

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Cipriani Hongkong

Address of Restaurant12/Floor, Old Bank of China Building, No. 1, Bank Street, Central,
Hongkong**Date of Visit**

Thursday, July 17, 2008

Category**TARGETs 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 - None	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	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 Karl Lai

Name of Chef

Mr Silvano Fiorindo

Comments

If **TARGET** Subscribers are unfortunate enough to receive from American Express, an advertising invitation to visit Cipriani Hongkong, located on the 12th Floor of Old Bank of China Building in Central Hongkong, they would be wise to throw this invitation into the dustbin without a second thought.

TARGET() visited Cipriani Hongkong, last Thursday night at about 8:10 p.m., and, from the moment that this medium's duo entered this restaurant, the only consideration was how fast an exit could be made.

The first exposure to this restaurant was an unbelievable shock to one's sensitivities.

The din, the cacophony of different sounds, caused by waiters, talking loudly among themselves, patrons, laughing, yelling and screaming, and the clash and clunk of dishes made one's entrance to this establishment a very unpleasant introduction.

One is told in the blurb of American Express, the following:

'You are always on the run for your business and may require an exclusive and elegant venue for your personal as well as professional needs. Located at 12th Floor of Old Bank of China Building in Central, much awarded Cipriani is a serene private haven, perfect for entertaining friends and corporate associates or sharing a gourmet evening with that someone special.'

Serene!'

This restaurant?

This free-standing eatery is far from being serene because, due to the lack of soft furnishings and the fact that the floor and walls are made of stone, noise bounces around the room, making it almost impossible to think, let alone have a conversation with anybody.

One part of the restaurant serves Chinese food, exclusively, while Cipriani Hongkong, supposedly the Italian corner, covers an area of, roughly 500 square feet, with a seating capacity of about 60 customers, according to this medium's rough count.

On studying the menu, **TARGET** noted:

'Classics from Harry's Bar in Venice

Club Sandwich

\$138'

'The very best of Italian cuisine designed by star chef ...', according to the advertising invitation from American Express.

That was just the beginning of this medium's education into the expertise of the staff of Cipriani Hongkong.

To summarise this medium's experience of last Thursday night: The food is terrible; the ambience is terrible; and service is terrible; and, the prices are outrageous, considering what one is served.

On the evening that **TARGET** was unfortunate enough to visit Cipriani Hongkong, this was that which was ordered:

Gazpacho Soup
\$HK98

Spinach and Cheese Ravioli with Butter and Sage
\$HK178

Veal Kidney with Risotto alla Milanese
\$HK268

Calves Liver alla Veneziana
\$HK268

The Food

Gazpacho Soup is a cold Spanish soup, originating in the Southern region of Andalusia.

It is not Italian, at all.

It is, usually, almost a puree, combining pieces of tomato, cucumber, bell (sweet) pepper, onion, garlic, and celery.

The Gazpacho, served to **TARGET** last Thursday, was nothing like the original or the modern version of this ancient soup; and nobody in Cipriani Hongkong is going to tell this medium that this is the way that it should be – because Italy does not produce this soup, it, not being in the Italian repertoire.

The Gazpacho looked and tasted very much like cold tomato juice, straight out of a tin, with some raw onions, thrown in for good measure.

It tasted like a watered-down tomato juice, also.

The Spinach and Cheese Ravioli with Butter and Sage was the best part of the entire meal and, if points were to be awarded to this dish, **TARGET** would rate it quite highly, at about 5.50 points out of 10 points.

It seemed that the ravioli shells were fairly fresh and the filling of spinach and cheese (the cheese appeared to be ricotta, actually) blended well.

Even the presentation was acceptable – which could not be said for any of the other dishes.

The Veal Kidney with Risotto alla Milanese and the Calves Liver alla Veneziana were so similar that, if one closed one's eyes and tasted each dish, separately, as in a blind-tasting competition, it would have been impossible to know which one was which.

The sauces were, exactly, the same, and due to the fact that the kidneys (**TARGET** assumes that they were, in fact, kidneys) and the calves liver (**TARGET** makes the same assumption as with the veal kidneys) were so similar in taste, it was impossible to know what one was supposed to be eating.

However, there were 2 hints, making it possible to understand the difference between the 2 main courses:

- a. The veal kidney came with a side order of something called risotto; while,
- b. The calves liver came with 2, thin squares of a white-coloured, something-or-other, which was claimed to be polenta!

The risotto was not risotto, to be sure, but a poor imitation of the rice dish, which appeared to have been made from some butter and cream, added to some rice.

It was tasteless.

It could not be devoured: One mouthful was all that this reviewer could manage.

As for the 2 small slabs of fried, white polenta, it was the first time that **TARGET** had seen polenta, which is made from cornmeal and water, mainly, of a grayish white colour, covered in a small pool of vegetable oil.

Could this be bleached polenta?

How was it possible?

If it were not a bleached copy of the original – was it possible that it was some of the leftovers from the previous day?

It was sickening; it was inedible; it was a disgrace.

Having suffered sufficiently for one evening, **TARGET**'s duo left about one hour after being seated.

No return engagement is envisaged.

Once outside in the street, the hustle and bustle and the clatter of the engines of the motor cars and buses were delightful, compared to the resounding and horrible noises, reverberating around the restaurant from which **TARGET**'s duo has just extricated itself.

The service at Cipriani Hongkong is almost non-existent and the entire restaurant could be compared with a local, Chinese neighbourhood eatery, operated by a mamma, papa and daughter, with the furniture, being made of the cheapest materials, no tablecloths on the tables, and the food, slapped down on table at the convenience of the servicing staff.

No wine had been ordered with **TARGET**'s dinner because the prices were silly, in the main, and the choices were very limited in the unbalanced wine list.

Italian wines, generally, are very good: Cipriani does not stock good wines.

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