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Website: <http://www.theworlds50best.com/amber-shines-on-hong-kong/11140>

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the website. On the left is the logo for 'THE WORLD'S 50 BEST RESTAURANTS' sponsored by S. Pellegrino & Acqua Panna. In the center is the 'FineDINING LOVERS.' logo with a red star. To the right, it says 'presents The World's 50 Best Restaurants sponsored by S. Pellegrino & Acqua Panna' and 'A LIVE AND EXCLUSIVE ONLINE EVENT Discover more!'. Below these are several promotional boxes: one for Noma as the 2011 winner, one for 'The World's 50 Best' lists, and one for a 'Win 2 tickets...' prize draw with a 'VIP' badge and an 'Enter now' button. At the bottom of the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, The Awards, Gallery, Past Winners, Regional Spotlight, Blog, The Academy, Press Centre, Our Partners, and About Us.

Amber shines on Hong Kong

Kevin Chan, March 16, 2012

A [hotel](#) doesn't need many restaurants if it has one of the best in the world! **The Landmark Mandarin Oriental** is such a hotel as their Michelin 2-star restaurant **Amber** really made headlines last year for being the only restaurant in [China](#) listed in the 2011 S. Pellegrino "World's 50 Best Restaurants."

Due to many disappointing experiences of French cuisine in Hong Kong over the years, I had some reservations prior to visiting Amber, a modern French cuisine with inventive twists. Thankfully, the 4-hour dining experience at Amber not only satisfied my palate in every way, but also changed my impression of French cuisine in Hong Kong forever.

Chef Richard Ekkebus is the spirit of Amber. This Dutch-born chef had training under some of the greatest Michelin-star chefs in Europe before heading up the Amber kitchen when it first opened its doors in 2005. Hong Kong proves to be an ideal location for a motivated chef like him; in his own words, it enables him to "take the full advantage of this unique crossroads between East and West." A quick glance at his menu shows that Chef Ekkebus uses only the finest ingredients from both local and global sources: sea urchin from Hokkaido, blue lobster from Brittany, salmon from Tasmania, and many ingredients from local organic producers.



Situated on the 7th floor of the hotel is an eye-catching wave of 4,000 golden rods hang from the high ceiling of Amber's stylish dining room. Serving no more than 60 diners a night, this restaurant offers a sense of space to each guest. The tasting began shortly after the arrival of my glass of champagne: the appetizing lime mousse emerging out from the thin crispy mini roll; the rich foie gras coated with raspberry jelly served on a wooden stick; the warm deep-fried ball with flavourful pork jus bursting out; and the creamy pumpkin velouté with an airy chestnut foam. This series of innovative amuse bouche was a [successful](#) introduction to the elaborate meal to come.

The first [course](#) of the degustation, the signature **Sea Urchin**, was enough to justify my trip. The presentation made this dish strikingly memorable – a sea urchin shell elevated by a bowl of ice with a shiny caviar spoon on the side. I knew this would be a winner by simply imagining the marriage of creamy sea urchin and velvety cauliflower mousse. Chef Ekkebus further enhanced this combination with a layer of lobster jello before crowning it with a quenelle of caviar and a gold leaf. He cleverly served a seaweed waffle on the side, providing a crispy texture to the dish. Each component had its flair on my palate, but it was the harmony of all these elements that perpetuated in my mind. No wonder this is one of his signature courses!



The fish course brought another dimension to my experience as the confit of salmon was enclosed by smoke! Once the cover was removed, we were surrounded by a sensational smokiness, a lovely fragrance to accompany the **Tasmanian salmon**, which had a remarkably creamy texture. The meal continued with more signature dishes. Although I usually prefer my seafood to be simple, I was impressed by how Chef Ekkebus managed to incorporate many intense flavours on the same plate without sacrificing the originality of the seafood. The arrangement of **red amadai**, fennel, orange, and potato with a powerful bouillabaisse sauce, or the composition of **scallop**, ham, and pumpkin gnocchi with a deep truffle sauce – it was these complex yet well balanced seafood courses that captured the true beauty of Amber!

Chef Ekkebus continued to indulge my taste buds with a rich roasted **foie gras** paired with an acidic red cabbage coulis finished by a touch of fruitiness from the sweet apple. The meat course consisted of little pieces of tender **venison** with beetroots and cherries scattered over a bed of onion purée. As Chef Ekkebus uses only the finest ingredients, it was no surprise that all the cheese on his trolley was matured by Bernard Antony. The cheese followed by a chocolate soufflé made from one of my favourite Grands Crus, Valrhona Abinao, an 85% cacao using beans from Africa. A powerful finale to this exceptional degustation menu!



Without a doubt this is an outstanding cuisine which can satisfy any gourmet. From the kitchen to the dining room, from the ingredients to the plate, from amuse bouches to petits fours, everything flows seamlessly. As always, service plays an essential role at this level of dining. In addition to the flawlessly smooth service, I was delighted to see the sommelier's enthusiasm in showcasing wines from less popular wine regions, and to hear from a staff member who had been transformed from a cheese-hater to a cheese expert of the restaurant. It became clear to me that the team of Amber is not only professional and knowledgeable but also dedicated and passionate, and this is exactly what is needed to become one of the best restaurants in the world!

Published by Kevin Chan. Kevin is a food traveller who has lived and travelled extensively throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Drawing upon his experience, Kevin offers a worldwide perspective on fine food.

www.finediningexplorer.com