

With flights so cheap, many of our readers are visiting London for weekend shopping. Over the next few weeks we will be reviewing some outstanding but different restaurants in London we tried recently, which are really worth a visit while you are there. These are restaurants that we doubt that you would discover without a personal recommendation, they are all sensibly priced and out of the ordinary.

Royal China Club



Lobster and scallop with panfried foie gras.

When you go out to dinner with a chef, let alone a chef from a two star Michelin restaurant, you can expect something unusual. It becomes even more interesting when he says "Let's have a good Chinese and go to China town,

followed by, no, let's try something more sophisticated", so we went to the Royal China Club in Baker Street. This proved to be no ordinary Chinese restaurant. The Royal China Group consists of five of London's most authentic and prestigious Chinese restaurants, including the luxurious and

highly acclaimed Royal China Club, which is where we headed. The first thing to be sure about is that your taxi (assuming that's how you get to the restaurant) drops you off at 40 Baker street, not at their other establishment, the Royal China which is a hundred or so metres further up Baker Street at

number 20. Both are good, and belong to the same group, the Royal China Club at number 40 is their most prestigious restaurant, under the direction of Chef Kevin Man and a very attentive and dedicated staff.

If you are waiting for other guests, you can wait at the bar in reception, otherwise you are promptly shown to your table, (reservations are highly recommended). We were recommended the 'Tasting Menu' nearly always a wise choice as most top chefs use this as a way to show their culinary talents by selecting their best dishes and getting all the courses to complement each other. It was a very wise choice.

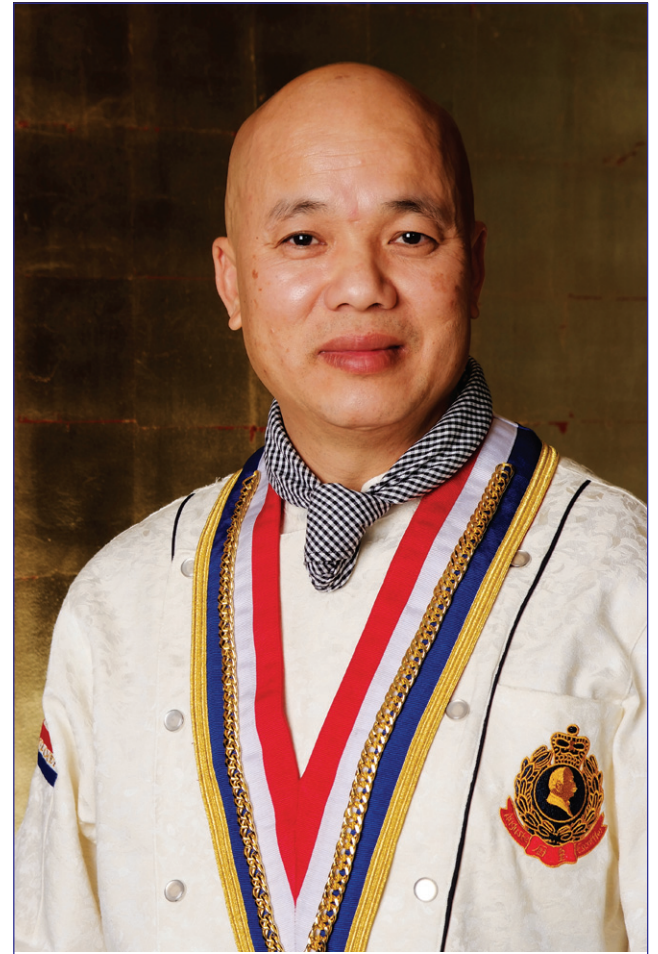
We started with Grilled Kings Scallop with Foie Gras, a French oriented dish with an Asian twist and a sprinkling of sesame seeds. Roasted Peking Duck followed with a beautifully glazed skin and cooked to perfection, which was carved and prepared at the table. Instead of the more normal pancake, this was served on a lighter than air pancake 'pillow'.

Baked Chilli Cod in minced Pork Sauce was served wrapped in lotus leaves, which had to be broken into and then released a beautifully aromatic and intense flavour. Steamed Organic Chicken and Frogs Legs in a clay pot were then brought to the table (we did tell you this was no ordinary Chinese restaurant).

George Tannock, our guest chef, said he could imagine this dish being served in a Chinese home in a small village to a special guest in the home. It was not just authentic, but so "homely" and quite delicious. Barbecued Spare Ribs in a fruity sauce were served as individual cutlets, and just fell off the bone. The Lotus Leaf rice which accompanied the dishes had a powerful fragrance and excellent flavour.

We ended with Pan Fried Mini Pumpkin Pancakes and Coconut Moss dumplings with black sesame. Yet again these were superbly subtle in flavour and complimented by the Jasmine Tea.

The Royal China Club is quite unlike any Chinese restaurant we have tried in the past, and is a 'must visit' if you want to see Chinese food served with imagination and flair. The Chef offers a modern interpretation of classic Chinese cuisine. Although we have not tried it, apparently their lunch and tea time speciality is Dim Sum, and it's not to be missed if you are in the area at that time. We will have to



Executive Chef, Kevin Man.

go back and sample these, as freshly made Dim Sum is a treat not to pass over. Baker Street, London. Tel: 0044 (0)20 7486 3898. Reservations are highly recommended

The Royal China Club, 40-42

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The exterior of the Royal China Club restaurant.

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