



Video

No Miss STEAK

Master Chef-ess Angie Ford serves up truly flawless fillets at Buenos Aires Polo Club



two – has seen fit to right this particular wrong with the launch of **Buenos Aires Polo Club**. While the group has already made a number of cuisines quite its own – including Lebanese, Greek and Italian – this marks its first foray into celebrating Latin America’s love of sumptuously-served slabs of prime cattle.

In keeping with Argentina’s famously macho culture, the Central-set Buenos Aires Polo Club occupies a decidedly masculine space, complete with well-worn leather banquette seats, sports memorabilia and equestrian-themed artworks filling up almost every surface. While the interior of the restaurant proper has mucho macho accents, its kitchen space is decidedly more feminine, a clear sign that Angie Ford, its Canadian head chef, is intent on making her mark in this relatively chap-dominated field.

Arriving in Hong Kong via Sydney, Chef Ford’s experience in South American cuisine comes from her many years of working under celebrity chef René Rodríguez at Navarra, his award-winning, Ottawa-set South American fine dinery. In particular, she brings to this new venture her mastery of *asado*, a style of open-fire cooking that is popular throughout Latin America.

Keen to experience her expertise for ourselves, we tucked straight into the first course – **Fries Provenzal** – disarmingly simple Argentinian chips (in the British sense), doused judiciously with duck fat, with their savouriness cunningly

As canny carnivores the world over know only too well, when it comes to quality and flavour, Argentinian beef could well be a worthy contender for the World’s Most Magnificent Meat Award, should such an accolade ever be up for grabs. Its particular allure lies in its leaner, Pampas-grass-fed meat qualities, while it also contains a higher percentage of omega-3 fatty acids than its grain-fed counterpart. In plainspeak, that means you can tuck into your medium-rare steak with relish without worrying that your heart might give way before you have the chance to polish it off.

While the beef is rightly renowned the world over, in Hong Kong, the number

“Argentinian beef would be a more-than-worthy winner of the World’s Most Magnificent Meat Award”

of Argentinian steakhouses offering such prime cuts is well below the figure for those offering the American or Japanese pretenders to its throne. Thankfully, Black Sheep Restaurants – the Hong Kong-based hospitality group behind Belon and New Punjab Club, to name but



This page from top to bottom: The restaurant's well-stocked bar; General Pico Black Angus beef being prepared; Spinach and Provolone Empanadas; Malvaviscos



enhanced by the tactical deployment of garlic and parsley. It may not be the healthiest of appetisers, but it's 100-percent finger-licking good – for once, literally – ensuring all thoughts of temperance recede as soon as its aroma arises.

To follow were **Spinach and Provolone Empanadas**, lovingly served with salsa criolla dip. While the house-made empanada dough was suitably crunchy, it was the sheer joy to be had from the spinach, cheese, onion and garlic filling that ensured we were wholly enamoured. While the empanadas were exquisite in themselves, dipping them in the accompanying salsa sauce occasioned a truly transcendent tanginess even further.

As if conscious of meat-intent sentiment, the **Chorizo Sausage** was next to make its way tablewards. A decidedly decadent combination of pork, beef and spices, it was an explosion of savoury meaty flavours with our taste buds being the more-than-willing ground zero.

All of that, though, was but foodie foreplay prior to the climatic arrival of the evening's culinary centrepiece – the **Ribeye Steak**, served medium rare as per the chef's recommendation. Knowing the perfect fit with her long-honed open-fire grilling skills, Chef Ford makes a point of opting for prime cuts of grass-fed General Pico Black Angus beef, slightly charring their crust, while trusting the tender meat within to win over even the most capricious of diners. Served with a single onion on the side and deputising three contrasting condiments – chimichurri, salsa criolla and Malbec mustard – as its cheerleaders, it's very much the steak that calls the shots. An engaging bit of attention to detail – and our particular 'wow' moment – accompanied the serving when we were granted the opportunity to select an individual steak knife, with the restaurant boasting more than its fair share of ornately-shaped sharp objects from as far afield as Pakistan and Brazil.

While a generous portion of Pampas-fed prime meat occupied much of the space we'd naively reserved for dessert, it was impossible not to be intrigued by the **Malvaviscos**, with its sundry charcoal and marshmallow sticks in tow. As soon as the charcoal was ignited, the marshmallows were toasted and the first bite was taken, it was clear that the steak would have to make way for at least a medium serving of this astonishing afters. This was down in no small part to the layer of coffee-flavoured ice-cream that lurked unannounced below the toasted marshmallow – surprising, enticing and impossible not to want to experience again. A bit like Buenos Aires Polo Club itself. ■

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