

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Domani

Address of Restaurant

Level 4, Pacific Place, Admiralty, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, September 24, 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
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Name of General Manager

Mr Giovanni Perna

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Michele Bernacchia

Comments

After being closed for about a fortnight in order to try to repair the leaking roof, which is only about 10 months old, Domani, the Italian-styled restaurant, located at Level 4, Pacific Place, Admiralty, reopened about 3 weeks ago.

And, it is quite clear that it, still, has not got its act, completely, together.

It is expensive and it is not worth the money that it is demanding for its food, in **TARGET**'s opinion.

Considering everything, to charge \$HK1,078 for a tasting menu (degustazione menu) is way over the top.

That is about the same price that one would pay for a meal at the most-expensive, fine-dining restaurants in any of the 5-star hotels of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

One need not even ask the question as to which is the better venue, Domani or any fine-dining restaurant at any of the 5-star hotels of the HKSAR: It is obvious by a cursory glance at Domani.

The food, served at Domani, is completely out of whack with the reality of the times, as are the prices, being demanded.

Domani was revisited for the third time on Thursday, September 24, 2009, without a reservation, having been made, and, as luck would have it, **TARGET** () was shown to exactly the same table that this medium occupied on November 13, 2008, just 5 days after this restaurant was first opened.

Everything looks, just about, the same, except, unlike the last time that this medium visited Domani, that was on March 23, 2009, there was a plethora of Chinese, Asian and some European chefs in attendance at the open kitchen.

TARGET ordered the degustazione (tasting) menu and 2 a la carte dishes.

The degustazione menu comprised:

Aperitivo

glass of montenisa franciacorta, antinori, lombardy, italy n.v.

Combinazione di Tagliatelle di Seppia, Pesto di Alga Nori,

Quinoa Fritta e Crudo di Ricciola in Agretto di Pendolini e Scampi

combination of cuttlefish tagliatella, nori seaweed pesto, fried quinoa, amberjack carpaccio, cherry tomato essence and scampi

Acqua di Pomodoro, Capesante, Gamberi, Insalatina,

Germogli e Frutta, Sale Nero

tomato jelly, scallops, prawns, sprouts, salad, fruit and black salt

glass of blangé langhe arneis, ceretto, piedmont, italy 2007

Albanella di Crostacei e Molluschi
*marche style mixed seafood chowder,
steamed and served in a traditional glass jar*

Strigoli al Nero di Seppia, Seppia, Parmigiano e Basilico
black ink strigoli, squid, parmesan cheese and basil

^^^

*glass of whispering angel,
château d'esclans, provence, france 2007*

***Rombo, Caponata di Melanzane,
Sabbia di Pinoli e Aria di Basilico***
*turbot, eggplant and tomato 'caponata',
pine nut sand, basil air*

or

glass of chianti classico, fontodi, tuscan, italy 2006

***Filetto di Manzo e Guanciale,
Salsa di Lacrima 'Conti di Buscareto' e all' Aglio,
Patate Arrostiti, Olive Taggiasche e Peperoni***
*grain fed australian beef tenderloin wrapped in 'guanciale' ham,
red wine and garlic sauce, roast potatoes,
'taggiasche' olives, red bell peppers*

^^^

Ciocco & Cocco
hot chocolate & frozen coconut

Caffé e Pasticceria
coffee or tea and cuddles

<i>Selection without wine</i>	<i>980 per person</i>
<i>Selection with three glasses of wine</i>	<i>1280 per person</i>
<i>+10% service charge</i>	

(TARGET did not taste the wines that were offered as accompaniments to the dishes.)

The a la carte dishes were:

*Quail Breast, Wrapped in Crispy Guanciale Ham,
Steamed Wild Rice,
Parmesan Cheese Cream
\$HK190*

*Homemade Vegetarian Passatelli,
Fresh Tomatoes, Pecorino Cheese
\$HK160*

The Dinner

A bread basket was presented on the table, shortly after being seated, but the bread was stale.

This could happen at any restaurant, of course, because, after bread has been warmed in the microwave or under a warming light for a period of time, it tends to dry out.

But this matter was a little consequence and was fluffed off as having been unfortunate.

The Quail Breast of the a la carte menu was served first and, it was, really, very good.

At this point in the meal, it appeared that there had been a radical change in the quality and presentation of the food, served at this restaurant.

The quail was a little heavy on the cheese, but that is the way that the cook likes it, one supposes, so one cannot criticise that aspect of the dish.

Everything about this dish suggested that a great deal of thought had gone into its creation and preparation.

It was the one outstanding dish of the entire meal, as it turned out.

Next came the Homemade Vegetarian Passatelli from the a la carte menu, which coincided with the arrival of the fourth course of the degustazione menu – black ink strigoli, squid, parmesan cheese and basil.

This was fortunate because it permitted this medium to compare the 2 pasta dishes, side by side.

There was, absolutely, nothing wrong with the Homemade Vegetarian Passatelli, but, at the same time, there was little to recommend it.

The Homemade Vegetarian Passatelli and the black ink strigoli looked very much alike except, of course, one was black and one was a pale cream colour.

The Homemade Vegetarian Passatelli, at \$HK160 a pop, was very expensive, all things considered.

As for the fourth course of the degustazione menu, it, like the Homemade Vegetarian Passatelli, was quite edible, but, once the dish had been cleared away, one had, completely, forgotten about it.

Moving back a little to the seafood chowder in a traditional glass jar, this was, exactly, the same dish that was served when Domani first opened its doors on November 8, 2008.

The meat dish of the degustazione menu, the Australian beef, it was here that the penny dropped – because this dish was a complete disaster.

The beef was without any flavour, at all and, to top it off, the texture of the meat was powdery.

The reason for this was that, as any decent cook will tell you, when the meat is likely to be tough, use baking soda as an instant tenderiser.

For the end cut of a tenderloin, which is, more than likely, to be among the toughest part of the curve of the ribs at the backbone, using baking soda and, then, having the meat, heavily permeated with a strong-tasting sauce, tends to camouflage the actions of the kitchen.

Unfortunately for Domani, **TARGET** knows this trick, too.

The dish was sent packing with the statement: *'I just wanted to try Australian beef again – and, now, I know that I do not like it.'*

Australian beef can never be compared with Kansas (USA) beef, of course, but Australian beef, loaded with baking soda, compares with nothing; and, no matter what a kitchen may try to do to cover up its *'felony'*, it is, still, just muck.

There is no reason to make mention of the dessert – anyway, Italians are known for their desserts – but it was interesting that **TARGET** was not offered tea or coffee, which was, supposed to be part of the degustazione menu.

Probably, in view of the fact that this medium was only tasting the food and not, really, digging in, so to speak, the word must have spread – and Management was only too glad to see **TARGET**'s duo leave the premises.

All in all, the restaurant is, still, very much a failure no matter how much money is spent on Public Relations handouts, write-ups, and all the houp-la in the world.

The Restaurant

For the most part, the serving team at Domani is new.

However, still many, if not most, of the serving staff have not been trained to tell guests about the dishes in full.

It is likely, of course, that the new Restaurant Manager, Mr Giovanni Perna, was in a hurry to get cracking with the newly repaired roof and to reopen Domani as quickly as possible in order to bring in the shekels since time, as we all know, is money.

On the day of **TARGET**'s visit, this medium counted about 70 guests, many of whom were staying at the hotels in the immediate vicinity of the restaurant.

The presentation of most of the dishes was good, the quantity of the dishes was adequate, but the taste, as already stated, left a lot to be desired.

When Domani first opened its doors, the modus operandi was similar to that which **TARGET** observed, last Thursday.

With Europeans, teaching some Chinese and Asian apprentice cooks, the only question is: How long will the experienced Europeans stay in the open kitchen?

Once the European cooks leave, the quality of the food will deteriorate, even further.

As it is, the food is not that great today, anyway.

The purpose-built, free-standing restaurant, which houses Domani, today, was constructed by the Swire Group of Companies and the building remains Swire's property.

The restaurant, itself, is managed by DIR Company Ltd, whose office is located at IUKI Tower in Wanchai.

DIR Company Ltd is owned by:

Mr James Vincent Robertson	One percent
EL Grande Holdings Ltd	43 percent
Golden Financial Management Incorporated	11 percent
Conti Di Buscareto S.R.L.	2 percent
WebeTech S.R.L.	26 percent
Crabapple Holdings Ltd	10 percent
Greater Heights Incorporated	5 percent
Mr Christopher Vincent Walker	2 percent

Since the opening of Domani, it has been a loss-maker and, in terms of the Swire Group of Companies, it must be more than a bit of an embarrassment since The Swire Group of Companies, no doubt, had hoped for a money-spinner not a money loser.

The building must have cost tens of millions of dollars to plan and to construct and the return on the investment must have been zilch, up to today – 10 months from the opening of Domani.

The way that things stand, there is unlikely, ever, to be a return on this investment.

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