

**THE ROTISSERIE AT THE FURAMA HOTEL :
IT IS BACK TO ITS OLD STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

To stand still is to move into the reverse mode.

This is true for nearly every aspect of life; it is especially true of the service industry of today.

The hotel of today, which does not embrace technology, is the hotel that will be unable to compete, successfully, in the fast-moving, hospitality industry.

The same logic applies to food outlets, free-standing restaurants and food outlets in established hotels.

For, not to cater for the ever-changing eating habits of the consumer is to flirt with economic disaster.

The Rotisserie, the once grand, fine-dining outlet at The Furama Hotel at Number One, Connaught Road, Central, the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), used to be considered a rival to 5-star hotel food outlets within spitting distance of this 4-star hotel's premier restaurant.

But that was some time ago and, with the previous Management, seemingly unable or uncaring about employing first-class chefs to lead this restaurant in attaining, and maintaining, a high degree of excellence in Continental cuisine, The Rotisserie fell from grace in the eyes of both locals and tourists.

This scribe, for instance, has not returned to The Rotisserie for some years because the last time that TARGET visited it, the head waiter shook his head and apologised for the secondary quality of the cuisine, stating that Management was cutting back on costs.

This was most unfortunate since, in a hotel, such as The Furama, food outlets ought to be viewed, first and foremost, as offering an important service to guests.

If the food outlets can make a profit, too, then that is an added bonus.

But service should be first on the agenda of The Furama's outlets; profit should be of secondary concern.

TARGET revisited The Rotisserie on Thursday, October 4, at about 1:15 pm, only to find fewer than 10 customers in the entire 100-seater.

This was ominous, and this reviewer fully expected to have a repeat performance of days of yore when the food could be atrocious, both in presentation and taste.

But that was not to be the case on this visit.

Aside from the expert and very attentive service of the entire Chinese staff on duty on the day that TARGET dropped in, none of whom knew, or had any idea, of TARGET's coming or purpose, what was surprising was that there was an air of professionalism, pervading the entire outlet.

For instance, in many food outlets, the service staff engages in little chats with each other in little select alcoves, often in not very quiet tones.

This can be quite disturbing to patrons, who come to eat and to talk among themselves, not to be disturbed by the bantering of the service staff.

Not so in The Rotisserie, at least, not when TARGET visited the restaurant in spite of the fact that there were only a handful of customers present.

Also, while criticism could be leveled at the way in which the menus were presented, their poor printing quality and the fact that insufficient time was given for a guest to make a decision as to what he, or she, wanted to eat, one could not find fault with much else.

Of course, one could take issue with the fact that the outlet has the same décor as it had some 100 years ago, with the same colour scheme, the same chairs and tables, and, even, the same layout of the outlet.

The Food:

TARGET's choice for a light luncheon was the Soup-of-the-Day – a Cream of Cauliflower (\$HK55) -- and Poached Salmon and Scallops with in a Salmon Caviar Butter Sauce (\$HK138) (this is the way that the restaurant described the dishes).

First, a little statement about the bread, which is placed on the table as a matter of course, along with a pad of French '*President*' butter.

While Christopher Erving, a solicitor in this town, used to laugh at this reviewer for including, from time to time, a short paragraph on a review of bread at certain food outlets in the HKSAR, bread is the one item that, regardless of what a person may choose to eat, he will, always, be tempted to taste a pinch, or 2 pinches, or, if it is really good, an entire bun, or slice of bread.

Bread, placed on a restaurant's table, is very important because one only has one shot at first impressions – and if the bread is no good, patrons will expect the food to be poor, also.

The bread at The Furama, throughout its history, has been among the best in this town. And TARGET's visit on October 14 reaffirmed this previous opinion about this hotel: It has a good bakery.

The Cauliflower Soup was served within minutes of it being ordered.

It was very hot – which has not, always, been the case at this outlet -- and tasted, naturally, of cauliflower, diced with cheddar cheese, a stock of some sort (perhaps a chicken stock?) and cream.

Being a cream soup, there is not much to say about it because, to be honest, unless one is preparing a vichyssoise, making a cream soup is no great shakes.

However, the texture of the soup, its flavour, and the suggestion of cheddar cheese, rather than the cheddar cheese, overpowering the flavour of the cauliflower, put it more than one rung above average.

For the soup, TARGET gave it a score of 7 points out of 10 points.

The main course, the salmon, however, ranked 9 points out of 10 points.

What made this dish outstanding was that it had all the ingredients of a great dish: Appearance; smell; and, taste.

On a 12-inch dish, on which the salmon was placed, were 2 pink pieces of delicate fish, placed on either sides of the plate, 2 scallops, filling up the holes in between the salmon '*steaks*', 2 pure white, new potatoes, opposing each other, and all this was arranged on a bed of julienne vegetables.

The appearance was exciting – and the taste to match the appearance.

The salmon had been half cooked so that it was not dry and flaky, as would have happened if the fish meat had been overcooked.

It was succulent and tasted very fresh (as should always be the case).

The butter sauce, with sprinkles of salmon eggs (this reviewer is of the firm opinion that it is wrong to describe any fish eggs, roe, as '*caviar*'. The term, '*caviar*', should be reserved to describe the roe of a large fish, such as a sturgeon) was a delight, and was an excellent complement to the taste of fish.

The scallops were not fresh, of that TARGET is certain, but even frozen scallops can be tasty and interesting – especially if they are served in a sauce, such as had been made by the excellent cooking staff at The Rotisserie on the day that TARGET paid it a visit.

The vegetables must have been prepared by a Chinese cook because none of them were overcooked, as is the wont of the British, who tend to overcook most of their dishes.

TARGET has no idea of the nationality of the chef de cuisine at The Rotisserie, these days, whether or not he is European, or Chinese, or any other nationality.

But one thing is clear: He and his staff are good.

TARGET skipped desert – too fattening.

This outlet, if it keeps up this standard, will make a strong comeback.

-- E N D --