

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Cucina

Address of RestaurantLevel 6, Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel, Harbour City, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon,
Hongkong**Date of Visit**

Monday, January 14, 2008

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
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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

Name of Food and Beverage Manager

Mr Peter Pfister

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Heinz Oertli

Comments

If the senior management of Hotel Sacher of Vienna and Salzburg, Austria, knew how the name of this internationally renowned hotel's claim to fame was being mutilated, it might like to consider initiating legal action in order to prevent recurrences of what a restaurant, located on the 6th Level of Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel, is doing to Sacher Torte, today.

The so-called, Sacher Torte, as it is spelled at this pretentious restaurant, named Cucina, is as far removed from the famous, succulent cake of the same name, invented by a pastry chef at Hotel Sacher, many years ago, as is an ant hill compared with Mount Everest.

The desserts at this newly opened restaurant are among the worst that **TARGET** () has ever had to sample.

The Sacher Torte, dished up at Cucina, was simply a couple of thin slices of something black, in-between which was some ice cream that tasted something like Italian granita.

TARGET visited Cucina last Monday at 6:30 p.m. and ordered the following dishes:

Baked Red Onion and Red Wine Soup

Parmesan Pastry

\$HK75

Cioppion

Italian Seafood and Tomato Soup, Orange Oil and Zest

\$HK185

Whole Red Mullet

Prosciutto, Fresh Thyme, Bay Leaves, Olive Oil, Baby Fennel,

Sea Salt and Cracked Pepper

\$350

Grilled Veal Cutlet 12 ounces

Prosciutto, Sun-Dried Tomato, Sage, Marsala Wine

\$HK350

Truffle Mashed Potato

\$HK55

Parmesan Polenta

\$HK55

With the meal, a bottle of Chianti Reserva Sensi, Vintage 2003, was ordered at a cost of \$HK400.

The Chianti was among the best things that were sampled on the evening of January 14, 2007.

This restaurant was opened on December 15, 2007, according to Pecky, **TARGET**'s waitress, and it seats 160 brave souls who have the courage to venture into the depths of this eatery.

It is a little difficult to describe this well-proportioned restaurant because it, certainly, is not a European restaurant although it does serve some European-styled dishes, but, at the same time, it cannot be called a Chinese restaurant because, clearly, it cannot cater for discriminating Chinese people who know good Chinese food.

It may be correct to suggest that this is an up-market coffee shop of a 2-star hotel, however, to be honest, the food, actually, is a step up from that level.

But only just, mind you.

Not long after **TARGET**'s duo had been seated, a small loaf of bread was presented on the table.

The centre of the bread was wet because it had been taken from the refrigerator and, then, baked in an oven and '*of course!*' it does get a little wet, according to Pecky.

The Soups

The 2 soups were superb, actually, but that was about the only thing that was worthy of a positive comment.

At the same time, paying \$HK185 for a seafood soup is way over the top, in this medium's opinion.

The rest of the food was either mediocre or, just plain, terrible.

While the fish course was, certainly, edible, this reviewer would not consider returning to this outlet in order to eat a pan-fried, half-roasted fish.

The fish would have been far superior if a Chinese cook had steamed the red mullet in the traditional Cantonese manner.

The Grilled Veal Cutlet was supposed to be cooked medium: It came nearly raw.

Pecky was informed that this reviewer did not like raw veal and so she, quickly, took it away, promising to return with another piece of veal, cooked correctly.

The second attempt was worse than the first – and Pecky recognised this fact.

'Let me exchange the veal for Wagyu Beef Cheek,' Pecky suggested. *'I can guarantee this dish!'*

She was correct and the stewed beef, cooked with/in Madeira wine and served with plum tomato, was the replacement dish.

Stewed beef can hardly be overcooked especially when it has been in the pot for hours on end.

TARGET's first choice of a main course was the Hearth Grilled Angus Rib Eye, but Pecky said that the restaurant had been sold out of Angus Rib Eye.

The problem with Pecky's statement was that, at the time that she stated this as fact, it was only 6:30 p.m. and the restaurant only opens at 6:00 p.m.

Further **TARGET**'s duo was the only customer at this time!

Turning to the polenta, it was undercooked and dried out, the cornmeal, having been boiled about 5 hours prior – and, then, not sufficiently.

It was, completely, inedible.

According to Pecky, the restaurant's cooks have come from Maxim's and Fook Lam Moon in Wanchai.

Fook Lam Moon has a very good reputation for Chinese food; Maxim's has a very good name in the fast-food industry of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

Cucina is not part of Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel, according to Pecky, so that The Dining Club membership card, issued by the hotel, which entitles one to a discount at any of the hotel's outlets, is invalid, **TARGET** learned on paying the bill.

However, according to a staff member of Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel, Cucina is part of the hotel's food outlets.

In **TARGET**'s opinion, this outlet is likely to go broke if it relies on discriminating diners to visit it more than once.

Because once is once too many visits, as far as this medium is concerned.

Management Blurb

The General Manager of Cucina is Mr Massimo Gavina who is Italian by birth, according to the blurb of Marco Polo Hongkong

Hotel.

He was standing at the door of the restaurant when **TARGET** entered and, thereafter, he secreted himself, most of the time, with some female guests (or friends?) in a little corner, near the entrance in the manner of a true Italian, no doubt.

On leaving Cucina, he said, without knowing that this medium had been sampling the food for this column: *'I am sorry for your experience.'*

Obviously, he knows that something is wrong with the food at this eatery otherwise he would not have made such a statement.

What is obvious about this restaurant is that it is pretentious in the extreme because, actually, it serves up quite a large number of Chinese dishes, dressed up to resemble high-class, Cantonese cuisine.

Actually, the Chinese food differs little from any ordinary Wanchai restaurant as far as **TARGET** could see.

But, served at Cucina, the cost is a complete rip-off.

TARGET's total bill for the meal was \$HK2,000, inclusive of a fairly generous tip because Pecky had been very helpful and did try to do her best even though the people in the open kitchens were not cooperating.

This medium will not be returning to this restaurant and puts Subscribers on notice as to what they can expect if they want to brave, eating at Cucina.

Lastly, it is advisable to empty one's bladder before entering the female toilet at Level 6 of Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel – because it smells similar to that of any public toilet.

Yuck!

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