

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Zuma

Address of Restaurant

Levels 5 and 6, The Landmark, No. 15, Queen's Road Central, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Wednesday, September 16, 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 | 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 | Excellent | Acceptable | None |

Total Cost of Meal

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Very Expensive | Moderately Expensive | Very Reasonably Priced |
|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|

Name of General Manager

Mr Christian Talpo

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Matthew Abergel

Comments

Zuma Hongkong is not just a restaurant: It is an experience.

The restaurant, which is part of an international chain, is located at The Landmark Atrium, Number 15, Queen's Road, Central, the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The food, served at this restaurant, is basically Japanese, but only the roots of the cuisine are basic Japanese, the rest of the cuisine are inventions of somebody who fused together a number of aspects of Asian and Western foods.

It works.

Before going on, **TARGET** () subscribers should know that this is not a fine-dining restaurant, but it is more expensive than most fine-dining outlets in many of the best, 5-star hotels.

TARGET visited Zuma, last Wednesday night, and after a meal that lasted for the best part of 2 hours and 15 minutes, this medium was \$HK2,200 poorer, in monetary terms, but much richer in terms of the dining experience.

The restaurant serves upwards of 200 guests and the décor, by itself, is well worth a visit.

Huge boulders of granite had been purchased in the PRC, proper – being separate and distinct from the HKSAR – pre-cut in the PRC, proper, and, then, trucked to the HKSAR where Queen's Road, in the middle of the night, was cordoned off so that the trucks could offload their cargoes via a large crane that transported the granite up 3 floors.

For the next 3 months, the boulders were fashioned into a lengthy sushi bar, the interior walls of Zuma Hongkong, the entrances to the washrooms, and even the floors had the same granite mat finish, replicating the general motif of the entire restaurant.

At one corner of the restaurant, there is a glass stairway, illumined, leading to a higher floor which is the bar area.

To say that this is an exciting décor underscores what the architects have done.

In short, it is a magnificent achievement, especially for restaurant, abutting Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hotel, which boasts of housing a 2-star restaurant, named Amber.

TARGET would estimate that the cost of the décor, alone, of Zuma has to be in the tens of millions of Hongkong dollars, but management seemed reticent to release such data.

Lastly, Zuma must be among the best-decorated, free-standing restaurants in the 416 square miles that constitutes the territory.

The Food

The following, described as Daikoku Tasting Menu (), was that which was chosen from the voluminous menu on **TARGET's**

visit of last Wednesday night:

maguro no taru taru

tuna tartare, miso, myoga and sweet potato crisps

suzuki no osashimi

sliced seabass, yuzu, truffle oil and salmon roe

gyu no tataki yuzu-koshu fuumi

seared beef with yuzu koshu-ponzu

.

tokusen nigiri sushi, sashimi moriwase

fine nigiri sushi and select sashimi

hamachi roll

yellowtail, japanese cucumber, pickled wasabi

arjun's chu toro roll

prime tuna and spring onions

.

hotate to ringo-wasabi no robatayaki

grilled hokkaido scallops, grated apple and wasabi

gindara saikyo-yaki

black cod wrapped in hoba leaf

.

gyuhire sumibiyaki karami zuke

spicy beef tenderloin, sesame and sweet soy

aka dashi

red miso soup

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dessert

tropical fruits chawan mushi,

green tea banana cake,

the special chocolate

\$870 per person (minimum of two)

It would be much too long and much too boring to describe all of the above-mentioned dishes, so this medium will focus only on some of the most-memorable ones.

The first course, for instance, the tuna tartare, contained, of all things, mint, as well as chives.

The mint was secreted in the tuna tartare while the chives chips were used as a garnish.

The resultant combination was outstanding, provided that one enjoys the flavour of mint and chives with chopped up pieces of fresh, raw tuna.

TARGET liked it.

While the first course may shock purists of Japanese food, the Nigiri Sushi and the Select Sashimi, as well as the Hamachi

Rolls, would not disappoint anybody because they were, just about, the real McCoy.

Turning to the Grilled Hokkaido Scallops, they were mouth-watering.

However, they hardly required the grated apple and wasabi as garnishes since the scallops, alone, required nothing more.

The beef tenderloin was Australian, grass-fed meat and, had it not been for the 'lake' of sweet soy sauce in which the meat half floated, it would have been insipid.

Now, **TARGET** is not a great fan of Australian beef, anyway, but it seems that, at the prices that Zuma charges, a better grade of beef should have been used – US Grade AAA or Argentine beef, for instance?

Turning to the desserts, here one had to be delighted because it was superb.

However, a warning is required at this point: Every one of the 5 small desserts comprises thousands of calories.

It is suggested that people, wanting to lose weight, stay far away from this part of the meal.

This reviewer ate all of the desserts ... and regretted every delicious mouthful.

The Staff

Many of the staff are completely untrained or only partially trained.

Some of them, **TARGET** discovered, can hardly speak any understandable English.

TARGET's original waitress was from Nepal and it was quite impossible to know more than a few words that she was trying to speak in the English language.

In fact, the most pleasant people in Zuma were the customers because the serving staff appeared to be of a rather unpleasant mien, just going through the motions of getting the job done and little more.

One is not disposed to tip very lavishly because of the general manner of the waiters and waitresses.

According to one employee of the restaurant, there are about 40 serving staff and 30 cooks.

The restaurant was opened in June of 2007, **TARGET** was informed, and the entire project was completed in 6 months.

The statement, that the entire project was completed in 6 months, seems to be at odds with this medium's knowledge of the speed and manner of the construction industry of the territory since the creation of Zuma was not just the decoration of about 30,000 square feet of commercial area, but a major building project of material difficulties.

It is quite likely that the planning of the décor, alone, must have taken a considerable length of time by itself: One year or so, perhaps?

Aside from the above-mentioned negative criticisms about the poor grade of staff, a visit to Zuma is well worthwhile in **TARGET**'s opinion.

About the wine, this medium scanned the wine list and found that many of the offerings were terribly overpriced, considering everything.

It appeared that there was no professional sommelier on duty, assuming that there was one, trying to push people to buy some of the expensive wines from places such as France and Italy.

It was just as well because high-quality European wines do not sit that well with Japanese food.

As **TARGET** has, already, stated, this is not a fine-dining restaurant, but an exciting adventure into the culinary arts, one which has a distinct Japanese flare – and expensive French wines would just get in the way of one's enjoyment of this interesting taste sensation.

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