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## Jimmy Choo on Golden Leaf

Jimmy Choo is very much a fan of tradition, a fact that you can hear in his down-to-earth tone of voice, which lacks much of the pomp associated with the fashion-forward set. It also reads in his couture shoe designs – and his choice of restaurants.

Golden Leaf, the Cantonese restaurant situated in the Conrad Hong Kong in Admiralty, has a similar philosophy and dedication to the traditional, serving up palatable cuisine without the usual side of hype. So it comes as no surprise that when Choo comes to Hong Kong, one of the first things that he does is to book a table here. It is a true testament to the restaurant that, in what Choo considers the capital of Chinese food, it holds the crown.

“I’m a very traditional guy,” Choo emphasises. “When I go to Italy, I eat Italian food. So in Hong Kong, I must have Chinese food. Hong Kong has the best Chinese food in the whole world; nobody can cook like them. At Golden Leaf, the way they cook the food is fantastic.”

Golden Leaf turned over a new leaf just recently; in September of this year it unveiled its new look to the public as part of the Conrad’s multi-million-dollar refurbishment plan. The interiors glow with golden opulence while retaining classic elements of Chinese architecture and design.

Despite a new look, Golden Leaf’s menu, however, has remained largely unchanged, with the same flavourful staples exercising Chef So Kai-chiu’s brilliant restraint. “A lot of restaurants put too many ingredients in their food,” Choo complains. “When you put it in your mouth, the first thing you think is, this is not the taste I wanted.” The key to making flavour-bursting food without the aid of extra ingredients, oils and spices, as any Chinese chef can tell you, is time.

The quality of a restaurant’s soup is generally a good measure of effort and, if Choo is to be trusted, Golden Leaf lives up to the name. “They don’t put too much sauce in it, but they boil it for long enough so that the taste is still astounding,” he says. “I also love the fish, and the way they do the chicken is fantastic as well.”

Choo is picky about his chicken – he’d rather do it himself than devour a substandard dish. “When I was a student I’d always make Hainan chicken rice for myself and my staff.”

Besides its lip-smacking cuisine, Golden Leaf also wins praise for stellar service. “The other thing is their manners. The waiters will come and serve you, talk to you, ask what you think, and other little things,” Choo enthuses. “Also,” he confides, “I like going to restaurants in hotels because the hygiene level is 100 per cent. And



in most hotels, the chefs are very specially trained. My tummy is very sensitive, so if the food is not that clean, I get an upset stomach very easily” – not to mention an upset disposition.

Luckily, Golden Leaf passes Choo’s tests with flying colours. With such good food and service, what’s not to like? It’s like a Jimmy Choo Couture shoe – elegant, high quality and reassuringly consistent.



**Clockwise from left:** Couture footwear maestro Jimmy Choo; sautéed fillet of spotted garoupa roll stuffed with shredded abalone; sautéed fresh crab claw with egg white



### CHEF SO KAI-CHIU

Chef So Kai-chiu has headed a team of 25 chefs at the restaurant for more than 10 years. Lunch sees a popular dim sum menu, with shrimp, pork and seafood dumplings and spring rolls. Dinner favourites include crispy fried chicken and sautéed spotted garoupa fillet with pumpkin in ginger sauce. When it comes to the food, Chef So finds the simple dishes are often the most difficult to master, as with the restaurant’s impeccable rice, and Golden Leaf does these to perfection. Try their shark-bone soup and see if you disagree.



### GOLDEN LEAF

**RESERVATIONS:** Recommended **DRESS CODE:** Smart casual **LUNCH HOURS:** 11:30am - 3:00pm **DINNER HOURS:** 6:00pm - 11:00pm **SET MENU:** Lunch and dinner **BUFFETS:** No **VEGETARIAN DISHES:** 10+ **AMENITIES:** Private rooms for 20 **CAR VALET:** Yes **CREDIT CARDS:** AE, V, MC, DC, JCB **YEAR ESTABLISHED:** 1990

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