

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

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

**Name of Restaurant**

Hugo's, Hyatt Regency Hongkong

**Address of Restaurant**

No. 18, Hanoi Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, Hongkong

**Date of Visit**

Thursday, April 8, 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	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
General	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

**Food**

Presentation	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Taste	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor
Quantity	Excellent	Acceptable	Poor

**Wine -- Not Applicable**

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 Director of Food and Beverage**

Mr Eric Chiu

**Name of Executive Chef**

Mr Michael Donley

**Comments**

The worst thing about Hugo's is the food.

The best thing about Hugo's is the service.

Hugo's is the fine-dining outlet of the Hyatt Regency Hongkong Hotel, located in Tsimshatsui, Kowloon. It reopened for business last September.

This area of Kowloon is noted for its grotty bars, questionable massage parlours, and cheap hotels as well as the plethora of prostitutes, pimps and hawkers, walking the streets, offering just about anything, from a luscious lovely for a quick legs-up, to the sale of knockoff watches of all the popular brands, to the sale of all kinds of illegal drugs.

**TARGET** () visited Hugo's last Thursday at about 7:00 p.m. and was pleasantly surprised to find that the restaurant was spacious, with the tables, not too close to each other.

After a visit to the facilities in order to wash up, prior to attacking food at what this medium had thought would be a bang-up meal, this reviewer was seated in a corner of the restaurant to the strains of 1950s music, including some Elvis Presley songs.

After studying the various dishes, being offered, the 8-course set menu was chosen:

8 COURSE SET MENU	per person \$988
WINE PAIRING	per person \$500

***Caesar Salad***

*Riesling Kabinett Armand 2004*  
*Reichsrat Von Buhl, Pfalz Germany*

***Steak Tartare***

***Escargot à la Bourguignonne***  
*Chardonnay Haras Character Maipo Valley 2007*  
*Vina Haras de Pirque, Central Valley Chile*

***Lobster Bisque***

***Oven Baked Fillet of Australian Salmon***  
***Brown Shrimps, Lemon, Capers,***

***Steak au Poivre***  
***Sautéed New Potatoes, Vichy Carrots,***

*Transformation Napa Valley 2006  
Jaffe Estate, California United States*

***HUGO's Cheese Selection***  
*Tokaji Aszu 6 Puttonyos 2000*  
*The Royal Tokaji Company, Hegyalja Hungary*

***Baked Chocolate Souffle,  
Grand Marnier & Chocolate-Cognac Sauce***

From the a la carte menu, the following was ordered:

***Green Pea Soup  
Champagne, Lardon  
Prepared Table Side***

*\$130*

***Wiener Schnitzel***

*\$345*

***Rösti Potato***

***Creamed Spinach***

### **The Food**

Up to this point, everything appeared to be honky-dory and one recalled the Hugo's of old, which was one of the first European, fine-dining establishments of any note in the 416 square miles that is known as the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Hugo's had never been the best restaurant in the territory, to be sure, and, by the end of this meal, **TARGET** had confirmed that it, still, is not the best eatery in town.

The first course of the Set Menu was the Caesar Salad.

With a great deal of fanfare, a waiter approached **TARGET**'s table, wheeling a trolley on which there was an assortment of condiments, used in the preparation of this salad.

Within minutes, a salad appeared on a plate and was placed on the table.

But it was not a Caesar Salad: It was a salad, made to the specifications of the waiter, acting as a type of Caesar Salad '*chef*'.

The waiter, obviously, likes a spicy salad with lots of pepper and Tabasco – and so, here was a pepper and Tabasco salad.

It was just too hot to be eaten, as far as this medium was concerned.

It was a pity, actually, that the waiter did not, first, ask **TARGET**'s table as to condiment preferences because all of the raw ingredients had the makings of a fine salad.

With the salad came the Green Pea Soup from the a la carte menu.

Once again, a trolley was wheeled over to **TARGET**'s table and, with a little more fanfare, the soup was finished at the side of the table.

The '*ceremony*' in respect of the preparations of the dishes – the soup and the salad – was quite something to watch and just about all of the diners at Hugo's were interested in the display.

When the soup was placed on the table, it had all of the appearances of being elegant, but appearances can be very misleading.

The soup was watery and, therefore, bland.

A waiter, acting on this occasion as a Green Pea Soup '*chef*', had added Champagne to the soup's base, which did not appear to be anything other than a green pea broth, and, as a result, it had '*watered*' down the taste of the mixture that bore the name of

the soup.

The Steak Tartare was the next course of the Set Menu and, once again, another trolley was wheeled over and another waiter, acting this time as a Steak Tartare '*chef*', started the process of mixing together a number of spices to the raw beef.

The meat had not been sufficiently ground to begin with, but the main problem with this dish was the meat, itself, had little to no flavour.

All of the pomp and ceremony meant naught if the end result of the product, being created, was not in accordance with the nomenclature of the dish.

In the case of the Steak Tartare, it was a huge and absolute failure.

On telephoning Hugo's, a member of the staff said that all of the meat, served in the restaurant, was of Australian origin.

When the third course of the Set Menu arrived, the Escargot à la Bourguignonne, in a small metal skillet, there sat 6 snails, wallowing in a butter sauce.

The snails had no flavour at all and this reviewer wondered whether or not they had been frozen snails or of the tinned variety.

A member of Hugo's staff explained, in a telephone interview, that the snails came right out of a tin.

The Lobster Bisque was the first course to pass the **TARGET** taste test. It was the fourth course of the Set Menu.

It was an excellent broth, clearly made of fresh lobster pieces to which Hennessy VSOP Cognac had been added at table side.

No criticism, here, only applause.

Then came the Australian Salmon, cooked to perfection by a Chinese cook, to be sure.

The fresh salmon steak must have been prepared by a Chinese cook because only the Chinese – in **TARGET**'s opinion – know the best way to cook a fish.

With the Australian Salmon came the Wiener Schnitzel from the a la carte menu.

It was unfortunate that the Wiener Schnitzel had been prepared at least 30 minutes before it landed on **TARGET**'s table, because, by that time, the '*skin*', made from egg and bread crumbs, wrapped round a veal cutlet, had become soft and mushy.

Making matters worse was that some idiot in the open kitchen had poured some kind of sauce around the entire mess.

Yuk!

With the attempt to produce a Wiener Schnitzel came the Rösti Potatoes and the Creamed Spinach.

The Rösti Potatoes were not Rösti Potatoes, at all, but potato pieces, fried or baked – or a combination of both – to the point that the dish resembled warm potato chips, made into a crisscross pattern, but without any discernable flavour.

As for the Creamed Spinach, it was merely a Chinese cook's interpretation of blanched spinach, chopped up slightly, but without the necessary ingredients to turn the vegetables into creamed spinach.

It could well be described as a kind of stir-fried spinach.

Both of these 2 side dishes were almost inedible.

The Steak au Poivre (also known as '*Pepper Steak*') was so spicy that it burned one's mouth at the first taste.

On top of a chunk of Australian beef, there was a coating, measuring about 2 millimetres, of black pepper.

A pepper steak, usually, is a steak that is smothered in a pepper sauce, not a steak on which 2 millimetres of pepper is smeared.

Also, the Australian meat was much too raw for this reviewer's taste and it was cold in the middle (it was supposed to have been a medium-cooked steak) and, when this was pointed out to a waiter, he took it back to the open kitchen area where some other idiot put the pieces of the meat, back together, sautéed the meat for another minute or so, and, then, had the entire mess returned to **TARGET**'s table.

Where it was rejected, of course.

At this point, Mr Paul Lau (), the Restaurant Manager who had finished off the steak, in front of **TARGET**'s the table, came over to apologise for his mistakes.

Too late!

Skipping the cheese dish, the names of the cheeses, nobody seemed to know, the only other dish to mention was the Chocolate Souffle – which was burned at the edges and uncooked in the middle.

What a mess!

### **Hugo's, The Restaurant**

After an absence of some years, Hugo's has risen from the ashes of the old Hyatt Regency in a new building.

It has its following, of that there is no argument.

It reopened in January, **TARGET** has been told, and it can seat between 70 people and 80 people in a well-proportioned room.

The waiters are all very polite, but most of them have only a sprinkling of knowledge of the English language and even less knowledge about the dishes on the menu.

On the Thursday of **TARGET**'s visit, there was no European chef on duty.

This medium was told that Hugo's Chef de Cuisine is Richard Sawyer, a man who hails to have come from the United Kingdom.

Is he ever on duty?

If this medium were to be asked in a few short words as to the correct way to describe the Hugo's of today, it would be an outlet, dishing up '*quasi-fast-food, dressed up to have the appearance of Continental cuisine*'.

Just about all of the dishes had been pre-cooked – and this was only too apparent.

In closing, **TARGET** rejected the wine pairing with the courses on the Set Menu, not because of the additional cost, but for other reasons which should be apparent to anybody, recognising the suggested wines, or, alternatively, being unable to recognise them.

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