

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

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

Name of Restaurant

The Continental

Address of Restaurant

Level 4, Unit 406, Pacific Place, No. 88, Queensway, Hongkong

Date of Visit

Tuesday, October 28, 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 - No Comment	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

The Continental Hongkong of Wanchai was newly opened, late last month, and Swire Hotels, a division of Swire Properties Ltd () (Code: 1972, Main Board, The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd), has been trumpeting its opening as something very special.

To state that the food and service at this restaurant is, by and large, dreadful would be unkind because, among other things, it is still going through its teething period.

And teething periods can, at times, be very lengthy processes.

One would be advised to wait six months or more before venturing into The Continental so that the very obvious problems – the quality and preparation of the food and the stupidity of quite a number of members of the serving staff – can be sorted out.

The restaurant can seat about 200 people, **TARGET** () was told by a black-jacketed European member of the serving staff on this medum's visit on Tuesday, October 28, 2014.

On scanning the wine list, this reviewer was only able to recognise a handful of the marques, the rest, all being completely unknown.

But, having said that, for the most part, the prices of the wines per bottle are quite reasonable and one supposes that the seemingly reasonably priced wines are indicative of the wine's quality or its lacking in popularity.

On studying the menu, a very soft-spoken, young Chinese gentleman, wearing the uniform of a waiter, asked whether or not **TARGET**'s three-man, food reviewers would like a bottle of water.

The reply was that a large, cold bottle of Perrier would be nice.

The waiter ambled away and, within minutes, brought to the table a bottle of 'The Continental Hildon'. Without displaying the bottle, he started to pour some of its contents into glasses.

When it was realised by **TARGET** that this was not the French brand of Perrier mineral water, as had been ordered, and on reading the label of the Hildon that stated that the carbonised water hailed from the England, the waiter giggled and said words to the effect:

'The bottle is from England, but the water is local – right out of the tap.'

Should one believe such utterances from a newly employed waiter of a restaurant?

The food that was, then, ordered for the evening was as follows:

First Courses

Griddled Squid with Chilli and Rocket
\$HK125

Griddled Scallops with Chestnut Purée, Shiso and Lemon
\$HK195

Country Pâté with Cornichons

\$HK85

Main Courses

Fish Pie with Salmon, Smoked Haddock, Prawns and Whiting
\$HK165

Half Chicken with Anchovy, Onion and Olives
\$HK225

Veal Kidneys with Mustard Sauce and Creamed Potatoes
\$HK250

Dessert

Chocolate Soufflé, Pistachio Ice Cream
\$HK115

Paris-Brest
\$HK90

Rice Pudding with Apricots
\$HK90

The Food

Of the three First Courses, the ‘*Griddled Scallops*’ was, by far, the best. The scallops had been cooked to perfection – just the way that any decent Chinese cook would have prepared the three, marine bivalve lamellibranch mollusks.

The ‘*Country Pâté*’, which our waiter claimed had been made by the restaurant, tasted of just two things: Fat and pepper.

It was inedible.

As for the ‘*Griddled Squid*’ – for what reason did not this restaurant just state that griddled meant fried? – was, simply, a very good salad with a splattering of pieces of squid, all of which appeared to be fresh and, clearly, prepared by a Chinese cook.

As for the Main Course, originally, **TARGET** had selected Hanger Steak with Chips, but when the steak appeared on the table, it looked as though it was some black ‘*thing*’ that the dog had just dragged in from the garden.

Further, nobody could possibly eat this ‘*thing*’ because it was as tough as the bark of a century old oak tree and tasted like cardboard.

The waiter tried his best to argue that there was nothing wrong with the meat, but, when a passing, European black-jacket noted the complaint, the black ‘*thing*’ was taken away and an apology was forthcoming, almost immediately.

Now, about the Main Courses, the fish pie was insipid, all of the ingredients, other than the mashed potato top, having been frozen. Of that, there could be no question.

This dish could not, and should not, be eaten.

The half chicken – the replacement for the Hanger Steak – was fine and, once again, it had all of the earmarks of a Chinese cook, having prepared it.

As for the veal kidneys, all five of them, had been sautéed medium – the centres, being pink – although they had been ordered to be well done.

(Probably, the poor waiter did not know the difference between medium and well done?)

However, there was nothing wrong with the kidneys and they were devoured in their entirety.

The desserts were, without doubt, the best part of the meal.

The soufflé was excellent as was the Paris-Brest – a French dessert, made of choux pastry and a praline-flavoured cream.

The rice pudding, however, was something out of England, during World War II, when sugar was in short supply along with many of the other ingredients that go into the making of a decent rice pudding.

(It is highly unlikely that Chinese people would choose this dish as a dessert, but, perhaps, it is not intended to be eaten by Chinese people.)

The Restaurant

Originally, The Continental Hongkong was operated as Domani Ristorante.

It must have been a financial disaster for the former owners of Domani because, among other things, the food and wines were horribly overpriced and, generally, the food was a hopeless example of somebody's wild idea of Italian cuisine.

One supposes that Domani – which is an Italian word, meaning '*the day after tomorrow*' – gave up the ghost and Swire Properties determined to take over the free-standing premises and change the entire philosophy of the restaurant into something, resembling that which Mr Rowley Leigh claims is '*Modern British Cooking*'.

Mr Rowley Leigh is claimed to be, according to the bumph of Swire Properties Ltd, the Chef Consultant to The Continental Hongkong.

A Chef Consultant is a long way from being an Executive Chef or even the Sous-Chef de Cuisine: It is much nicer to talk about food and not get one's hands, singed in a kitchen, isn't it?

It is said that Mr Rowley Leigh had been solely responsible for the selections on the menu of the restaurant, but that does not mean that he has had a hand in the preparation and presentation of the dishes.

If he did, in fact, have a hand in the preparation and presentation of the food when **TARGET** visited the restaurant, then, Shame! Shame! Shame!

Mr Rowley Leigh is quoted as saying in the Swire Properties's bumph:

'I was brought up with a French style incorporating other elements into recipes where I'd take one out and put something else in. It's a lot French, a little Italian and an British sensibility. Everything I do is a response to the best ingredients and I just try to do justice to them.'

One supposes that, using frozen fish in a fish pie is an example of '*British sensibility*', as well as a Hanger Steak, having the flavour of a piece of cardboard and being as tough as the bark of an old tree?

What utter rubbish, Mr Rowley Leigh!

Aside from the quality of the food and its hopeless presentation, for the most part, the waiters have little to no idea about their duties and so, on not less than four occasions, this reviewer had to ask a passing waiter to have the table prepared for the next course – removing dirty dishes from the table, dishes that had been collecting on half of the table for the previous 30 minutes or so.

TARGET fully intends to return to The Continental Hongkong in the fall of 2015 in order to learn whether or not the demerits of this medium's first visit have been remedied.

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