

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Domani

Address of Restaurant

Level 4, Pacific Place, No. 88, Queensway, Admiralty, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Thursday, November 22, 2012

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
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Name of Restaurant Manager

Nil

Name of Executive Chef

Mr Andrea Pagoni

Comments

**DOMANI OF PACIFIC PLACE:
GIVE THIS EATERY A WIDE BERTH !**

If one is looking for genuine and expertly prepared Italian food, do not expect to find it at Domani Ristorante of Pacific Place.

That is the position, today, but domani (which is the Italian word for ‘*the day after tomorrow*’), provided that this restaurant can locate a competent general manager, things could change for the better because, aside from the poor preparation of the food and the distinct lack of accountability in the open kitchen, there is little reason that this well-situated restaurant could not give the three hotels in the immediate vicinity a good run for their money.

TARGET () is at a complete loss to understand how this eatery has survived into its fifth year when, on Thursday, November 22, 2012, at about 7:00 p.m., our team of peripatetic food reviewers turned up at Domani after an absence of about three years.

The last time that this medium reviewed this pretender to be known as an upmarket Italian eatery was on September 24, 2009 (Please refer to **TARGET** Intelligence Report, Volume XI, Number 186, published on September 30, 2009).

In that published review, it was noted that this restaurant had little going for it: Most of the facets that go to produce an acceptable, fine-dining Italian restaurant were sadly missing; and, the food and the service represented some of the worst that one could have imagined.

To some extent, some of the previous shortfalls no longer exist, but the food and its preparation, well

Domani, being a little more than four years old, has gone through not less than four general managers in its four-plus years of operations. All of these gentlemen, it seems, had graduated from vastly different universities of hard knocks. All of them, **TARGET** suggests, can boast of having received sheepskins, proving that they have achieved various degrees of mediocrity with regard to operating a fine-dining restaurant.

Things have changed very little at Domani over the four years in respect of the quality and presentation of the food, but, paradoxically, patronage of this restaurant appears to have picked up quite materially, compared with three years ago.

On the Thursday of **TARGET**’s most-recent visit, it was noted that there were very few local Chinese people in attendance, and the 30 or so diners were, mainly, European tourists.

This would suggest that management of Domani is aiming at luring well-healed visitors to the territory while forsaking the more-savvy ethnical Chinese residents of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.

There is much to be said for this policy – if, in fact, this medium is correct in that that is the unstated philosophy of management – because it is quite unlikely that a visitor to Hongkong would want to give this restaurant a second try, having suffered, during the first time round.

Before going into the business of vivisectioning the food dishes that **TARGET** ordered on the latest visit, to be fair to management, there have been very impressive improvements in the quality of the service staff, from the friendly young ladies, acting as hostesses, to middle management serving staff.

(Of course, there was that Filipino waiter who did not know on which side of a placemat of guest to put the knife and fork and soup spoon and he had to be instructed, on numerous occasions, to pour water into half-empty glasses.)

The following are the dishes that **TARGET** ordered on the indelible experience to Domani on the third week of last November:

Antipasti

Sardines, Roasted Bell Peppers, 'Green Sauce' \$HK180
Pan-Fried Foie Gras, Stout Beer Marinated Baby Onions,
Ginger Bread, Honey Leaves and Balsamic \$HK250

Pasta

Homemade Gnocchi, Pumpkin Puree, Pie Bleu Mushrooms
And Robiola Cheese \$HK480

Carne

Our Bread Crumbed Veal Cutlet "Milanese" Style \$HK350
Slow-Cooked "Ossobuco" with Chantarelles Mushrooms
And Caramelized Apples \$HK320

The Antipasti

It would be difficult to fault the Foie Gras, both in its presentation and in the flavour of the sautéed goose liver, but with regard to the sardines, one had to ask oneself whether or not the poor little dead fishes had suffered from their long journey from wherever they had come.

This was because the little chunks of dead, sardine meat, deep-fried to a crisp, tasted as though it had been left in the sun for far too long.

If one closed one's eyes and tasted this dish, one could be convinced for believing, in the words of William Shakespeare, that '*something is rotten in the state of Denmark*'.

The Pasta

The homemade gnocchi appeared to taste as though it was just boiled and mashed Idaho potatoes, fashioned into a three-dimensional, oblong-shaped 'pear'.

Now, gnocchi is supposed to be a soft dumpling, usually made from semolina, eggs, cheese and potatoes and, when eaten, it is supposed to melt in one's mouth.

The gnocchi, served at Domani stuck to the inside of one's teeth: It was akin to trying to digest a gooey glue, which had no discerning taste.

TARGET was expecting the gnocchi to have the ability to float in the air if not restrained by a sauce, but Domani's style of gnocchi had the ability, or so this medium conjectured, to choke one to death.

When this was pointed out to Mr Alberto Massa, the Manager of the restaurant, **TARGET** was told that this gnocchi was a specialty of the house, the oblong shape of the substance (that was supposed to pass as gnocchi), being different from most other Italian restaurants.

(**TARGET** cannot fault the claim that Domani's '*gnocchi*' was very different from most other restaurants. Thank the Good Lord for that small mercy.)

Mr Massa suggested, at first, that he could exchange the oblong, pear-shaped gnocchi (?) for the traditional, round one, but, within minutes, he returned to **TARGET**'s table and apologised, stating that all of the restaurant's gnocchi had been sold out.

And that declaration was about one hour after the restaurant had opened and at a time when there was only a handful of guests, still in the process of scanning the restaurant's menu.

(If one wants to tell a fib, make it a good one, please.)

The Carne

The two meat dishes – the veal cutlet and the osso buco – represented, perhaps, the true colours of Domani's standard: The fluttering yellow banner of incompetence.

The veal cutlet, aside from the meat, being almost completely insipid, had a one-millimeter crust on it that wept a transparent liquid, resembling water, when a chunk of the meat was sliced open. The crust had the consistency of very soft, water-soaked bread and was as inedible as one could imagine.

It was clear enough to any reasonable person that this dish had not been freshly prepared.

How the Chinese cooks, standing in the open kitchen of Domani, could have accomplished this feat with a slice of veal is quite easy to conjecture: Cook the cutlet with its crust, perhaps one day earlier, and, when cooled, place it in a refrigerator for future use.

Then, when an unsuspecting customer ordered it, take it out of the refrigerator and warm it up in a microwave oven or under a warmer for between 20 seconds and 30 seconds so that the meat gets warm from the inside. Then, place it on a warm plate, serve it and hope that the guest is too drunk to know what he is trying to eat.

The only alternative that **TARGET** could suggest for this horror of a dish was that the veal, with or without its crust, had been frozen before or after being cooked, but this was denied by Mr Massa and, since he appeared to be a very affable Italian man, this medium is willing to accept the denial of the restaurant, using frozen veal.

Of course, this does open up the suggestion box as to whether or not the veal hailed from the Mainland of the PRC, doesn't it?

As for the osso buco, it was exactly the opposite of the veal cutlet – because it was as dry as a bone, having been left in the sun for a couple of days.

A slow-cooked veal shank – that is, in fact, that which is osso buco – was supposed to have been braised with vegetables, white wine and broth so that the meat is flavourful, tender and juicy.

So how could the osso buco, served to **TARGET**, have been completely devoid of any liquid, at all?

Once again, Mr Massa hazarded a guess: He said that it appeared that somebody had not basted the meat, sufficiently.

This appeared to be a reasonable explanation for the wood-like texture that the veal shank had adopted when placed in front of this reviewer, but that opened up another door: For what reason would the Chinese cook, placing the veal shank on a plate, have the blazon boldness to expect anybody to want to eat it?

Further, was the dish inspected by the head cook before being handed to the serving staff?

What happened to the notion of accountability?

The Restaurant

Domani is a nice-looking restaurant that can seat about 100 people.

It has all of the visible attributes of being a successful, moneymaking operation, but, having gone through four managers in four years, it strongly suggests that there have been problems in the past and, perhaps, some of these problems are continuing to fester.

One of the many problems that this medium discovered was that, on the evening of **TARGET**'s visit, the temperature inside the restaurant was considerably higher than outside, somewhere in the region of 28 degrees, Celsius, this medium guessed.

When this was pointed out to one sub-manager (**TARGET**'s guess of a black-suited, gentleman's position by virtue of him, not being a waiter) who answered that he, too, found the heat in the restaurant, being somewhat sticky.

'I'll see what I can do,' he said as he strode off.

When, after about 10 minutes, the situation had not improved, **TARGET** moved to one of the many vacant tables, much, it appeared, to the consternation of a Filipino waiter who took umbrage to this reviewer's determination to find a cooler spot.

Throughout the evening, the situation did not improve, materially.

When this matter was brought to the attention of Mr Massa, he said that it was the fault of the owner of the Pacific Place, namely the Swire Group of Companies.

Once again, this gentleman made admirable sense because the management of a number of shops at Pacific Place has remarked that the air-conditioning system is inadequate in the heat of the summer.

So, for those brave souls who are intent on testing **TARGET**'s findings, it is strongly advised that they reconfirm this medium's opinion of Domani, but suggest that they do so in the winter months, not the summer months.

Come to think of it, it could transpire that one could be slightly frozen when trying to eat at Domani, during the winter months if the temperature should have fallen below 10 degrees, Celsius.

Life can be series of problems, can't it?

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