

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Nicholini's, Conrad Hongkong

Address of Restaurant

Pacific Place, No. 88, Queensway, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, August 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

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

Name of Restaurant Manager

Nil

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Alfred Moser

Comments

The premier food outlet of Conrad Hongkong () has a new Italian, Executive Sous Chef who goes by the name of Mr Michele Rodelli.

How long he will last in his present position is anybody's guess, but this medium is covering all bets that it will not be very long – unless he determines to make some changes to his present modus operandi and, perhaps, more importantly, he gets to work in Nicholini's kitchen, doing his 'thing' – where he should be spending most of his time.

Another matter that Mr Michele Rodelli will have to tackle is how to get along with the long-established, serving staff of Nicholini's, the premier food outlet of Conrad Hongkong.

It is only too obvious to this medium that he has an extraordinarily short fuse when his hackles are caused to rise for the slightest reason.

TARGET () visited Nicholini's () on Thursday, August 5, 2010, purely by chance on learning that the new chef had come to town.

After discussing the menu of the evening with Mr Eddie Yeung, the Manager of Nicholini's, this is that which this medium ordered:

First Courses

*Traditional Italian Minestrone,
Scented with Fresh Basil Pesto and Barley
\$HK128*

*Scampi and Sicilian Prawns in Summer Salad
\$HK548*

*Beef Carpaccio on Pesto
\$HK218*

Second Courses

*Roasted Whole Seabass
Enhanced with Fresh Aromatic Herbs,
Served with an emulsion of Sicilian Lemon
\$HK548*

*Dutch Veal Cutlet in Herbs Crust Porcini,
Flavoured with Rosemary and Grilled Potato
\$HK560_*

Side Dish

Fusilloni With Tomato Sauce

\$HK278

With the above, **TARGET** ordered a wonderful bottle of Chianti at the price of \$HK920.

It was Chianti Classico, Riserva, Vintage 2006, the producer, being Castello di Querceto.

TARGET highly recommends this wine.

The Food

The First Courses were excellent and, aside from the horrific price of the Scampi and Sicilian Prawns, little could be said that was not complimentary.

What appeared somewhat anomalous to **TARGET**, however, was that the First Courses had not the slightest suggestion of having been the handiwork of an Italian cook/chef/what-have-you.

This observation proved to be correct.

Turning to the Second Courses, beginning with the Seabass, as can be seen from the description of the dish, it was supposed to have been served and enhanced with fresh aromatic herbs, and with an emulsion of Sicilian Lemon.

It was not.

The seabass was merely baked, having lightly been smeared with some salt.

As a result, the fish meat was without any meaningful flavour at all.

The Dutch Veal Cutlet, however, was excellent and little could be said of this dish other than it was a bit oily and, very, very pricey for what one got for one's money.

As for the lone side dish of Fusilloni, it was overcooked and tasteless.

Enter Mr Michele Rodelli

While **TARGET** was sampling the above-mentioned dishes, standing in one corner of the restaurant was a young gentleman, dressed in the traditional white garb of a chef.

This medium assumed that he was observing what was taking place in the luxury restaurant because the alternative conclusion was that he was asleep.

He did not appear to be doing anything, throughout the 2 hours or so that this medium was present, so Mr Eddie Yeung, at the end of **TARGET**'s tasting session, was asked whether or not it would be possible for this medium to meet the new Italian chef.

After all, it did appear that the gentleman, whom **TARGET** assumed was the new chef, did look rather lonely, standing in a corner of the restaurant as though he were waiting for 22 diners to leave Nicholini's so that he could, also, go home ... or where-ever he goes when he is not standing around, doing nothing.

Mr Michele Rodelli arrived at **TARGET**'s table, minutes after being told that this medium was surveying the Italian, food outlet of Conrad Hongkong.

After the introductions, **TARGET** asked: *'Was the seabass farmed or was it wild?'*

Mr Michele Rodelli: *'Farmed. But it did come from Italian waters.'*

TARGET: *'Wild seabass, I take it, has more flavour than farmed seabass because that which was served was, almost, tasteless.'*

Mr Michele Rodelli: *'Yes, er, farmed is not as tasty as wild.'*

TARGET: *'Do you have wild, Italian seabass, too?'*

Mr Michele Rodelli: *'Yes. But it is very big fish. Also, more expensive, you know.'*

TARGET: *'Why was it not offered?'*

At this point, Mr Michele Rodelli was, clearly, out of sorts.

He just shrugged his shoulders at the question and, then, said that he did not know that **TARGET** was doing a review of his restaurant.

He, then, proceeded to state that he had only been at Nicholini's for 3 months – actually, he started work at Conrad Hongkong in June 2010, but one has to remember that many young European cooks, these days, have trouble with numbers – and that he had not cooked in the kitchen, at all, other than teach some of the pastry cooks how to make bread.

About the seabass, he said that it had been baked without anything, other than a little salt.

TARGET stated, at this point, that it appeared that the entire meal, that had been ordered, was completely prepared with Chinese cooks.

‘That is correct,’ Mr Michele Rodelli confirmed. ‘I have a lot of work to be done, here.’

With that, he rushed away to take up his position of being the sentry at one corner of the restaurant.

About 5 minutes later, Mr Eddie Yeung, half in tears (or so it appeared) – he is a very temperamental person, as this medium recalls of old – and said that **TARGET** had complained to Mr Michele Rodelli about the Dutch Veal Cutlet.

On another request, **TARGET** recalled the ‘sentry’ who came over to this medium’s table, rather grudgingly, this time.

(The poor chap was, clearly, having a difficult time of it as far as he was concerned. He must have been thinking to himself: *‘Why don’t these people just let me stand alone in a corner without their bothering my reflections on life?’*)

‘Chef,’ TARGET started as the Italian stood, slouching at one corner of the table, ‘I have been informed by Mr Eddie Yeung that you said that I had complained about the Dutch Veal. Nobody at this table complained about it. What our complaint was that the seabass was completely insipid, devoid, as it was, of any discernable flavour.’

Mr Michele Rodelli replied: *‘This is internal. Nothing to do with you. I did not know what you were doing. Nobody told me. I don’t like it.’*

And that was, just about, the end of the conversation between **TARGET** and Mr Michele Rodelli, the make-believe chef of Nicholini’s who, by his own admission, has yet to prepare one dish in the restaurant.

Now, this medium is not a friend of Mr Eddie Yeung, not by a long shot, but one cannot help but feel a little sorry for him because, like it or lump it, he will have to put up with this temperamental Italian man who appears to be better suited as a sentry than a cook.

TARGET will not be re-entering Nicholini’s until an Italian chef is engaged to take charge of the kitchen since, when one determines to eat in a restaurant, where Italian cuisine is advertised, one expects to eat Italian food, not an Italian-type of food, prepared by Chinese cooks.

Having said that, this medium hastens to add that Chinese cooks are among the best in the world.

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