

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Opera House

Address of Restaurant

Nos. 109-111, Queen's Road East, Wanchai, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Monday, June 2, 2014

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	Reasonably Priced
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Comments

If you were to walk down Queen's Road East, Wanchai, in the direction of Hopewell Centre, and marvel at the way in which the entire area is undergoing an almost complete transformation, the probability is high that you have just passed Opera House, one of the best, free-standing restaurants in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region in the People's Republic of China.

Opera House, the Italian Restaurant and Bistrot – according to its nomenclature on a flyer that the restaurant has been distributing, of late – was opened in April, this year, and, at the rate that it is going, it could well become one of the most-fashionable eateries in these 416 square miles.

On Monday, June 2, 2014, The Dragon Boat Festival, **TARGET** () happened to be in the area of Opera House and, having nearly missed the entrance to the restaurant at about 2:00 pm, doubled back to have a gander at the inside of this darkened 'place', the door of which has to be slid to the right in order for it to open.

On the inside of Opera House, on the ground floor, there was a handful of Europeans, all of whom were eating pizza, with some of the men, drinking beer (the temperature in the street was in the low 30 degrees Celsius with the humidity level, being higher than 80 percent).

Thinking that this might be an interesting place to have a snack and cool down a little from the oppressive heat and high-humidity levels of the street, the little Chinese waitress tried to tempt **TARGET**'s three food reviewers to have a seat at table at the far end of the ground floor that can only accommodate about 20 people.

The table was akin to something one could imagine as being 'The Black Hole of Calcutta' (shades of June 20, 1756, at Fort William), being stuck next to the open kitchen, with an ethnic Indian, appearing to be in charge of the wood-burning, pizza oven.

Rejecting the suggestion to be stuck in the darkened corner of the ground floor, on noting that there was another area up a small staircase, this reviewer asked to be seated, elsewhere, preferably on the first floor.

After a wait of about five minutes with the waitress, seeming to have vanished, noting that nothing was transpiring with regard to a better seating arrangement, this reviewer climbed the stairs only to discover an empty cavernous room that had the ability to seat more than 100 people.

Without so much as a how-de-do, **TARGET** selected a table, next to the window, while Ida, the original waitress whom this medium had met on the ground floor, said that she had talked to the Italian Manager who agreed to permit us to eat on the first floor and, then, she added:

'I've just turned on the air-conditioning system for you. It will take a few minutes to cool down the room.'

I informed Ida that, by all appearances of this restaurant, **TARGET**'s three members – Ida was never informed that we were employees of **TARGET** Newspapers Ltd – were hungry and thirsty and, as such, it was our intention to eat a full meal (not just pizza).

*'At what time does the kitchen close for luncheon', **TARGET** asked.*

'At 2:30 pm,' came the immediate answer.

'So, if we stay longer than 2:30 pm, will you throw us out?'

'No, No! You can stay as long as you like.'

'And will you be staying to take care of our requirements?'

'Yes, of course!'

Having obtained the response that had been desired, **TARGET** ordered a bottle of Duval-Leroy Champagne (at the very reasonable price of \$HK838) to be drunk with the meal and a bottle of Kracher (an Austrian dessert wine from Austria), at the price of \$HK688 per bottle.

With instructions that both bottles of wine must be very cold, this was the meal that this medium ordered at about 2:30 pm on that memorable Sunday afternoon.

Pizza

Quattro Funghi
Mushrooms, Pine Nuts and Truffle Oil, Buffalo Cheese, Basil Pesto Sauce
\$HK228

Pan-Fried Hokkaido Sea Scallops,
Porcini Mushrooms, Taleggio Cheese and Truffle Oil
\$HK158

Goose Liver Combination:
Porto Wine Terrine and Pan-Fried with Blue Berry
\$HK198

Home Made Pasta

Gnocchi Porcini Mushrooms,
Smoked Pork Ham and Muller-Thurgau Sauce
\$HK178

From the Land

Tasmanian Lamb Chops,
Asparagus, Morels and Honey Black Pepper Sauce
\$HK288

Grilled "Bresse" Chicken,
Marsala, Asiago Cheese, Thyme and Lemon
\$HK198

Dessert

Opera House Chef's Selection
Panna Cotta Wild Berries Sauce
Chocolate Soufflé
Tiramisu
Home Made Mango Ice Cream
Home Made Vanilla Ice Cream

The Food

As **TARGET** Subscribers may have noted, in fact a pizza had been ordered, not because it is a favourite dish of any of our reviewers, but in order to enable the team to make a determination as to the quality of the pizza chefs and of the ingredients.

Unlike another, newly opened, would-be pretender to being a restaurant, serving Italian food, Opera House serves pizza within minutes of it, coming out of the oven: It is piping hot – as it should be served.

Everything about this little dish was par excellence. That said it all!

As for the second dish, the Hokkaido Sea Scallops, they had been prepared to perfection, not being overcooked as British cooks are prone to do, and the presentation was as good as the tastes of the scallops and the mushrooms.

And so it went on, one dish after another, being right out of the top-drawer.

One criticism could be made, however, about the gnocchi that had been a little overcooked and with the cook, having been heavy-handed with the saltshaker.

On the other hand, mention should be made of the Goose Liver Combination – the French often name this dish, mistakenly, foie gras – because it was absolutely superb.

It could not have been better.

Once again, it was only too obvious that the person, preparing this dish, knew only too well not to allow the goose liver to be seared too long for fear of destroying the succulent taste of the viscus.

The Ambiance

The ambiance of Opera House is nothing to write home to mom, but one man's meat is another man's poison, to coin the 1576 adage.

It can accommodate about 120 patrons at a sitting and it boasts of having a private dining room.

There are insufficient soft furnishings so that sound does travel round the room (be a little careful of those endearments to your loved ones).

One cannot call this a fine-dining restaurant although the food is as good as, if not better than, most of the dishes, served at swank food outlets at posh, five-star hotels in the territory.

On the afternoon of **TARGET**'s visit, sadly, the ladies' toilet had no flushing water and this situation was the result, Ida explained, of a burst water pipe in the street.

But, aside from this inconvenience, the toilets were spotless.

TARGET left Opera House at about 4:00 pm, having enjoyed a delightful two hours on a swelteringly hot, Monday afternoon in the sublime comfort of this newly opened restaurant in a nondescript area of Hongkong Island.

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