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the ramblings of an itinerant travel (& food) whore

« elmo's holiday wish

feeling far from home »

## under the spell of amber



My first Michelin-starred meal in Hong Kong turned out to be quite the doozy. Under the guidance of Dutch chef Richard Ekkebus, [Amber](#) at [The Landmark Mandarin Oriental](#) has two of those coveted stars. But wait, there's more: the San Pellegrino "World's 50 Best Restaurants" Awards ranked the eatery at number 37 earlier this year. Not only is it the only Hong Kong restaurant on the list, it's the only restaurant in Hong Kong to have made the list since 2005. (I'd been told the city is emerging with enormous gastronomic energy – this factoid only served to solidify my stomach's growing expectations.) Needless to say lunch at Amber did not disappoint. From the amusing *amuse* of foie gras lollipops shellacked with beetroot to the perfectly-formed olive-studded focaccia, my meal was a languorous mix of creative aesthetics and fresh, contemporary flavors grounded in traditional French technique. Dungeness crab with crème fraiche, avocado, Granny Smith apple and cucumber was so composed I almost hated to mess the plate. Line-caught Atlantic cod was roasted with the skin on and served with salted celeriac and Iberian pork neck in a Cabernet reduction that perfectly played off the meatiness of the fish. For dessert a terrarium of tiramisu was inspired – so, too, the cheese trolley – yet the bliss of dark chocolate gunaja with speculoos crumbs was

downright genius. This wasn't at all what I expected of Hong Kong – but I'm so happy to have had my expectations thoroughly upended.



