

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Ristorante Sergio

Address of RestaurantShop A, Ground Floor, Catic Plaza, Number 8, Causeway Bay,
Hongkong**Date of Visit**

Thursday, May 22, 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> (Weighted Toward Italian Wines)			
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

Ms Oriana Tirabassi

Name of Chef

Ms Oriana Tirabassi

Comments

It is well known that one should never take an American cowboy off his horse because the cowboy's acquired physical shape, in time, fits the horse's back, almost exactly; and, the cowboy's arse, eventually, is moulded to the shape of his saddle, which is lashed onto the back of the horse.

While seated on his horse, the cowboy is in his element.

Taken off his horse, he is lost and may have trouble, walking in a straight line in view of his bow legs.

The same is true, to a great extent, of a prize-winning, European chef: Take the chef out of the kitchen and he or she is lost and, probably, cannot even write his/her name.

This appears to be the situation in respect of Ms Oriana Tirabassi, the Executive Chef and Manager of Ristorante Sergio of Causeway Bay, the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Ristorante Sergio is a failure, not, perhaps, because of the cooking skills of Ms Oriana Tirabassi, but because she is not doing the cooking in her chosen domain – the kitchen – as she shuttles back and forth between a restaurant in Tsimshatsui East, where she is, also, said to be the Executive Chef/Manager, and Ristorante Sergio in Causeway Bay.

TARGET () visited Ristorante Sergio, last Thursday night at 7:40 p.m., without making a reservation.

The restaurant seats about 40 patrons and is pleasant enough although the sound system, from which some would-be Italian singer was attempting to croon some Neapolitan songs, left a lot to be desired.

On entering the restaurant, a visit to the restroom was in order because, last Thursday night, the humidity level was in excess of 95 percent and this reviewer was hot and sweaty and needed to freshen up in addition to indulging in a little peeing.

There was no soap in the men's room and, when what appeared to be the Filipino head something-or-other was asked for some soap, the answer came back:

Filipino Something-Or-Other:

'No soap?'

TARGET:

'No soap.'

Filipino Something-Or-Other:

'Will this do?' (offering a yellow, plastic bottle of something like *'Jiff'*, a harsh detergent, especially manufactured for cleaning pots and pans)

TARGET:
Filipino Something-Or-Other:

'This is for cleaning pots and pans!'
'That's all there is!'

Not a good start to the evening.

According to Ristorante Sergio, this restaurant specialises in producing prize-winning pizzas.

So, this medium ordered a pizza to start off the proceedings: Pizza con Salsiccia, at \$HK148.

Within about 5 minutes, a large pizza was placed on the table.

Up went **TARGET**'s red flag!

How can a fresh pizza be produced within such a short period of time?

The answer: If it is a frozen pizza that had been thawed, placed in a microwave oven, and then popped into a warm, gas-fired (or electric) oven.

The pizza dough was soggy: It had not been proofed; and, it was tasteless to boot.

As for the pizza's filling (whatever it was supposed to have been!), it, also, was insipid because the condensation, due to the defrosting process (**TARGET** assumed), resulted in copious quantities of water vapour to have been mixed with the filling so that, along with the soggy dough, one had no idea what one was supposed to be eating.

After a slice, **TARGET** asked a Filipino waiter to take away the mess.

Then, this medium ordered a Main Course: Rabbit, stuffed with Fennel and Artichokes at \$HK198.

About 15 minutes later, the rabbit dish appeared.

It comprised about 5 slices of stuffed rabbit, some oily French Fries and some boiled Chinese spinach.

On the first mouthful of rabbit, out came 2 pieces of string from this reviewer's mouth!

That was it.

'Please take this away!' **TARGET** told the Filipino waiter, pointing to the rabbit dish.

'Is something wrong?'

The young Filipino waiter, whose family had settled in The Philippines from the Fujian Province of the PRC, some years ago, was handed a piece of cooked string to examine, without this medium, uttering another word.

After a hasty examination of the offending piece of string and, then, offering it to the Filipino Something-Or-Other for a second opinion, he returned to **TARGET**'s table and offered to exchange the table's rabbit dish for another rabbit dish sans string, sans peur et sans reproche.

'No thank you,' **TARGET** quickly responded. *'But please bring the Home-Made Tagliatelle Pasta with Porcini Mushrooms, Radicchio and Speak Ham.'*

(**TARGET** had no idea what was meant by *'Speak Ham'*, then, and, still, does not know, although one is told that it is a type of ham.)

The tagliatelle was home-made, to be sure, but it, literally, floated in a veritable *'bath'* of olive oil.

The flavour was good and, had there not been so much olive oil, at \$HK148 a plate, it was good value for money.

But it was the only dish that was edible, during the entire meal.

TARGET, also, ordered a bottle of Ca'Bolani – Fruili, Merlot Aquileai, Vintage 2004, at \$HK318.

It, too, was very reasonable for an Italian table wine and this medium is happy to report that the Filipino Something-Or-Other actually knew how to open the wine bottle and to pour the wine, properly.

TARGET could, also, have mentioned the stale bread that was placed on the table at the time of this medium's introduction to the restaurant, but that would have been a little picky, wouldn't it?

Ms Oriana Tirabassi is said to have been a world-champion pizza maker, according to her name card.

This medium is not willing to question her credentials, but it is a pity that she does not stay in the kitchen, rather than try to be a restaurant *esperta femminile* or a *restaurant impresario* – at which, clearly, she is failing on both counts.

It was confirmed from the Filipino waiter who tried his best to serve **TARGET** in view of the difficulties that he faced, last Thursday, that the person, doing the cooking in the back room of Ristorante Sergio, was a pretender to the position of sous chef in an Italian restaurant: He hailed from Nepal.

Ristorante Sergio has had nearly 2 years of life, thus far: It is unlikely that it will last another 2 years at the rate that it is going.

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