

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Mandarin Grill and Bar, Mandarin Oriental Hongkong

Address of Restaurant

No. 5, Connaught Road, Central, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, May 5, 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
<u>Wine</u>			
Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	Expensive
Storage of Wine	Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier	Excellent	Acceptable	Unknown

Total Cost of Meal

Very Expensive	Moderately Expensive	Very Reasonably Priced
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Name of Director of Food and Beverage

Mr Antoine Melon

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Uwe Opocensky

Comments

Things appear to have changed, dramatically, at The Mandarin Grill and Bar, located at Mandarin Oriental Hongkong in Central, Hongkong Island.

And it, definitely, is for the better.

What is very noticeable is the quality of serving staff, their general demeanour and willingness to take care of patrons, whether or not they know them.

It is very different from the first visit that this reviewer made to this food outlet when it first reopened in the fall of 2006.

TARGET () revisited The Mandarin Grill and Bar, last Thursday night, not having a reservation and uttered falsehoods, purposely, in order to determine whether or not a table could be obtained as well as to test the way in which the staff would react to such an ad hoc situation.

After a short period of utter confusion by some staff members, who were obviously concerned lest somebody had made a mistake in booking a table for this medium's party of 3 people, **TARGET** was ushered to a table and settled in for a meal.

The staff could not have been more polite and went out of their way to be gracious.

Since this medium had determined, before entering the restaurant, that steak would be the order of the day – after all, this is a grill and bar – a bottle of wine was ordered:

Chateau Talbot, Vintage 2001
\$HK1,980

For the meal, the following dishes were ordered to accompany the wine (it is, always, a good idea to order wine first, if one can latch onto a good one, and, then, order food to match the wine):

Appetisers

White Asparagus (3 portions)
\$HK744

Main Courses

US Rib Eye Steak (Two portions)
\$HK\$HK1,016

Fillet Steak (One portion)
\$HK468

Side Dishes

Hand Cut French Fries
\$HK88

Sautéed Mushrooms
\$HK88

Baked Idaho Potatoes
No Charge

Desserts

Bread and Butter Pudding
\$HK138

Spring Garden
\$HK138

Japanese Fruit Salad
\$HK138

The White Asparagus, **TARGET** was informed, came from France.

This was very difficult to believe because white asparagus, grown in France – which is, actually, a subterranean vegetable that is immature and is not permitted to break through the soil where it would become the usual green asparagus that is more common and plentiful – is not in season in the spring due to the time of the year in France when it is quite cold, sometimes, even freezing.

White asparagus, known as spargel, is cultivated by denying the plant light while it is being grown.

White asparagus is less bitter than the green variety and is very popular in the Netherlands, France, Belgium and Germany where some 57,000 tonnes are produced, annually.

Peru has, over the years, become the leading exporter of white asparagus, followed by the People's Republic of China and Mexico.

The white asparagus, eaten by this reviewer, last Thursday, at The Mandarin Grill and Bar, could not have been of French origin because it is, still, too cold in France for the successful growing of *Asparagus Officinalis* in commercial quantities.

Since Management of Mandarin Grill would not, or could not, prove that, indeed, what was claimed to be French white asparagus was the real McCoy, **TARGET** made the assumption that it was grown in Peru, where the weather is conducive to the cultivation of this vegetable in the first quarter of just about any calendar year.

The matter of the white asparagus, however, was of immaterial concern or significance to this reviewer because, actually, it was not at all bad.

At the same time, however, clearly, it was not the best.

Turning to the steaks, it is difficult to believe that one could have had a steak, superior to that which was devoured by this medium, last Thursday.

The Rib Eye Steak is served on a wooden box, measuring about 2 inches deep and 9 inches long, to which, through an opening at the top of the box, the waiter poured in some water which caused white smoke to be created and that white smoke caused the cooked meat, which had been sliced into rounds of about half an inch thick, the fat, having been removed, to become permeated into little smoky morsels of meat, similar in taste to barbecued meat.

It was delicious and almost melted in one's mouth.

The Fillet Steak was as good as the Rib Eye, without the smoky flavour.

The side dishes were, all, first class, with the French Fries, deserving of a special mention due to their freshness and the fact that they had not been overcooked – which many restaurants tend to do.

With the above courses, naturally, the ruby-red Saint Julien wine, Chateau Talbot, with its powerful, overriding Cabernet Sauvignon flavour, augmented with Merlot and touched off with Petit Verdot, in order to provide the most-delicate of embellishments, often referring to as *Enfant Terrible*, went down very smoothly.

Of the desserts, the Bread and Butter Pudding was exceptional.

But it was not the horrible, English-style of muck, served as a dessert, but an improved version whereby 2 piece of brioche (a

small, usually, round sweet cake made with light, yeast dough) were placed at one end of a plate and, on the other end was the 'butter' which was not butter, at all, but a creamy mixture of sugar, egg yolks and cream.

For people, intent on getting fat, this is for them.

The Restaurant, Itself

The Mandarin Grill and Bar seats about 75 diners and, after renovation, which was completed in September of 2006, it has become quite a popular venue for people who are staunch carnivores.

When it first reopened, it had its problems.

They appear to have been relegated to history.

There is music at this restaurant, but it is turned down very low so that it is, only, background music that does not prevent a young man and his lady friend to indulge in romantic conversations.

The Restaurant Manager is Mr Marco Rosado who is very helpful.

TARGET had met this gentleman, in the past, and that encounter had not been a particularly pleasant one since that which he uttered was nonsensical.

That is, also, relegated to history because, today, he makes very good sense.

This medium shall be returning to The Mandarin Grill and Bar, but, on future occasions, it will be to eat, not to review the food.

That is if **TARGET** is, still, welcome, of course.

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