our kitchens daily they're hand carved by a dedicated bloomologist. Each bloom is cooked until golden and served with our spicy dipping.'

\$HK72

Australian Angus Beef, Rig Eye Steak, Outback Style

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\$HK216

Ribs on The Barbie

‘Imported baby back ribs, smoked and grilled, with Aussie chips and cole slaw’

\$HK132

Chocolate Thunder from Down Under
\$HK50

Choco Choco Cookie
\$HK42

Having ordered what this medium thought was a fairly good sample of an Outback Steakhouse meal, a waiter appeared with a small loaf of freshly baked pumpernickel bread, still warm from the oven.

It was very good.

The Bloomin’ Onion

The first course, the Bloomin’ Onion, is the type of dish that is guaranteed to add at least 4 ounces of oil to anybody’s digestive tract if eaten in its entirety.

This is a very large deep-fried onion (or a number of onions, made to look like one onion), loaded with oil, much of which is floating on the plate.

It tasted of oil, mostly, but the restaurant gives customers a dipping in the middle of the oil-encrusted onion so that it masks the taste of the unhealthy oils.

This restaurant appears to be frequented by the younger set so that, no doubt, they enjoy eating this dish.

TARGET does not recommend it, though, to anybody ... for health reasons.

The Outback Style Rib Eye Steak

When the Australian Angus Rib Eye Steak arrived at the table, **TARGET** noted that it was accompanied by some French fries, made from fresh, Russet potatoes, along with some broccoli, blanched carrot slices and some French beans.

Now, a number of hotels in Hongkong do not bother to serve French fries, made from fresh potatoes, preferring to use the industrial-grade, frozen variety, which, for the most part, are completely insipid, except of course, for the oils, used in the cooking of the French fries.

Not so at Outback Steakhouse because this restaurant’s French fries are as good as they come.

As for the Rib Eye Steak, it was fine, a little tough, perhaps, but it was flavourful. After all, it is Australian beef, isn’t it?

The steak, served at Outback Steakhouse, differed greatly from that of Lawry’s prime rib in that, whereas Lawry’s depends on a heavy sauce to give flavour to its (alleged) US meat and its mashed potatoes, produced from a powder, Outback Steakhouse relies, solely, on the original flavour of the grass-fed Australian beef.

The Rib Eye Steak dinner comes with a soup.

Last Sunday, the soup was cream of onion.

It was terrible!

Unless one enjoys cornstarch and sugar, added to some pieces of boiled onion.

The waiter, noting that **TARGET** did not enjoy the soup, suggested that he bring a salad, instead.

This was much appreciated and the salad, which was pleasant, was devoured in total.

Ribs On The Barbie

This dish comprised 8 ribs, bathed in a pleasant-tasting barbecue sauce.

The meat from the ribs peeled away from the bones at the slightest touch of one’s fork, suggesting that the ribs had been blanched and, then, marinated before being baked.

The ribs were, in **TARGET**’s opinion, superior to the Rib Eye Steak.

This dish, also, came with French fries and a little cole slaw.

Choco Choco Cookie And Chocolate Thunder From Down Under

TARGET has lumped both of these deserts together because there was little difference between them.

Actually, they were both variations on the same theme: The American hot-fudge sundae.

The major difference between these 2 deserts was that the Chocolate Thunder from Down Under had a huge wad of cream atop a scoop of ice cream, floating in a hot-fudge sauce which had permeated a brownie, whereas the Choco Choco Cookie was a cookie in the base of a dish on top of which was some hot fudge, a scoop of ice cream and some cream on top of that.

Kids will love both of these dishes, to be sure, but adults should steer of them unless one wants to add 1,000 calories per teaspoon.

The Restaurant's Ambiance

This restaurant, **TARGET**'s waiter claimed, seats about 200 people and, from Friday to Sunday, it is full from about 6:30 p.m.

Diners are warned that they are permitted to stay in the restaurant for no more than 90 minutes on these 3 days, **TARGET** was informed by the waiter.

The restaurant is neat and functional and is devoid of any soft furnishings so that it can be noisy at times, especially when the kiddies start laughing out loudly.

It is patronised by young people, by and large, and everybody appeared to be having a good time on the day that **TARGET** surveyed the eatery.

The food could be described as being up-market, fast-food, with a little something extra, thrown in for good measure.

Outback Steakhouse is better than Lawry's by far because it serves unpretentious food and delivers what it promises.

Lawry's promises one thing, but does not deliver.

There is no tenderiser, impregnating the meat at Outback Steakhouse, unlike Lawry's: You get what you see at this Aussie restaurant.

Dollar-for-dollar, Outback Steakhouse has Lawry's beaten by more than one lap.

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