

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

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

Name of Restaurant

The Pizzeria, The Kowloon Hotel

Address of Restaurant

Numbers 19-20, Nathan Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, November8, 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 Food and Beverage Manager

Mr Ken Ng

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Giancarlo Zoccoletto

Comments

If **TARGET** () Subscribers have ever wondered whether or not it is worthwhile, visiting The Kowloon Hotel in Tsimshatsui in order to obtain a good, Western meal, then, their pondering of the question is over: One cannot obtain a good Western meal at this hotel.

This medium visited the so-called, top Western food outlet at The Kowloon Hotel, last Thursday, November 8, 2007, having made a reservation over the telephone in the name of a Chinese staff member.

'We shall hold the table for 15 minutes, only, past half past seven,' the receptionist at The Pizzeria informed **TARGET**. *'Then, if you are not here, we shall give the table to somebody else.'*

TARGET's duo was promptly at the restaurant at 7:30 p.m. and was happy to discover that the seat, which had been reserved at this Italian restaurant, near the entrance which abuts the coffee shop, was still available.

TARGET asked the hostess whether or not walking through the coffee shop was the only entrance.

The answer came back in the affirmative.

If **TARGET**'s team had not been escorted to The Pizzeria, it would have been nearly impossible to know that the outlet even existed because one has to wind one's way through a virtual sea of diners of the coffee shop, all of whom were holding bowls of soup, hot noodles, sushi, etc.

Counting the diners, seated at The Pizzeria at 7:30 p.m., last Thursday, resulted in the number, coming up to 13 hardy souls in this 66-seater outlet.

And that situation lasted for the entire length of **TARGET**'s visit.

So much for the threat of losing one's table if one is 15 minutes late.

The outlet, actually, is very tastefully decorated although it did look a little tired.

The service, **TARGET** is happy to report, is really very good, with the staff, bending over backwards to accommodate the requirements of guests.

After studying the menu, this is that which **TARGET** ordered:

The 5-Course Set Dinner Special (\$HK388)

Crostini di Funghi

Toasted bread crostini with mushrooms, garlic, rosemary, extra virgin olive oil, and Parmigiano Reggiano

Polenta al Gorgonzola (Veneto)

Baked maize dumpling with gorgonzola cheese

Mushroom and fresh tomato sauce

Zuppa della Sera

Minestrone (Lombardia)

Osso Buco alla Milanese (Milano)

Braised veal shank with vegetable ragu,
served with saffron rice

Panna Cotta (Val D'Aosta)

Delicate double cream dessert

From the a la carte menu, **TARGET** ordered the following:

Cozze alla Marinara

(Black mussels with white wine, garlic and parsley
\$HK138

Soup of the Day

(Tomato and vegetable)
\$HK68

Scaloppine de Vitello Mastroiani

(Milk-fed veal scaloppine with shitake mushrooms and sherry cream sauce)
\$HK228

Millefoglie alla Fragole

(Multi-layered pastry, filled of creme patissiere and topped with fresh strawberry)
\$HK78

With the meal, a bottle of Côtes du Rhône, Grenache-Syrah, Vintage 2003, was ordered at the cost of \$HK370.

Aside from the excellent service at this food outlet, the wine was a close second and even the young lady who served the wine appeared to have knowledge of how to pour it, having offered a taste, first, in order to be certain that the wine had not oxidized.

The Set Menu

With regard to the first course of the set menu, ***Crostini di Funghi***, there is little that **TARGET** can comment because, after all, what could possibly go wrong with placing some pre-sautéed and cold mushrooms on a piece of toast?

The second course of the set menu, ***Polenta al Gorgonzola*** (Veneto), however, was a bit of a puzzlement because the Gorgonzola Cheese turned out to be Mozzarella Cheese, an Italian cheese, usually reserved for use on pizza.

Another comment that this medium could make about this dish is that, aside from it, having never been to Veneto (north-east Italy), it is highly unlikely that an Italian cook would want to lend his name to this dish.

The third course, ***Zuppa della Sera***, supposedly a Minestrone from Lombardia, was atrocious!

This turned out to be a watered-down vegetable soup which was, completely, insipid.

TARGET's female member of the survey team described the soup as a '*virgin minestrone*' (think of a '*Virgin Bloody Mary*') – because it lacked all of the ingredients of a minestrone.

It was noted by the waitress, who sheepishly apologised for the condition of the soup and reported the matter to a black-jacket (one of the senior staff members of the restaurant).

The fourth course, ***Osso Buco alla Milanese*** (Milano), was on a par with the other courses: Terrible!

The meat was tough and tasteless and the saffron rice was nonexistent.

The last course, ***Panna Cotta*** (Val D'Aosta), was, like the first course, the type of dish which is not too difficult to produce and even the people at The Kowloon Hotel could not mess it up.

It was at this point that it occurred to **TARGET**:

(a) There is/was no chef at The Pizzeria; and,

(b) The restaurant is trying to save money by using second-class fresh (or frozen?) produce.

The A La Carte Meal

Cozze alla Marinara, although the name was written in the Italian language, looked and tasted very much like the New Zealand variety of frozen black mussels.

These mussels are considered quite good, in any case, but the problem with this dish was that the shells of the mussels were very cold (straight out of the refrigerator?) while the ‘*meat*’ of the mussels was lukewarm.

What, clearly, had happened was that the person in the open kitchen had used a microwave oven to warm up the mussels in their shells, but had not taken into consideration that the shells take longer to heat than the edible marine bivalve mollusc.

After a complaint, the black jacket appeared, once again, apologised, and returned a few minutes later with a very hot plate, loaded with microwaved, black mussels, the edible marine bivalve mollusc, being badly overcooked.

But the shells of the black mussels remained cold!

Yuck!

The *Soup of the Day* was lukewarm, tasteless, and was completely nondescript.

It is difficult for **TARGET** to describe this dishwater except not to try to drink it.

The *Scaloppine de Vitello Mastroiani*, actually, was not all that bad – but it was, nevertheless, a poor imitation of this Italian dish.

The sherry cream sauce managed to camouflage the taste of the veal which had, in fact, been overcooked, in any event.

Once again, **TARGET** noted the heavy reliance on the microwave oven at this outlet.

The dessert, the *Millefoglie alla Fragole*, was, actually, very good and was worthy of 9 points out of 10 points.

Where was it purchased?

It appeared to this medium that The Pizzeria should be closed down and the coffee shop expanded because a coffee shop is, and will always be, just that, a coffee shop.

And such outlets are real money spinners for most hotels due to, among other things, the patrons of a coffee shop, being not as picky as customers who are willing to pay a little more for better fare and superior service.

Since The Pizzeria does not dish up better food than the coffee shop of The Kowloon Hotel, there is no reason to keep this pretentious food outlet open.

In closing, **TARGET** would like to offer thanks to the French wine makers for producing Côtes du Rhône, Grenache-Syrah, Vintage 2003.

Lastly, if **TARGET** Subscribers are forced, for one reason or another, to visit either the coffee shop or The Pizzeria of The Kowloon Hotel, it would be advisable to empty one’s bladder, prior to entering the hotel because the toilets, on the day that this medium entered the hotel, were filthy and stank of urine and faeces.

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