

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Aqua

Address of Restaurant

29 and 30/Floors, One Peking Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Saturday, July 12, 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

Comments

Without any hesitation, **TARGET** () maintains that the best thing about Aqua of Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, is the view from the 29th Floor of Number One, Peking Road.

The view of Victoria Harbour from this Italian-Japanese (!!!) restaurant is, simply, breathtaking.

As for the food, well, it is certainly passable, but, at the prices that are being demanded by Management, there is better value for money at many stand-alone restaurants in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

This medium visited Aqua on Saturday, July 12, 2014 at 7:30 pm, on the nose, but, for a little while, there was a question as to whether or not a reservation had, in fact, been made.

After about 10 minutes of searching, the lady at the reception, suddenly, discovered the reservation.

(The reservation had been made under a nom de plume.)

Once seated for the evening, a charming little waitress came over to the table and mumbled something so incoherently that one had to ponder in which language she was attempting to speak.

As it turned out, the young lady was discovered to have hailed from Nepal and had only been in the employ of the restaurant for a short period of time so that, when trying to explain something about the food on offer, she was just a little timid in her approach and, in any event, *'I don't speakee much Englishee'*.

It appears that Aqua, like so many businesses in the HKSAR, today, is suffering from a shortage of competent labour and, in a pinch, any body is better than no body.

On studying the wine list, this medium discovered a bottle of Mumm, Condon Rouge at \$HK958.

The wine list is exciting for its choices of many brands of champagne as are the many choices of Italian sparkling and still wines. The cost of most wines, for the most part, is very reasonable.

After studying the menu, the following was selected:

From The À La Carte Menu

Black Ink Pizza with Mozzarella, Tomato, Garlic, Squid, Mussels

()
\$HK238

Squid Ink Tagliolini Tossed with Mussels and Chilli with a Creamy Sea Urchin Sauce

\$HK308

Homemade Tagliatelle tossed with Freshly Flown from France Chanterelle Mushrooms

\$HK308

*Vialone Nano Risotto from Veneto with Morel Mushrooms
Robiola Cheese and Sweet and Sour Red Onions*

\$HK248

Homemade Lemon Potato Gnocchi Stirred with a Deliciously Creamy Organic Yoghurt

\$HK248

Banana Tempura with Honey and Vanilla Ice Cream

\$HK108

*Trio Japanese Ice Cream
Red Bean, Green Tea, Yuzu
\$HK128*

Shun Season Menu

*Summer Scream
Hendricks Gin, Yoshinogawa Liqueur, Lemon, Organic Rose Syrup
Chili Egg White and Shiso Leave*

*A Sweet Prawn with Sea Urchin
Tuna Sashimi and Spicy Yellow Tail Sushi*

Crab Meat Croquette with Tomato Miso Sauce

Inaniwa Udon Noodle with Mentaiko Cod Roe, Shiso Herb and Garlic Chip

Char Grilled Black Cod Saikyo Style

Baked Japanese Sweet Potato with Edamame Puree and Preserved Red Bean

\$HK988

The Food

Just before giving our waitress, whose name was Durga, the daughter of a Nepalese soldier who had been a soldier in the British Army in the territory in days of yore and who had been in the HKSAR for about seven years, our order, she explained that the restaurant does not have an Italian chef and the Japanese chef was not on duty on the Saturday of **TARGET**'s visit.

When asked who was manning the kitchen, in view of the intelligence that our waitress had imparted, Durga's response was that all of the dishes are being prepared by local, Chinese cooks.

And so, here was a real test for this restaurant group that claims to operate 18 eateries, spread across Asia, according to a European gentleman who explained that he was the Manager.

The first course from the à la carte menu, Black Ink Pizza, was a paper-thin, pizza crust, onto which the ingredients that were listed on the menu had been spread.

It was definitely eatable, but it was difficult to believe that such a pizza had ever been concocted in any territory where savvy Italian gourmets congregated.

It was, in a word, terrible!

The second course from the à la carte menu – the squid ink tagliolini – was far better than the so-called pizza and it was consumed in a thrice.

This was because, among other things, **TARGET**'s three reviewers were quite hungry after a wait of about one hour for the table to be arranged with the necessary cutlery and a basket of bread – which had to be returned twice until fresh bread adorned

the table.

On tasting the taglolini, this reviewer had a sneaking suspicion that it was, in fact, the type of noodles that are very common in many Chinese restaurants, especially in Wanchai, on the other side of the ‘*pond*’ that separates Hongkong Island from Kowloon.

The ‘*homemade*’ tagliatelle – pull the other teat, please, the pasta was not homemade – was, also, quite edible, as pasta dishes go, that is, but it had almost the same taste as the taglolini without the mussels and chili and what-have-you.

As for the risotto, it was a complete failure!

The rice was almost raw instead of being al dente and, also, it had not been cooked in any chicken stock, of that there could be no argument.

The gnocchi was another failure with the cook, having laced the boiled potatoes with far too much flour so that the gooey balls tended to stick to one’s palate – Yuk!

Turning to the Shun Season Menu, it comprised just five dishes, the first two dishes, being so small that, in the half-light of the restaurant, it was difficult to locate much more than the lone prawn and the dab of sea urchin in the first course, and the single little crab-meat croquette was the size of a thumb nail in the second course.

Skipping to the fourth course, because the third course was best quickly forgotten, the black cod was, certainly, sautéed as it should have been, but it had been drowned in a sickly sweet sauce that resulted in one feeling nauseated within a very short space of time.

In short, the persons in the kitchen had no idea what they were supposed to be cooking.

As for the last course: What was it supposed to be: Japanese, Chinese, or?

The Ambiance of Aqua

Aqua has everything going for it ... other than its local cooks and the semi-literate serving staff.

It is an exciting restaurant, overlooking Victoria Harbour, with the twinkling lights of Hongkong Island, reflecting off the Harbour’s water.

The restaurant can seat about 200 patrons, Durga said, and on most nights, it is packed with mostly European tourists.

The service leaves a lot to be desired, but that is due, in large part, to the inability of the many Nepalese and other nationalities serving staff to understand what they are supposed to be doing and, to top it off, in their timidity to be good little girls, they tended to mumble rather than to articulate that which that wanted to impart to patrons.

In addition, most of the time, they appeared not to understand that which the patrons requested of them.

Poor little dears!

There is music, piped throughout the restaurant, but it was difficult to hear much of it over the din of the diners and the laughter of some of the inebriants who were overindulging themselves.

A saving grace could be said of the fact that the toilets – male and female – were spotlessly clean, but that could not be said of some of the cutlery and the wine glasses on **TARGET**’s table.

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