

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

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

**Name of Restaurant**

The French Window

**Address of Restaurant**

Room 3101, Podium Level 3, IFC Mall, Central, Hongkong

**Date of Visit**

Thursday, April 15, 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
<b><u>Wine</u></b>			
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 Romain Chan

#### **Name of Executive Chef**

Mr Michael Le Calvez

#### **Comments**

There is absolutely nothing wrong with The French Window – provided somebody replaces the existing chef, post-haste.

This restaurant badly needs a decent European chef because Mr Michael Le Calvez is approaching, if he has not yet totally become, a fat deadbeat of a cook.

This is the opinion of **TARGET** () after visiting this restaurant.

**TARGET** visited The French Window on Thursday, April 15, 2010, at about 7 p.m.

The restaurant is elegant and, if first impressions are deemed to be lasting ones, then, the first impression of The French Window should have stayed with **TARGET** to this day.

But the picture that this medium will always recall of this restaurant is that of a very fat man, dressed in a chef's uniform, doing his level best to avoid, being pigeon-holed by anybody should there be a complaint about the food, being dished up.

And complaints about the food were plentiful.

After surveying the menu and the wine list, **TARGET** selected the following:

#### ***Degustation Menu***

\$HK800

With Wine Pairing \$HK1,400

**TARTARE DE THON DU PACIFIC,  
COURGETTE MARINEE ET KETCHUP BASQUE**  
*Blue Fin Tuna Tartar, Marinated Zucchini and Basque Ketchup*  
  
*Shaw and Smith Sauvignon Blanc 2007 Adelaide Hills, Australia*

**ST JACQUES DE LA BAIE  
SAINT GEORGES COMPOTE DE CHOUX VERT,  
SAUCE TRUFFE**  
*Pan Seared Scallops, Green Cabbage, Black Truffle Sauce*

*Domaine Ostertag Riesling Grand Cru Muenchberg 2006 Alsace, France*

**POLENTA CREMEUSE AU CEPE, BEURRE DE PERSIL**  
*Creamy Polenta, Cep Mushrooms and Parsley Butter*

*Chateau de Mercey 1er cru En Sazenay 2005 Mercurey, Burgundy, France*

**JOUE DE BOEUF WAGYU A LA BOURGUIGNONE,  
CAROTTE CONFITE ET SAUCE VIN ROUGE**  
*Wagyu Beef Cheek a la Bourguignone Carrot Confit, Red Wine Sauce*

*Chateau Lalande de Borie 2005 St Julien, Bordeaux, France*

**DESSERT DEGUSTATION**

*Dessert Tasting*

*TFW*

*Domaine du Bablut Coteaux de l'Aubance Selection 2005 Loire Valley, France*

**CAFÉ OU THE**

*Coffee or Tea*

**PETITES DOUCEURS**

*Petites Fours*

From the a la carte menu, **TARGET** chose the following dishes:

**Entrees**

**CARPACCIO DE BOEUF SUPER PRIME ROSSIGNY,  
FOIE GRAS ET TRUFFE NOIRE**

*Angus Super Prime Beef Carpaccio Rossigny, Black Truffle*

*\$HK300*

**RAVIOLE DU CRABE ROUGE DE KAMCHATKA,  
VINAIGRETTE CURRY**

*Kamchatka Red King Crab Ravioli, Curry Vinaigrette*

*\$HK280*

**Plats Principaux**

**BAR DE LIGNE POELE, LEGUMES DU MOMENT,  
SAUCE AU THYM**

*Pan Seared Sea Bass, Seasonal Vegetables, Thyme Sauce*

*\$HK400*

**CANARD DE CHALLANS AU SANG  
DE CHEZ MADAME BURGOS ROTI,  
SAUCE BIGARADE**

*Roasted Challans Duck, Bigarade Sauce*

*\$HK420*

With the meal, **TARGET** selected a Portuguese wine from the Douro Valley.

This wine, made of Syrah (Shiraz) grapes, is powerful, 14.50 percent by volume, and tasted of almonds and vanilla.

Its name: Cortes de Cima.

The cost: \$HK680 per bottle.

It was money well spent.

Before passing on to the food, it is well worth commenting that the service at The French Window was, on this medium's visit, quite remarkable.

Many of the serving staff had, clearly, been poached from fine-dining outlets of a number of 5-star hotels, **TARGET** was able to confirm.

The staff, however, is being let down, badly, by the kitchen staff – sadly.

### **The Food**

The Degustation Menu is reasonably priced, but the pairing of the wines was, simply, ludicrous.

The first course, the blue fin tuna tartar, was not a tartar, at all, but pieces of fish meat, cut into chunks, measuring about 3 millimetres square, with the chunks, tasting like nothing this reviewer had ever eaten before.

And, hopefully, will never be tasted again.

The second course, the pan-seared scallops, did not, at first glance, appear to be scallops, but after searching the platter, there, hiding under a piece of cabbage, was half a scallop.

Actually, it tasted as a scallop should taste.

What else can one state?

That was the end of the best part of this meal.

The next course was the polenta with cep mushrooms.

It tasted something like Cream of Wheat, but it did not taste as a polenta should taste.

One did recognise the overpowering butter flavour, however, as well as the pieces of mushroom, floating in the mush.

But one could not taste polenta!

After the mush came the Wagyu beef cheek.

When placed on the table, one found 3, one-inch cubes of meat that were cold, sticky and insipid.

It is just as well that Japan, recently, banned the export of its Wagyu beef due to inspectors, finding that some Japanese cows had contracted Mad Cow Disease – **Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)** – because, otherwise, who knows who else could come down with the killer sickness that affects cows' nervous systems.

**TARGET** could not help but ponder: Could BSE be passed on from cows to human beings?

### **From The A La Carte Menu**

The Degustation Menu was a complete dud so, when **TARGET** determined to try the dishes from the a la carte menu, it was hoped that there would be a change of pace.

Well, there certainly was a change of pace: The food from the a la carte menu was even worse than the food from the Degustation Menu.

The carpaccio of beef looked appetising, but the beef was arranged in strips, in between which, there were layers of foie gras.

The presentation was far better than the taste because the foie gras overpowered any flavour of the beef, assuming that it had some flavour, initially.

The next course from the a la carte menu was the Kamchatka red king crab ravioli.

When this dish appeared, this reviewer looked and looked and looked for the Italian ravioli.

It was nowhere to be found.

So, picking up a spoon and dipping into the slosh, out came a blob that was a pale white something or other.

On to the next dish.

This was the pan-seared sea bass at \$HK400 per 2 ounces or so of fish.

Atop a pile of vegetables sat a thin slice of fish which appeared to be sea bass.

This reviewer could not swear as to the phylum of this piece of fish, but **TARGET** is quite willing to accept that it was, indeed, sea bass.

Certainly, from the taste, one could not be sure of anything, however.

The last course to be sampled at The French Window was the roasted Challons duck.

When this dish was first ordered, the waiter asked how this reviewer would like the duck cooked.

The answer was '*well done, please*'.

When the duck dish arrived, a piece of crispy pork skin, the type that one eats in a Chinese restaurant when ordering a suckling pig, sat on top of a piece of deboned duck meat.

It looked very appetising, actually.

Looks, only too often, can be deceiving and, on trying to slice through the rectangular piece of duck meat, measuring about 4 inches long, it was discovered that the meat was completely raw.

Yes!

Completely raw!

It was sent packing.

About 5 minutes later, back came the same piece of duck meat – still half raw.

That was about as much as **TARGET** could take and called for the bill.

### **The Peripatetic Chef**

Some people may have heard of the lost tribe of Israel, members of whom are said, still, to be wandering round the world, looking for a home.

Members of this tribe have been wandering for the past 3,800 years, it has been suggested.

Originally, there were only 12 tribes of Israel, but the 13<sup>th</sup> tribe is said, today, still to be homeless, lost and forlorn.

It would be nice and a gesture of generosity if a member of this lost tribe, in the vicinity of The French Window, would consider asking Mr Mickaer Le Chalvez whether or not he would like to join the rest of the mob in looking for a home.

This is because, throughout **TARGET**'s visit to this restaurant, Mr Mickaer Le Chalvez was walking back and forth, looking for something.

It is possible, of course, that he had lost his way and could not find the kitchen.

This restaurant is not small and can cater for about 88 guests in a very large room.

It seems quite possible that Mr Mickaer Le Chalvez had trouble, finding the kitchen, considering the rubbish that was served up on **TARGET**'s visit to the restaurant.

The restaurant is, after all, only 4 months old.

What was utter madness was that olive oil and balsamic vinegar were placed on the table, along with a completely flat piece of glass, which was supposed to serve as a plate for bread.

If the olive oil and the balsamic vinegar had been put onto this piece of glass, it, without question, would have resulted in part of the tablecloth, turning a brownish-yellowish colour as the olive oil and the balsamic vinegar seeped over the sides of the piece of glass.

This idea may have been cute, but somebody should have told the fat, white-uniformed, peripatetic man, pacing back and forth and round the tables of the restaurant, that the piece of glass, which is supposed to serve as a plate, was impractical.

That piece of glass exemplified what is, clearly, the keynote of The French Window: All show and no substance.

**TARGET** is not sorry for wasting a little more than \$HK3,000 on the experience at The French Window because, otherwise, how else could one learn how horrible can be cooked food when a chef is not up to the task, assigned to him.

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