

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

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

**Name of Restaurant**

Holytan Grill

**Address of Restaurant**

Shop 3, 2/Floor, The Pottinger, N. 74, Queen's Road Central, Hongkong

**Date of Visit**

Friday, June 27, 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

<u>Wine</u>			
Choice	Extensive	Limited	Unbalanced
Cost	Reasonable	Unreasonable	Expensive
Storage of Wine	Good	Poor	Unknown
Expertise of Sommelier	Excellent	Acceptable	None

Total Cost of Meal -- Outrageous

Very Expensive

Moderately Expensive

Reasonably Priced

### Comments

There is a new name to remember if one wants to eat in a very different kind of restaurant, but one is warned: Be prepared to be asked to spend a vulgar amount of money on what is, in reality, not a particularly exciting cuisine – whatever it is named.

The name of this relatively new eatery is Holytan Grill (), located in the heart of the Central District of Hongkong Island.

Holytan Grill is located at Number 74, Queen's Road, Central, in a not particularly salubrious part of the Central Business District, but in an area, nevertheless, that reeks of the old (British) Hongkong, with its narrow streets and the well-known, Pottinger Street open market where one can buy all manner of things, from buttons and bows to Halloween costumes to specially made dancing shoes to fresh fruit.

**TARGET** () visited Holytan Grill on Friday, June 27, 2014, at 6:45 pm, having made a reservation, using a nom-de-plume.

On entering the restaurant, it was noted that the décor was far from being luxurious and that the restaurant was relatively small, able to seat only about 60 patrons.

The first consideration, on entering this restaurant, was to find a nice, cold bottle of Champagne (it was swelteringly hot on that Friday evening), but, to this reviewer's surprise, the wine list only named six different brands, of which, only one brand, Dom Pérignon, was recognisable.

(Holytan Grill lists two Dom Pérignon Champagnes, one, having been wrongly spelt, by the way.)

The Champagne Region of France boasts of having more than 100 premier Champagne Houses – Dom Pérignon, being one of the most famous such Houses – and some 19,000 other Champagne producers, mostly being vine-growing producers, known as 'vignerons' in French.

Most Champagne labels are not exported from this very famous part of France and it is just as well because many of them are not very good.

The prices of the five, unknown Champagne brands (to **TARGET**, that is) were far too expensive – this medium has an extensive knowledge of the retail price of most of the best Champagnes that may be purchased in supermarkets or wine purveyors of the territory.

So **TARGET**'s attention was given to scanning the wine list in order to locate a good-quality red wine and, there, in a corner of a page of the wine list, was Sassicaia, Vintage 2009, at \$HK3,680.

Sassicaia is not a very well known Tuscany wine, having been on the market only since 1968.

But it is a wonderfully fruity wine, made from 75 percent Sauvignon and 25 percent Cabernet Franc grapes, the vines of which, having been aged between seven years and 40 years.

Having settled on the wine for the evening, attention was given to Holytan's food menu.

This was that which was ordered for **TARGET**'s three reviewers:

### Appetisers

*Homemade Smoked Salmon*  
\$HK268

*Walnut Foie Gras Terrine*

\$HK178

*Two Wildcat Oysters (from the State of Washington, the US)*

\$HK176\_

**Soups**

*Holytan's Style Lobster Bisque*

\$HK158

*Wagyu Beef Consommé*

\$HK98

*Organic Vegetable*

\$HK78\_

**Main Courses**

*Kagoshima Steak*

\$HK400/100g

*Kobe Steak*

\$HK1,020

*Holytan's Style Charcoal Grilled Japanese Wagyu Steak*

\$HK720\_

**Dessert**

*Green Tea Crème Brûlée with Raspberry Sorbet*

\$HK128

*Homemade Cheese Cake with Mango Sorbet*

\$HK128

*Special Dessert by the Chef*

\$HK128

**The Food**

The first aspect of the food, served at Holytan Grill, is the individual presentations of each dish: For the most part, the presentations were exceptional!

Every dish resembled, to some extent, a painting and, where the food could not be dressed up in its Sunday Best, then, specially made glassware had been created under which one 'discovers' the morsel to be devoured.

This was especially true of the first appetiser, the Homemade Smoked Salmon.

It was brought to the table in what appeared to be an opaque glass cover, shaped in a cone, in which some dry ice had been inserted in order to give one the appearance that the two small cubes of fresh salmon were continuing to be smoked right up to the time that the dish was placed on the table.

The Walnut Foie Gras Terrine was a sizeable block of what could, at first glance, have the appearance of a light pâté or, perhaps, a mousse.

But it, certainly, could never pass for a terrine – never in a million years!

As a pâté, it lacked substance and/or a discerning flavour of any meat, liver or vegetables and, in addition, it lacked any suggestion of alcohol, such as wine, cognac, or Armagnac, having been added during the preparation process.

As a mousse, however, due among other things to its bubbly texture, it could well be described as being excellent.

(TARGET could not help but ponder, at this point, whether or not the person who wrote the menu had made multiple errors – the wrong spelling of Dom Pérignon Champagne and, now, a terrine that was not a terrine.)

Turning to the two Wildcat Oysters, they were eaten with gusto. In a word, they were delicious.

As for the soups, the Lobster Bisque was mouth-watering, but for this reviewer, the other two soups – the Wagyu Beef Consommé and the Organic Vegetable – had flavours that were far too mild and, in a blind-tasting competition, one would be

hard-pressed to tell one from the other.

Turning to the three steaks, they had been cooked to perfection, all being medium rare and all having separate and distinctive tastes.

Each lump of about five ounces of meat could be sliced with a fork, so tender was the meat (and this was not an exaggeration).

The Wagyu beef was the fattiest of the three steaks.

To some people, they might be put off by the unique tastes of the steaks that may be considered too foreign to many a person's palate to be accepted in a thrice.

Compared with a premier-cut, Kansas steak, which is much tougher than Japanese beef, but with a flavour, all of its own, Japanese beef may come in a poor second as far as most Americans are concerned.

However, for Japanese lovers of their homegrown beef, one can readily understand the reason that they would prefer Kobe or Kagoshima beef to its American cousin.

As for the desserts, they were pleasant enough and, certainly, interesting, but little else could be said of them.

### **The Restaurant**

Considering that Holytan Grill is supposedly desirous of being known as a competitor to well-known, fine-dining restaurants of the territory, it may be considered a little off-putting to discover the lack of soft furnishings on entering the second floor of the building in which the eatery is located.

This lack of soft furnishings allows sound to travel round the room with ease and, as was the case when **TARGET** visited the restaurant, the table, immediately in front, in which some young ladies were enjoying exchanges of tittle-tattle, was somewhat irritating, especially when the entire room was forced to listen to their loud comments and guffaws.

The service, on the other hand, was far better than most five-star, hotel food outlets: Attention to every little detail was plain to see.

The restaurant has been given the nomenclature by some people of being a Japanese style of French food.

This is really silly because it is, clearly, only a Japanese conception of some European dishes. The food has little relationship to the way in which any respectable French chef prepares his dishes.

This is not to suggest that the food is not good, but it, definitely, is not French and it does not even approach, being close to the cuisine of the country that gave the world the best wines that money can buy and has produced some of the world's most-important artists over the past two millennia.

### **Severe Criticism**

Sadly, **TARGET** has to add to this food review that one can be taken for an almighty '*ride*' at Holytan Grill if one is not careful.

This medium was overcharged at least \$HK500 by '*massaging*' the amount of money that was due for that which was eaten and drunk.

The bill for the food and wine was revised five times!

The one bottle of mineral water that was only drunk about 50 percent, at \$HK86 per bottle, was doubled to \$HK156, and marked as two bottles of San Pellegrino.

The Set Dinner, at \$HK1,280 per person, was charged \$HK1,780 on the bill.

(**TARGET** had selected the Set Dinner for one person in order to see what would be the difference between this selection and the à la carte menu because the dishes on the Set Dinner were exactly the same.)

The prices of most dishes are far too expensive for that which one receives: Simply put, it is not worth the money.

Some people might not be unwilling to state that the prices of many dishes are outrageous.

While it is appreciated that one should be willing to pay top dollar for the best that money can buy, it does not follow that being covertly overcharged is part and parcel of being able to afford the best.

In the words of Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), greed is defined, thusly:

*'It is a sin directly against one's neighbour, since one man cannot over-abound in external riches, without*

*another man lacking them... It is a sin against God, just as all mortal sins, inasmuch as man contemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things.'*

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