

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Secret Garden ()

Address of RestaurantGround Floor, Bank of America Tower, No. 12, Harcourt, Central,
Hongkong**Date of Visit**

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

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

<u>Food</u>			
Presentation	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
<u>Wine -- Not Applicable</u>			
Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	Expensive
Storage of Wine	Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier	Excellent	Acceptable	None
<u>Total Cost of Meal</u>			
Very Expensive	Moderately Expensive	Very Reasonably Priced	

Name of Director of Restaurants

None

Name of Executive Chef

None

Comments

It is a strange fact but, in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), some of the rudest serving staff can be found in restaurants, specialising in preparing and serving Korean food.

This medium has no idea as to the reason for this phenomenon, but it is, sadly, fact.

Secret Garden () is a Korean restaurant, located at the Ground Floor of Bank of America Tower, Number 12, Harcourt Road, Central, Hongkong.

It has been at its present location for the past 15 years.

Management, therefore, must be doing something right, regardless of the lack of servility of the serving staff.

TARGET () had visited this stand-alone eatery, some years past, but because of the then rudeness of the staff, this reviewer was loath to suffer a second time.

However, a **TARGET** Subscriber had suggested that lunch at Secret Garden was good value for money.

So, burying this reviewer's pride, on Wednesday, February 24, 2010, **TARGET** entered this Korean restaurant.

Immediately apparent was that the service staff was scurrying hither and thither and had little time for pleasantries, such as: *'Good Afternoon. Do you have a reservation?'*

Instead, upon hearing that a reservation had been made, a female member of the serving staff, confirming that **TARGET** was on time (she studied her wristwatch for about 20 seconds), said, only, *'Wait a minute'*, and, then, on her return to the small entrance hall, escorted this medium to a table, opposite the kitchen.

After being seated for about 5 minutes, a Nepalese lady – **TARGET**'s waitress for the 45-minute lunch – came over and placed a menu on the table, along with 2 cups of tea.

Before accepting our order, this Nepalese serving lady suggested that, perhaps, choosing the set menu for the day would be the best option rather than ordering from the a la carte menu.

This was her recommendation:

SET A – HK\$300

Korean Style Vermicelli

Mixed Rice in Stone Pot

Spicy Bean Curd Soup

Not including rice

An interesting facet of this lady's suggestion was that she said that ordering one Set A Menu would be sufficient for 2 people.

She was correct.

The food was, just about, as one would expect from a Korean restaurant: Hot and spicy.

The lunch was not a barbecue, which is common in most Korean restaurants, these days, but mixture of 8 appetisers, a very spicy soup, and a well-known Korean dish in a clay (not stone) pot, called bibimbap.

The bibimbap was very bland and, as far as **TARGET** could ascertain, the rice had been slightly overcooked which, this medium has been reliably informed, is par for the course for this dish.

Be that as it may, it was a healthy dish although it was not especially tasty in this reviewer's opinion.

By this time, it had become only too apparent that Secret Garden had reinvented itself: From a traditional Korean restaurant it had metamorphosed into what could be described as being a fast-food, Korean restaurant.

However, having said that, at \$HK150 per head, it is difficult to beat this restaurant on price, alone.

Value for money, it is.

But, as with many, if not most, Korean restaurants in the territory, don't expect very much in the way of service.

There is no music in this restaurant; its decor could not be considered appealing to anybody except the owner as she counts the profits of the day; it, certainly, is not the place that one would want to take a person for a romantic evening; it is noisy, with the sounds of dishes, banging together throughout the restaurant; and, lastly, the incessant chattering of the patrons reminded one of a flight of Canadian geese, having landed in a field, all looking for food.

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