

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Ristorante Goccia

Address of Restaurant

Ground Floor, Number Wyndham Street, Central, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, May 1, 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
Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
<u>Wine</u> (Weighted Toward Italian Wines)			
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 Food and Beverage Manager

None

Name of Chef

Francesco Brocca

Comments

Nestled in a corner of Wyndham Street, Central, Hongkong Island, there is a little restaurant that, if one sneezed as one passed it, it would go completely unnoticed, no doubt.

It is Ristorante Goccia, an Italian, stand-alone restaurant whose nondescript appearance on the ground floor belies its true assets.

The truth is that the 2 people, manning the kitchen of this restaurant, both being of Italian origin, really know their onions.

The Ground Floor of Ristorante Goccia looks like and, in fact, is nothing more than one of the 100 or so, grotty little bars and dives [the resident, European contingent of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) refer to them as '*Watering Holes*'] that have sprouted up in this area of Hongkong Island over the past decade or so.

When **TARGET**'s duo arrived at Ristorante Goccia on Thursday, May 1, 2008, at 6:30 p.m., standing at the open door was a Filipina, smoking a cigarette, in the manner of a mama-san, standing at the entrance of a girlie bar of Wanchai.

Being uncertain as to whether or not **TARGET** () had reserved a table at a bar or a restaurant, this medium asked this Filipina whether or not food was served at this establishment.

The answer:

'Yes! Of course! You may eat in the bar or upstairs in the restaurant. What would you like? You have reservation?'

Looking along the bar area on the ground floor, it was obvious that eating in the smog was hardly conducive to enjoying a meal so **TARGET** went up the stairs to the restaurant area.

The air-conditioning had not been turned on in the restaurant so that one could not be very excited with the first appearance of this 60-seater.

At the first table of the restaurant, as **TARGET** meandered into the area, was a European, donned in the white uniform of a cook.

He turned out to be Mr Fabrizio Napolitano, the Sous Chef.

In a far corner, there was a group of serving staff, seated at table, talking and, apparently, having a drink of something or other.

The Filipino Supervisor was briefing the serving staff on how to introduce the food on the menu and how to act.

Jose, **TARGET**'s waiter for the evening, turned out to be a newcomer to the hospitality industry, having been a construction worker in the recent past, he said.

He did not seem to know very much about food or wine, but he made up for his inexperience by trying very hard to accommodate this medium's requirements without realising that a food review of this restaurant was in progress.

As is this reviewer's wont, one of the first things that takes place when entering a new restaurant is a visit to the water closet in order to determine the extent of the cleanliness of the facilities, these facilities, being a clue as to what to expect in the rest of the establishment.

The toilet passed the first test, but it was a rather small room where one had almost to turn sideways in places in order to allow defaecators to pass into the small, inner sanctum.

It was here that a short conversation took place with the Sous Chef who, also without knowing that a review of the restaurant was taking place, made suggestions as to the menu of the evening.

This was his recommendation:

White and Green Asparagus Baked with Ricotta Cheese
\$HK128

Platter of 7 Types of Seafood
\$HK296

Melody of White and Green Asparagus Soup,
Flavoured with Eggs Croutons and Norcia Truffle Petals
\$HK88

Sardinian Sea Bass in Salt Crust
\$HK248 per person

With the meal, **TARGET** ordered a bottle of Greco di Tufo, Vintage 2006, a wine from Campania, which was priced at \$HK520, but was charged at the price of \$HK460.

Greco di Tufo's history goes back to the First Century B.C., according to **TARGET**'s knowledge of this charming wine.

Originally, the Greek grapes, used to produce this amber-coloured wine, were planted on the slopes of Vesuvius where the wine was given the name, Lacryma Christi (Tears of Christ).

The grapes were later replanted in the Province of Avellino, Italy, where the wine was given the denomination: Greco di Tufo.

It was a good choice for the meal.

The first thing that was a pleasant surprise about the food at Ristorante Goccia was that the bread was extremely fresh and, on questioning Jose, it was learned that the restaurant bakes its own bread.

For a restaurant with such a small dining room, this was quite a shock for this reviewer, but Jose explained that the owner of Ristorante Goccia, also, owned other restaurants.

The Food

This medium permitted the Sous Chef to select the dishes for the evening upon him being told that **TARGET** knew little about Italian food (which was a little bit of a fib).

The first course was the Green and White Asparagus, baked with Ricotta Cheese.

Ricotta Cheese (from the Latin, '*recocta*'), actually, is a recooked soft cheese, usually used for cooking because of its mild flavour.

In years gone by, the remnants of cheese-making were thrown away, but somebody in Italy, some time ago, came up with the bright idea of making this soft cheese as a byproduct: Ricotta Cheese was born.

With the earthy taste of the asparagus, the Ricotta Cheese embellished the dish, considerably.

On enquiring of the Sous Chef how the asparagus was prepared – steamed, boiled or blanched – Mr Napolitano said that the asparagus had been boiled for the sake of speed because his kitchen was small and it had only one oven.

That was an honest answer, to be sure, and, clearly, it was a veiled complaint.

The second course was a medley of 7, seafood hors d'oeuvres, comprising scallops with truffles, baked octopus, tuna tartar, sardines, crab meat, mantis shrimp, and some smoked salmon.

Each one of the above was a taste treat in its own right; and, the dish was devoured in its entirety.

Prior to starting out on this culinary adventure, Jose was asked to identify the variety of hors d'oeuvres.

Jose did not know the names of the foods and called over a little young lady from Nepal to assist.

She was another member of the serving staff, who, also, did not know a shrimp from a frog.

She explained that she had only started to work in the restaurant, a few months earlier.

And so it went on: The entire matter of the foods was a mystery to a number of members of the staff, it seemed.

TARGET, eventually, on vivisectioning the lone mantis shrimp, was able to identify the decapod, marine crustacean, as well as the other 6 hors d'oeuvres.

Regardless of the ignorance of the serving staff, this second course was a culinary success.

TARGET, also, ordered the Asparagus Soup in order to sample it, only.

All that this medium needs to say about this soup was that it was excellent.

As for the Baked Sardinian Sea Bass, cooked in sea salt, it was a treat to the eyes and a treat to one's palate.

However, there was a major problem.

Jose brought out the fish on a stainless-steel platter and presented it to **TARGET**'s table.

He, then, disappeared to another part of the restaurant for a period of about 10 minutes where he deboned the fish and placed the meat on 2 dinner plates.

Sadly, by the time the fish-meat was placed on **TARGET**'s table, it was cold.

Poor Jose!

He had had little experience in deboning a fish and, to top it off, he placed the fish-meat on cold plates, confounding the problem that much more.

However, there was nothing at all wrong with the quality of the fish, the manner of its cooking, or of its presentation.

The only thing that was wrong was the result of the incompetence of Jose.

As for the desserts, these were as good as it gets, both of them, having been prepared in the kitchen of Ristorante Goccia.

Conclusion: The food at Ristorante Goccia is excellent, but one cannot say the same for the serving staff.

Also, it appeared that nobody was in charge of this restaurant on the day of this medium's visit and **TARGET** noted a very plumb Filipina, giggling loudly with other Filipinas in a similar fashion to that which one notes (and hears) at Statue Square on a

Sunday afternoon.

It is unlikely that this reviewer will be returning to this restaurant because it is hardly the place for a romantic evening or even the venue for a special meal due to the fact that the ambiance is not conducive to fine dining even though the food is extremely good.

However, full marks for the chef! Pity, actually!

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