

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé Restaurant

Address of Restaurant

Shops 3096-3097, Podium Level 3, IFC Mall, Central, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, May 14, 2009

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
Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

Wine

Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	Expensive
Storage of Wine	Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier --	None	Excellent	Poor

Total Cost of Meal

Very Expensive	Moderately Expensive	Very Reasonably Priced
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General Manager

Mr Christophe Vrignaud

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Decki Leung

Comments

Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé Restaurant rarely receives very much attention from anybody: This is fair and only to be expected.

Because it does not deserve any attention, at all.

It is, in a word, a fraud of a French restaurant.

Any and all nationals of France should be utterly and completely ashamed of this restaurant and its many claims to preparing the fine cuisine of The French Republic.

TARGET () visited Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé at its Central Hongkong outlet on May 14, 2009, at about 7:30 p.m., and, on entering the area of the restaurant, called La Loggia, was pleasantly impressed by the décor.

However, the air-conditioning system had only been operating for a short period of time so that parts of this 92-seater restaurant were far too hot and this medium was, eventually, led to a table where the air-conditioning was most favourable to the comfort of healthy homo sapiens.

The menu and the wine list were presented by our waiter almost at the time of being seated and, at first, one could not help but be impressed by the speedy service.

But the rapid pace of things in this restaurant belied Management's real intent: Get diners in and out as quickly as is absolutely possible without them realising that this is, in fact, a French, fast-food outlet.

Everything that is speedy and is conducive to a food outlet, specialising in fast food, should be employed, it seemed to this reviewer.

In fact, the McDonald's Restaurant chain could learn something from Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé with regard to the speedy way to dish up slop, making claims that are far from being justified.

On the day of **TARGET**'s visit to Agnès b. le pain Grillé, this is that which was ordered:

Natural Water
\$HK68

Soupe à l'oignon
Traditional Onion Soup
with Le Lain Grillé and Cheese
\$HK65

Foie Gras de Canard Aux Pommes,
Pan-Seared Duck Foie Gras in Sauternes Wine and Apple Sauce
\$HK185

Confit d'agneau
Penne Pasta with 'Seven Hour' Slow Cooked Lamb Shoulder in Espelette
\$HK185

Trinite aux Amandes
Panfried Whole Trout in Lemon Butter Sauce, Served with Young Sautéed Spinach
\$HK250

Francis Nicois
Stuffed Mediterranean Vegetables with Veal Stew,
Served with Assorted Salad Leaves in Confit Tomatos Dressing
\$HK198

Soufflé au Pralin
Hazelnut and Almond Soufflé
\$HK78

Crepe Suzeette
French Crepe in Orange Sauce, Orange Zest and Cointreau
\$HK78

With the above, **TARGET** ordered a bottle of Champagne:

Ayala, Aÿ
Blanc de Blanc, Vintage 1998
\$HK1,250

The Food

The Soupe à l'oignon had the appearance of the traditional French onion soup, even down to the bowl in which it was served.

But the soup was laced, very heavily, with sugar.

It is an old trick of idiot cooks, worn thin with time.

If one enjoys drinking onion water with some peeled onions, added to it, a broth that tastes sickly sweet, then, this is for you.

For this reviewer, it was pushed aside after the first spoonful.

The Foie Gras de Canard Aux Pommes was completely edible and, if it had been served in any fine-dining establishment, it would have gone down well.

However, it was the only dish of the evening that scored a 'pass' mark.

After the first 2 courses, things went downhill rapidly – even faster than the service staff could place the plates of food on the table.

Skipping over to the trout – because the lamb dish tasted like nothing – here was another trick for the books.

The trout was of the frozen variety, the meat of which was completely insipid and so overcooked that the taste of the delicate 'meat' had long vanished and gone down the drain as had, no doubt, the water in which the poor dead fish had been poached.

To this poached, frozen trout, some idiot in the kitchen had sprinkled some sugar on the topside skin, taken a miniature blowtorch, and, then, caramelised the sugar to the trout's skin.

This gave the appearance of the dish as having been sautéed, but, as soon as one turned the fish over, one noted the scam.

It was incredibly stupid of the restaurant to try this trick because, in a predominantly Chinese community where steamed fish is as commonplace as herpes in a whorehouse, the scam would become evident within seconds of the plate, being placed on the table.

The cook, who prepared **TARGET**'s trout, was too stupid for words because he forgot to blowtorch the tail of the trout in order to give it the appearance of a sautéed fish – and one could actually see the sugar!

Also, because of this situation, one could marvel at the fact that there was a layer of sugar-water, balanced at the tail of this, once beautiful fish.

The veal stew was not even worthy of a mention because, as with the lamb dish, it tasted of absolutely nothing.

If one had closed one's eyes and tasted this dish, it would have been quite impossible to know what one was eating.

Turning to the soufflé, when it was placed on the table, it looked, really, wonderful.

But, as everybody knows, one cannot tell a sausage by its skin and, in the case of the soufflé, served at Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé, as soon as one broke the crust of the soufflé, what was underneath it was a shock: There was a '*soup*' – a watery substance that resembled something unmentionable the morning after one had imbibed copious quantities of alcohol, leading to the runs, also known as diarrhoea.

As for the Crepe Suzette, it, too, looked like the genuine article, but as soon as one took a fork to it, the crepe fell apart – because it was an old crepe that had long before seen its best days.

The '*soup*', into which the mush had been submerged, was sugar water with some orange flavour added for good measure.

It was, again, something sickly sweet.

It could not be eaten.

When the waiter was told of **TARGET**'s complaints, he muttered something along the lines: '*Hmmm. I'll tell the kitchen ...*' and, then, smartly, left the field.

The Ayala Champagne will never again be ordered by this reviewer because, although it is claimed to be a blanc de blanc – made from 100 percent chardonnay grapes – there was far too much Pinot Noir in the must to be called a blanc de blanc.

Pull somebody else's tit, please!

The Restaurant, Itself

While Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé Restaurant looks neat and tidy, **TARGET** noted that, when some of the tables were vacated, the tablecloths were not replaced, but, merely, straightened out in order to remove the marks of the former tenant.

Other diners were not eating most of their meals; and, they were not loath to complain.

But the service staff is well trained ... not to listen to the complaints in any detail and parroting similar remarks, such as: '*I'll tell the kitchen.*'

There is no toilet at the restaurant so that one has a 3-minute walk from the restaurant, along a corridor of IFC Mall, in order to find the nearest facilities.

The signage is quite good so that one is unlikely to get lost in the labyrinth, but one is advised not to wait until one's bladder is too full – because accidents can happen, one could speculate.

Another horror of this restaurant is that the tables for 2 guests are about 18 inches apart so that, from time to time, a waiter's bottom will appear on one side or the other as he serves another guest at an adjoining table.

This reviewer is not one that appreciates to have a stranger's bottom in his face: It is not a very pleasant sight.

Because of the fast pace of things at Agnès b. Le Pain Grillé, no service staff really cares about quality, of the food, of the service, or anything else, for that matter.

At least, that is that which **TARGET** noted.

The prices of the dishes are terribly expensive – especially when the food is inedible.

TARGET has reviewed quite a number of good and bad restaurants in Hongkong and this one ranks with some of the worst.

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