

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Panorama, Renaissance Kowloon Hotel

Address of Restaurant

Level 4, Number 22, Salisbury, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Monday, March 3, 2008

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 Raj Mohan

Name of Chef

Mr Lau Shiu Bor

Comments

If one enjoys exceptional Chinese food, especially Cantonese cuisine, then, it would be difficult to find anywhere better to eat such food than in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Chinese cooks are among the best in the world, in **TARGET**'s opinion, and the HKSAR has veritable battalions of them.

But Chinese cooks are not at their best when trying their hand at European cuisine.

There are exceptions, of course, there always are, but the Chinese cooks at Renaissance Kowloon Hotel () at Tsimshatsui are far from being among those exceptions.

TARGET () visited Panorama, last Monday, at 6:30 p.m., in order to sample the European food at this hotel's only premier food outlet.

In summary, this medium's experience at Panorama () could not be described as being very bad – just bad.

Last Monday, this is the menu that was ordered:

Risotto of Spiny Lobster with Saffron, Black Truffle, Green Pea and Parmesan Crisp
\$HK195

Panorama's Signature Lobster Bisque
\$HK95

Spinach and Portobello Lasagna with Mozzarella, Rosemary and Truffle Cream
\$HK190

Roasted Scottish Salmon, Asparagus, Shitake Mushrooms and Fennel Emulsion
\$HK260

Apple and Blackberry Crumble with Vanilla Ice Cream and Lemon Custard
\$HK85

With the above meal, **TARGET** ordered some table wine from Germany:

Scharzhof Riesling, Egon Muller, Vintage 2004
\$HK450

The Food

The first taste of the Risotto made it very obvious that no Italian had had a hand in the preparation of this course.

This rice dish had been cooked, al dente, to be sure, and the rice was, indeed, of the Italian variety, but one of the main problems with Panorama's version of this Italian dish was that it included frozen peas, mixed into a microwaved concoction of rice and something else, the peas, still being partially frozen.

It was as though the mixing in of the frozen peas had been an afterthought of somebody in Panorama's kitchen.

Further, it appeared that the elusive lobster bits were hiding behind the frozen peas.

There, also, was no question about this risotto: There was a distinct absence of any trace of a stock or Parmesan cheese, both of which usually create a risotto.

(Come to think of it, Chinese are not very keen on cheese, in any event.)

The cook in Panorama's kitchen is likely to come from the north of China because he is pretty heavy on the black pepper – something which Italian chefs are unlikely to be, especially in the preparation of a risotto.

The Lobster Bisque, however, was far superior to the risotto mainly because it was hot.

There were visible bits of lobster in the bottom of the soup bowl and it was only too apparent that the lobster had been frozen because the bits had the consistency of overcooked steak.

The lasagna was, without question, not lasagna, at all, but some piled up, half-cooked vegetables, made to resemble its namesake minus any pasta.

It comprised some pieces of sliced eggplant, one thin slice of raw tomato and 2 pieces of cooked portabella mushrooms, all folded into some Mozzarella cheese and sitting atop some cooked spinach, all of which were floating in a thin oil.

It resembled a vegetarian sandwich minus any bread, if you will, but little else.

As for the Scottish Roasted Salmon, it was fine, having been either grilled or panfried (it was difficult to determine which way it had been cooked, actually).

The fish had been about three quarters cooked and tasted very much the way that a Chinese cook would prepare such a dish.

Of all of the dishes, tasted last Monday, this was the best.

The dessert was a disaster!

The Apple and Blackberry Crumble was straight out of the freezer, it seemed to **TARGET** – because it was ice cold.

This reviewer had, prior to ordering this dessert, asked the waiter whether or not it had been prepared in the restaurant.

Having been told that it was freshly made, when it was placed on the table, it was a bit of a shock to discover, on the first bite, that it was at least 3 days' old.

One can always tell when pastry is more than one day old by its consistency and the amount of moisture that it has absorbed from its surroundings.

This crumble was inedible.

The ice cream, however, was very good: It had not been prepared by anybody in the restaurant.

The German Wine

As a table wine, the Scharzhof Riesling was refreshing.

This is not a full-bodied wine, but a cheeky slightly sweet wine which goes well with fish and rice dishes.

It smells like hay, actually, and tastes a little like cherries.

However, at the price of \$HK450 per bottle, it is expensive.

Finally, on being seated at the table, facing Victoria Harbour – a beautiful sight it is, too! – a basket of bread was presented.

If any brave souls go to Panorama, it is advisable not to touch this basket of bread because, in spite of there being 5 different kinds, they all tasted exactly the same: Chewy and half damp.

What had taken place, **TARGET** suspects, is that the bread had been taken out of the refrigerator and had been warmed from the top, down.

Hence the soggiess.

How To Get There

The Renaissance Kowloon Hotel abuts New World Centre, opposite InterContinental Hongkong (Hotel).

If one is not driving a motor car, the **Mass Transit Railway** (MTR) is the most-convenient and comfortable way to cross from Hongkong Island to Kowloon.

However, once out of the MTR, one is forced to make one's way through a very threatening mob of mostly ethnic Indians and Africans.

Most of these people are trying to sell such things as 'copy watch', instant, tailor-made clothes, girls (and boys), and what-have-you.

Because of the throng, one is forced to rub shoulders with these people who, clearly, are not part of the upper drawer of society and may well be illegally staying in the territory.

Because what they are selling is either illicit or immoral, as far as this reviewer is concerned, one cannot help but feel threatened.

Once clear of this unruly mob and seated in Panorama, an 80-seater outlet, one can appreciate the beauty of the night that is Hongkong.

The service is good and the waiters try their best.

Unfortunately, the service staff is hamstrung by the kitchen staff – which does not know anything about European cuisine.

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