

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

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

Name of Restaurant

The Steak House, Winebar + Grill, InterContinental Hongkong

Address of Restaurant

Number 18, Salisbury Road, Kowloon, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Friday, July 4, 2008

CategoryTARGETs 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> (Weighted Toward Italian Wines)			
Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	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 Bryan Chiu

Name of Chef

Mr Laurent Andre

Comments

It would be fair to state that The Steak House, Winebar + Grill of InterContinental Hongkong is one of the best restaurants in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Of course, it is a steak house, but it is a steak house, extraordinaire.

TARGET's team visited this restaurant, last Friday night at about 7:40 p.m., having made a reservation under an assumed name.

The restaurant seats about 96 patrons, but the tables are widely dispersed so that one is not disturbed by one's neighbours.

First impressions of this elegant food outlet of this Kowloon hotel – first impressions are very important, of course – were excellent, with this medium's waiter for the evening, Mr Vincent Wu, introducing himself as soon as the **TARGET** duo were seated, offering his assistance, which proved invaluable as the evening wore on.

To start off, **TARGET** ordered a bottle of Slovenian wine: Veliko Belo, Movia, Brda, Vintage 2001, at \$HK680.

The reason for this choice of white wine was because this medium has never tasted a glass of wine from this part of Europe.

The wine turned out to be a mixture of grape varieties, ribolla, chardonnay, pinot grigio and sauvignon blanc, according to the sommelier, Mr Ng Tit Fai.

The yellowish wine was a little tart and the aftertaste very abrasive to one's palate, in this reviewer's opinion.

It looked, smelt and tasted something along the lines of somewhat mouldy wet hay after a summer's rainstorm had passed.

It was not, exactly, to this medium's taste.

With regard to the wine list of The Steak House Winebar + Grill, however, it is, by far, the most comprehensive assortment of international wines that **TARGET** has ever had the good fortune to study.

One of the most-expensive wines on the list was one from California: Screaming Eagle, Oakville, at \$HK48,900 per bottle.

This wine is Vintage 2002, mind you!

While perusing the wine selections, Vincent came over to explain that the specialty of the day was Dry Aged Beef.

It was explained by this gentleman that Dry Aged Beef was 28 days old whereas the Wet Aged Beef on the menu was 7 days old.

It seems that Dry Aged Beef is, as its name implies, beef left to age in dry area while Wet Aged Beef is beef, wrapped in a vacuum bag after being cut from a carcass and allowed to age in its juices.

Just prior to making a final food selection for the evening, **TARGET** noted that there was a combination plate of steak, lamb and chicken.

TARGET () asked Vincent as to the origins of the chicken: Hongkong? China? American?

Was it fresh, chilled or frozen?

At first, Vincent was very defensive, claiming that *'his'* restaurant does not serve frozen fish, fowl or flesh, but *'I will check with the chef, first'*.

About 5 minutes later, Vincent returned, very apologetically, stating that the chicken was from Denmark and it was, indeed, frozen.

When asked what variety of starchy tubers were used for the mashed potatoes, Vincent, reluctantly, explained that potato powder was used in their production.

Honesty is, always, the best policy.

After questioning Vincent on other aspects of the menu, this was that which **TARGET** ordered for the evening:

Seasonal Freshly Chucked Oysters
Half Dozen
\$HK260

Crab Cake *'New Orleans'* Style, Tartar Sauce
\$HK175

Yonzawa Pork Loin 12 ounces
\$HK330

Baked Idaho Potato
\$HK78

Classic BBQ Sauce
\$HK78

U.S. Dry Aged Beef
Rib Eye Steak 16 ounces
\$HK600

French Mustard and Thyme Sauce
\$HK78

Creamed Spinach
\$HK78

Traditional Apple Pie with Vanilla Ice Cream
\$HK130

Mango Soufflé
\$HK130

New York Cheesecake
\$HK130

Since this is a steak house, 2 glasses of red wine were ordered to accompany the main courses:

Cigales, Reserva Museum Real, D.O. Vintage 2002, from Spain
\$HK190

Chateau Musar, Bekaa Valley, Vintage 1999, from Lebanon
\$HK190

The Meal

The oysters were a combination of 3 kinds, all of which were excellent, being fresh and cold: North Bank from Australia; Barron Point from USA; and, White Pearl from France.

The Crab Cake, '*New Orleans*' Style, was a tragic flop since, although the ingredients, clearly, were correct, the crab cake had been produced at least 6 hours earlier and had gone soggy with age and, then, had been warmed up in a microwave oven just before being ordered.

As a result, the crab cake was soft and mushy and not a patch on its original cousin.

This matter was mentioned to Vincent who informed Mr Jason Chui, Assistant Restaurant Manager, who came over to apologise, without trying to make any excuses, or trying to deny the facts.

As for the meat dishes – the Dry Aged Steak and the Yonzawa (Japanese) pork – they were both top drawer.

However, **TARGET** Subscribers should beware: The portions are huge.

And because of the quality of the meat, along with the cooking process, one is apt to overeat unless restrained by force of will.

As for the red wines, the Spanish selection was far better than the Lebanese, the Lebanese red, being much too immature and not being full-bodied to accompany the likes of the splendid meat dishes.

(The reason that the Lebanese wine had been chosen was due to the fact that, just like the Slovenian wine, this reviewer had never tried it, before.)

The dessert soufflé was inedible, sad to state, and was swiftly exchanged for the Traditional New York Cheese Cake.

What had happened was that the soufflé had been cooked and permitted to stand for a while so that all that remained of it on the table was a deflated, wrinkled balloon with a horrible taste.

Not only that, but it had been over-baked, the '*skin*' of which was like leather.

Yuk!

The Traditional New York Cheese Cake, however, more than made up for the horrible soufflé.

The apple pie was wonderful, but it was sufficient for about 4 people, not one person.

The Ambience

The atmosphere of The Steak House Winebar + Grill is, exactly, as it should be.

It is difficult to think that it could have been improved.

This is not a fine-dining restaurant, but it has all of the ingredients of being such, minus the French food and a black-jacketed, pretentious European maître d'hôtel, walking round the restaurant, talking as though he had a plumb in his mouth, making it difficult to understand what he is trying to say.

The service staff at The Steak House Winebar + Grill are well-trained and cannot be harried.

The music is not offensive and, for the most part, it is just background noise that is pleasant enough.

It is worthy of a mention, at this point, that one is offered 9 different choices of salt to accompany one's dishes and 8 different kinds of knives in order to cut one's meat.

This is a bit much, in **TARGET**'s thinking, but a charming gesture, nevertheless.

Also, regardless of which wine is chosen, the wine steward serves, first, a taste in a glass just to make certain that everything is up to scratch.

Which is the way that it should be, of course, but many restaurants do not observe such simple niceties.

What is wonderful about this restaurant is that, aside from the food being, generally, very good, the restaurant, itself, is an experience, one that one would like to duplicate.

It leaves many of the other American steak houses in the territory miles behind it.

Lastly, it is expensive: The entire meal for 2 people cost a whopping \$HK3,400 plus tips.

If you want the best, you pay for it.

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