

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Amber

Address of Restaurant7/Floor, The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, No. 15, Queen's Road, Central,
HongkongDate of Visit

Sunday, September 18, 2011

CategoryTARGETs RatingService

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 Richard Ekkebus

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Richard Ekkebus

Comments

There is quite a number of excellent steak houses in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and, for the avid carnivores among us, these are the places in which one can sink one's teeth into a juicy piece of USDA porterhouse steak.

These steak houses are unashamed to slap a 16-ounce slab of meat, cooked to one's specifications, on a plate with an Idaho potato, complete with sour cream, chives and, perhaps, some desiccated bacon.

One leaves such a restaurant, satisfied, and, subconsciously, one may be planning to return in the near future when the urge for good steak rears up again.

However, there are other restaurants in the territory in which the chefs, in their vain attempts to be creative, go too far.

One could state that some chefs go completely bonkers in their mad attempts to walk on water.

One such restaurant, in **TARGET's** opinion, is Amber, the lone restaurant of The Landmark Mandarin Oriental on Queen's Road, Central (excluding the bar on the ground floor of the hotel).

This medium dropped into Amber, last Sunday at about noon, in order to sample the Sunday fare.

This is that which this medium ordered, right off the menu:

WEEKEND WINE LUNCH

Starters

dungeness crab

*salad with crème fraîche, avocado,
granny smith apple and cucumbe*

'maatjes' herring

*served with new potatoes, beetroot,
pickled pearl onions and crispy rye bread*

Middle Courses

petuna ocean trout

*dorsal fillet confit, the belly seared with grenobloise
and salmon roe leek in vinaigrette*

fregola sarda

*prepared like a risotto and alsatian bacon 'carbonara' style
wild mushrooms*

Main Courses

challans corn-fed chicken

*breast steamed, minced wrapped in silver beet
langoustine with crispy chicken skin crumble
mousseline of ratte potatoes and albufera emulsion*

beef oxtail

braised in red wine, with foie gras in fresh pasta

yogurt, mango dice and cevennes onions emulsion

Tasting Desserts

lemon basil

*and granny smith sorbet
with 'mara des bois' strawberries*

white peach

*poached in champagne over lemon verbena
panna cotta & white peach sorbet*

guanaja bitter chocolate

*over speculoos
and coffee ice-cream*

\$HK598 per head

(**TARGET** declined the paired wine with the above menu not because of the added cost of \$HK200 per head.)

The Consistency

There was a consistency with most of the dishes, sampled at this fine-dining outlet of this Central hotel: One had great difficulty in knowing what one was eating without reference to the menu.

If one closed one's eyes, it would have been almost impossible for most of the dishes to be identified or even to know what the dish was meant to be.

The Executive Chef, Mr Richard Ekkebus, had made every dish appear as a work of art, to be sure, but something was, sadly, missing from every dish: The taste and texture of the main ingredient that should have been the most-important feature of each and every course.

Take for instance, the Dungeness Crab Starter.

Here, on a platter, were 3 pieces of what had the appearance of Japanese kappa maki, which is made from rice, laced with vinegar and wrapped in a sheet of seaweed, in the middle of which is some raw vegetable, such as a cube of cucumber.

In fact, the Dungeness Crab Started even tasted similar to this Japanese delicacy.

But where was the taste of the crab?

Also, it appeared that this dish had been prepared some time prior to it being ordered because, on the first bite of one of the rolls, one received a healthy dose of some cold liquid.

This would suggest that it had been placed in a very cold refrigerator for some time before being served.

The other starter, the Maatjes Herring dish, was mostly beetroot, the 3 herring pieces, measuring about one centimeter by about one quarter of a centimeter, being difficult to find.

The 2 Middle Courses were on a par with the starters and **TARGET** () will not waste time, explaining the insipidity of these 2 dishes.

The Main Courses

The Challans chicken dish did not taste of chicken, at all, although, clearly, it had the appearance of piece of the breast of a chicken: An almost white chunk of meat on a plate.

As with all of the other dishes, the presentation was outstanding, but it was all show with little substance.

If this reviewer had closed his eyes, it would have been impossible to know the contents of the various dishes.

The beef oxtail should have been an excellent dish, but, once again, it did not taste of oxtail, at all.

Peeling away 2 of the outer layers of the dish, **TARGET** was able to find some flakes of the ox tail meat, it, having been separated from the bones of animal, but, on trying to taste the meat, again, it did not taste at all like meat.

Which is quite an accomplishment!

The 3 deserts were no better than the first other courses so that this medium will not labour the situation, any further.

Lastly, after making 3 attempts to obtain a cup of hot coffee, **TARGET** gave up, paid the bill, and left the 7th floor of the hotel.

In summing up many of the dishes, the garnishes tended to overpower the tastes of the natural ingredients, which was the principal reason for ordering the various courses, of course.

One could not help but enjoy the '*food art*', but without the advantage of eating food.

Presentation ... presentation ... presentation!

Did somebody forget something?

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