

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

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

Name of Restaurant

Isono Eatery And Bar

Address of Restaurant

Shops H601-H608, PMQ, No. 35, Aberdeen Street, Central, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Monday, August 18, 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 one has trouble in locating this restaurant, then, one is lucky – perhaps the lucky person will continue to be lucky and will never find the restaurant.

If one finds the restaurant, then, one's luck has just run out – because the food is atrocious.

The restaurant to which **TARGET** () is referring is the latest addition to the ever-growing number of free-standing eateries, selling what is claimed to be European cooking, with this one, making the claim of preparing genuine Basque cuisine. It is called Isono Eatery and Bar.

There are two aspects of this restaurant that are firsts for the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC):

(a) There is only one unisex toilet where ladies and gentlemen do that which comes naturally in five cubicles, all adjoining each other. Three of the cubicles are reserved for the ladies and two cubicles are reserved for the gentlemen; and,

(b) There is a \$HK35 charge for bread to be delivered to the table.

TARGET visited Isono on Monday, August 18, 2014, after trudging for about 30 minutes in the wilds of what must surely be among one of the oldest areas of the Business District of Hongkong Island.

The restaurant is located in what used to be the Police Married Quarters, but the signage is so poor that one is forced to ask directions from passersby, most of whom are just as lost as were this medium's three food reviewers.

On locating the restaurant, one is, almost immediately, bombarded by the sounds of very loud and very unpleasant music, being piped throughout the restaurant that has the capacity, one is told, to seat upwards of 140 people.

The table that had been reserved for **TARGET** was in the middle of the dining area so that the sounds of the music were unavoidable. That made it difficult to hold a conversation or to hear, clearly, the statements of the serving staff, most of whom, by the way, were young students that had taken the positions as waiters on a part-time basis.

As one waiter remarked:

'I find this restaurant a little difficult to find, also. And the food ... I don't know anything about it, to be honest.'

It was evident that this young, affable man had never tried to sample the food of the restaurant and, by his facial expressions when commenting on the daily fare, he appeared to be quite unwilling to sample it.

On studying Page Two of the wine list, **TARGET** counted a total of 30 different brands of champagnes, of which not one was recognisable.

On Page Three of the wine list, of the 17 different brands of champagnes, seven were recognisable.

The wine list is long and, for many of the selections, the prices are far too expensive.

The Food

After scanning the menu that, compared with the wine list, is really extremely limited, this medium selected the following dishes:

Coco Bread with Tomatoes

\$HK32

Bread Basket

\$HK35

Cold Appertisers

Fresh Marinated Bluefin Tuna with Tomatoes and Basil

\$HK220

Traditional Andalusian Gazpacho

\$HK98

Warm Appetiser

Deep Fried Squid and Fingerling Fish with Salsa Brava

\$HK115

Main Course

Paella

\$HK240

Catalan Salted Cod Soup with Potatoes

\$HK220

The Andalusian Gazpacho was, in a word, horrible, and tasted more like watered-down tomato puree than a gazpacho.

The paella was bone dry and, aside from two shrimps, resting on about one millimeter of dried-up rice, there was little evidence of anything else in this dish that was served on a piping hot platter that kept cooking the already overcooked rice.

Needless to say, it was inedible, but the serving staff was completely oblivious of the situation and only asked, after a few minutes of the dish, being placed on the table: *'Are you finished?'*

As for the Catalan Salted Cod Soup, which was supposed to have been a Hearty Stew, well, it was served lukewarm and was, also, insipid – and nearly inedible.

And that was all that this medium can comment on the food other than to state that it was about the worst muck that this medium has had the misfortune to sample.

The Atmosphere

The entire restaurant is newly decorated and, for people who enjoy a raucous atmosphere, then, this watering hole could be their cup of tea.

The staff, for the most part, does not know what they are supposed to do and, as a result, they rush round, hither and thither, accomplishing very little other than making stupid claims about dishes, most of which are totally incorrect.

The restaurant, this medium was informed, is beneficially owned by six Chinese businessmen of the HKSAR.

TARGET can well believe this because, throughout the time that this reviewer was trying to taste some of the dishes, large family groups came in and out and were welcomed, very warmly, by a dumpling of a young Chinese man who seemed to be something of a captain, minus his black jacket.

This young man's statements, on greeting these families – which must have been the families of the beneficial owners of the restaurant – went along the lines of calling this man, *'uncle'*, and that women, *'auntie'*, and, then, proceeding to give them a tour of the eatery.

This restaurant has only been open since early August.

One can only gestimate how long Isono will be able to survive.

(If this food review is a little short, today, it is because there is little to write about this pretender of a restaurant, claiming to serve authentic Basque dishes. For the record, **TARGET** has visited Gurea Restorante and does know good Basque cuisine, compared to the rubbish, being served up at Isono Eatery and Bar.)

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