

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

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

Name of Restaurant

The Swiss Chalet

Address of RestaurantGround Floor, Numbers 12-14, Hart Avenue, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon,
HongkongDate of Visit

Thursday, October 23, 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
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Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
<u>Wine</u>			
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

Nil

Name of Executive Chef

Nil

Comments

The Swiss have never been known for their great wines.

The Swiss are unlikely, ever, to be in a position to compete with the French and or the Italians when it comes to the noble art of the viniculture for the sake of the production of fine wines.

But the Swiss can produce plonk – and in vast quantities.

Swiss food, also, might be enjoyed by the Swiss, but it, as with Swiss wines, will never be able to compete with French, German or Italian cuisine.

There is good reason that the Swiss have tried to maintain a neutral stance in the world, especially in the tricky art of politics.

It is because the Swiss, as with their food and wines, are, for the best part, either ineffective or uninspired.

The Swiss Chalet, located in Tsimshatsui, is a pleasant enough, free-standing restaurant, but that is, just about, as far as this eatery ever will go – just a pleasant place to eat a quick meal or to live in a world of make-believe, sucking on some bread, soaked in some soft, hot cheese, this dish, commonly known as fondue.

TARGET () visited The Swiss Chalet () last Thursday at about 6:30 pm, after having some difficulty in locating this 80-seater in a corner of Hart Avenue.

Within one hour of being seated, the entire restaurant was full.

It appears to be a favourite hangout of the younger set, mostly Chinese, at least, that was the case on the evening of **TARGET**'s visit.

The first thought in this reviewer's mind was that the food must really be wonderful.

Well, it isn't.

The waitress, who served this medium's table, came from Nepal and, although she was a nice-looking lady, she had trouble with the English language and, it appeared, with a great deal more, too.

There were 4 Nepalese ladies, working as waitresses at The Swiss Chalet on the evening that **TARGET** visited the restaurant,

and one rather, rotund Chinese gentleman, the last-named, appearing to be the maitre d'hôtel (or something like that).

Altogether, **TARGET** estimates that the production level of the 4 Nepalese is equivalent to one, well-trained Chinese waiter or waitress.

Put another way, any one of these 4 Nepalese waitresses appear to be accustomed to playing gin rummy with just 13 cards instead of 52 cards.

This is known, in some parlances, as being quarter decks.

On a trip to the water closet in order to learn of the cleanliness of the facilities, this reviewer noted that the kitchen door was ajar.

Peering in, Lo and Behold! There was one of the Nepalese waitresses, preparing a salad – the very same salad that this reviewer had ordered.

Another one appeared to be scooping something from a pot.

These scenes, as the evening wore on, told a great deal about this eatery.

Having scanned the menu and the wine list, the following was chosen for the evening:

Set Menu

Lamb's Lettuce with Egg and Crisp Bacon
White French Dressing

Emince of Venison with Mushrooms, Noodles and Red Cabbage

Two Large Meringue with Vanilla Ice and Plenty Fresh Cream

\$HK325

A La Carte

Swiss Air-Dried meat Specialties of Ham, Beef, Bacon and Salami,
Complimented with Pickles

\$HK95

Thinly Sliced Veal Meat with White Mushrooms in a Creamy Sauce,
Served with Harsh Browns

\$HK185

With the food, **TARGET** ordered a bottle of a Blend of Blauburgrunder – Pinot Noir, Cornalin Humagne Rouge and Syrak 2005 at \$HK398.

This is a light table wine, which is innocuous enough, but it is quite unlikely to take any prizes in any competition with even a common Sangiovese vino di casa from a small Rimini restaurant.

Still, the wine was quite drinkable although, being acidic, it did leave an unpleasant aftertaste on the palate.

The Food

Without question, the Lamb's Lettuce with Egg and Crisp Bacon, bathed in a White French Dressing, was the best course of the evening.

It was the only dish that was eaten fully.

The Lamb's Lettuce had the texture and flavour of the leaves of sweet peas.

It was easy enough to prepare, as the Nepalese waitresses proved: Just put the raw vegetables on a plate, pour over the French dressing and sprinkle with bacon pieces and chopped, hard-boiled egg.

Any quarter deck could be trained to do this menial task.

The Swiss, air-dried meats, however, were a wash: They were all insipid.

There was little difference in taste between the bacon, the salami, the ham, and the beef.

If one had closed one's eyes, one would not be able to identify any of the air-dried meats.

As for the 2 hot dishes, it was very obvious that they had been made some time earlier and left in pots to be dished up when ordered.

This, most likely, was what **TARGET** had noted on passing the kitchen on the return trip from the water closet.

There was nothing wrong with these dishes except that there was nothing right about them.

One could not say, as with the air-dried meats, that they were tasteless – because they were all very similar in taste.

The first, hot a la carte dish, the thinly sliced veal meat with white mushrooms in a creamy sauce, was a stew, of sorts.

It had a creamy flavour, as one would expect, and that was about all that one could say about the dish.

The thinly sliced venison pieces (Emince of Venison) with mushrooms was, in effect, also a stew, the flavours of the ingredients, being undefinable.

The owner of The Swiss Chalet is Mr Max Liechti () and he made a quick walkabout on his entrance, shaking hands with select customers.

This rather fat gentleman appears to know his way round the kitchen and knows, full well, the value of a stew: It can keep for a relatively long period time and, to a certain extent, its richness improves with age.

Of course, training less-than-average intelligent, Nepalese waitresses to serve a stew on a plate is cheaper than hiring a cook and, obviously, Mr Max Liechti has his eye on the Bottom Line of his restaurant.

TARGET will not bother, discussing the desert, because that would be a complete waste of time.

The total cost of the above meal, at \$HK1,300, which included a \$HK91 tip, was worth the experience – because, now, there will no curiosity about this restaurant: It is not worth the trip to this grotty part of Tsimshatsui.

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