



SHANGHAI

PAUL PAIRET, GUEST

PORTRAIT

There were near misses in Paris, Sydney and Miami, but after fifteen years of trying it was in Shanghai that the celebrity chef realized the project of his life.

From Perpignan to Pudong

Born in French Catalonia in 1964, Pairet traces his interest in cooking back to a gift he requested for his ninth birthday. His friend had just received a heavy, hardback book of recipes ostensibly written by Donald Duck's grandma, and Pairet wanted a copy of his own. He went on to study at a Toulouse hotel school before starting his professional career as commis at Maison Blanche in Paris. He worked at restaurants in Hong Kong, Sydney and Jakarta before returning to the French capital, where he won praise as the chef de cuisine at Mosaic. After a stint in Istanbul at the suggestion of culinary deity Alain Ducasse, he arrived in Shanghai in 2005 tasked with launching Jade on 36, and has lived in the city ever since.

Viewed from both sides of the Huangpu River

Shanghai is a city built on its cosmopolitan past and, over the last decade, while countless other chefs have come and gone, Paul Pairet has viewed the city's return to global prominence from both sides of the Huangpu River. For three years he helmed Jade on 36, the Shangri-La hotel's gourmet restaurant located in Lujiazui, the city's new finance district, which had sprung from the Pudong swamps in just the past thirty years. During his time at Jade he developed many dishes as bold and avant-garde as the surrounding skyscrapers. Then, in 2009, Pairet crossed to the Puxi side of the river, where he opened extremely popular French restaurant Mr & Mrs Bund in the Unesco-protected Bund 18 building, which was constructed during the height of pre-People's Republic foreign influence in 1923.

Backed by Taiwanese shoe magnate Jessie Chiang's VOL Group, Mr & Mrs Bund enjoyed a success that helped lay the foundations for Ultraviolet, a ten-seat multimedia "psycho-sensory" dining experience hidden in an undisclosed location in one of Shanghai's many fast developing neighbourhoods. Pairet's progression from the postcard-perfect Bund to a less celebrated location mirrors the city's growing complexity and confidence.

The hustle and hedonism of the city

Ultraviolet's purpose-built multimedia dining room allows him to utterly transform its ambiance and thus influence what he calls the dishes' "psycho-taste". Sounds, smells and video projections specifically designed to enhance each course provide a kind of connotational seasoning for the food. The restaurant is typically booked out three months in advance, Ultraviolet still loses money. It's thanks, in part, to Shanghai's hustle and hedonism, the city's rush to both prove itself the best and enjoy the rewards of its successes, that a project as ambitious and improbable as Ultraviolet finally came into being. President Xi Jinping may not have been thinking of chefs from Perpignan when he laid out his vision of the Chinese Dream, but through dedication and innovation, Paul Pairet has realized his ambitions in Shanghai.

Taking the rough with the smooth

Much of Pairet's creativity stems from his irreverence. Though a meal at one of his restaurants might start with an ethereal tuna foam, it will be served in a deceptively commonplace supermarket tin. He may excel in high-tech culinary flourishes, but he is dismissive of overelaborate marketing. This attitude makes him an especially useful guide to seeing through the speculative smog that attaches to a place as exotic and impressive as Shanghai. Pairet is unsentimental about the city, acknowledging its rough edges and the challenges of living here. In doing so, he fortifies his admiration for the things about it he truly loves: its energy, the opportunities it presents, and of course the food. Two aspects that particularly intrigue him: the doctrine of drinking hot water, even on 40-degrees days, and the local interpretation of French decor. Looking out from under the peak of his trademark military cap, with glasses balanced on the tip of his nose, Pairet grins as he prepares to deliver another contrarian position. Shanghai, in many ways a new city, unburdened by convention, is listening, and ready to respond.

MY CITY

“The plane trees that line the streets in the former French Concession are the same as those from my hometown.”

Paul Pairet

The seductive buzz of the city

I was seduced by Shanghai straight away. There are things I don't like, don't get me wrong, but I like the idea that Shanghai is a city where everything is possible. I like the buzz – zzzzzz – that bubbling energy in the air. You hear it on the Bund. I felt it when I first arrived in Shanghai in 2003 and I still have the same feeling. More than ten years of that kind of energy? That's fantastic. I love walking around the city, that typical French passion. I love to sit down at a café and observe people. Out of my field I'm not an actor any more – I'm really a spectator. I want to be brainless, a vegetable, a carrot. Shanghai is alluring, not charming. It's a beautiful woman in a nightclub, not the woman of your life – although if you're lucky, it could be. Anything could happen.

Little villages full of surprises

I live in Pudong, which is where I've been since I first came to Shanghai to work at the Shangri-La. Back then, when I was establishing Jade on 36, people said no one would come east of the river, but they were completely wrong. Everything is possible. You have to have some luck, a niche, and you have to be focused on something. In Lujiazui you find these large avenues, although when I first arrived the only thing they led to was the Grand Hyatt. In ten years what were vast, empty spaces have become packed, and quite cleverly developed. There are four-lane roads like French motorways going through the centre of the city. It's unbelievable. These days I really live in Puxi and sleep in Pudong. The Fuxing Road tunnel is at the centre of my circle, which includes the Bund, the former French Concession and Jing'an Temple. Inside Shanghai there are a lot of these little villages. I like Ferguson Lane, and the small streets around it. All those alleys are great to investigate and discover new things. The plane trees that line the streets in the former French Concession are the same as those from my hometown. Xintiandi is a well-known destination, but things don't always need to be extremely original. Sure, it's commercial, but there's nothing wrong with that. Places with that sort of energy become commercial by nature.

The world of five-star hotels and world-class restaurants

The postcard view of Shanghai is beautiful – the Bund is very impressive – and the former French Concession is charming, but I don't like Shanghai necessarily for its architecture. It's such an incongruous mix of new things and old things that have not been refurbished properly. But the rate of change is phenomenal. You can go away for one month and, when you come back, suddenly there's a huge new building. There have been so many new five-star hotels in recent years. It's a city building up in front of your eyes. You don't see that anywhere else, except for maybe Dubai. In Shanghai, we build first, and we think what we'll do afterwards. People construct an entire building, fit out the whole thing, and only then when they're close to completion do they start to think about what brands and restaurants they're going to put there. I see areas building up, generally around restaurants. Restaurants in the streets are life; I like it when they are complemented by other businesses.

The fruits of local unlimited curiosity

I make my money working in restaurants and I spend my money going to restaurants, that's the cycle. Going to restaurants is unfortunately my only hobby. The food and drink industry is still developing here, it's not mature yet, but if you look at what's happened in the past three or four years it's definitely moving in the right direction, which was not so clear when I settled here in 2005.

There's more and more expression of personality through concepts, through the food, and it's more quality oriented. One of the best feelings of being in Shanghai is that we're a part of the development of our whole industry. We feel that we contribute. When we establish a project, it's another rock that builds up the mountain. You don't get that feeling in a lot of cities that are very mature. You can have success, but you don't necessarily contribute because the city is already old. You can become the best practitioner of your entire trade in Shanghai, or the best version of yourself at least.

Ultraviolet works not just because it's Paul Pairet, not just because it's a world first, but because it's in China. Our sponsors want to showcase the value of their products in Shanghai. That's something that benefits from Chinese people's unlimited curiosity. Never underestimate the capacity of the Shanghainese to know more, to discover more, as long as they are convinced that it is something of quality or value.

RESTAURANTS

CULINARY CLASSICS TO BISTRO FARE: EATING OUT IN THE CITY

Besides Shanghai's unique local cuisine, most of the rest of China's diverse regional cuisines, like Sichuan, Cantonese and Hunan, are well represented in the city. Moreover, one could easily walk past a local dumpling stand, an American fast food chain and a gourmet restaurant on the very same street.

But in general the tide is rising. A newly moneyed class has spurred a demand for status symbols. And there is scarcely a better status symbol than dining in a fashionable restaurant. As a result, Shanghai is on the cusp of becoming an international gastronomy destination on a par with Tokyo or Hong Kong.

In recent years, the city has attracted a slew of high-profile chefs from around the world. Jean-Georges Vongerichten blazed the trail in 2004 with his namesake restaurant on the Bund. Eight years later he doubled down with his Italian restaurant, Mercato. In the interim he has been joined by Jason Atherton, Paul Pairet, Richard Ekkebus and Umberto Bombana. Other foreign chefs such as Franck Pécol and Brad Turley have come to Shanghai and made names for themselves. More importantly, local stars like Tony Lu are starting to receive international recognition for putting Shanghai cuisine on the map.

MERCATO

6th floor, Three on The Bund,
3 Zhongshan Dong Yi Road,
near Guangdong Road
黄浦区中山东一路3号外滩3号6楼, 近广东路
Metro East Nanjing Road, exit 3
Tel 6323 3355, www.jean-georges.com
À la carte ¥300
Closed for lunch

ITALIAN, STYLISH

International culinary powerhouse Jean-Georges Vongerichten chose Shanghai, somewhat surprisingly, for his first-ever Italian concept. The results are spectacular. Design firm Neri & Hu have created a space of rustic simplicity with a slick post-industrial edge. Tables and floors are constructed of reclaimed wood. Exposed concrete walls bear Leonardo-esque mechanical drawings. Elegant arched windows peer out on Huangpu River below. And it all basks in the warm orange glow of naked incandescent bulbs. Chef de cuisine Sandy Yoon embraces subtle innovations in Italian cuisine with a deep and abiding veneration for its fundamental tenets: keep it simple, keep it fresh. No dish embodies this more than Mercato's signature kingfish carpaccio topped with crushed olives and just the slightest hint of chilli pepper. Nearly everything is made in-house. It shines through in pasta dishes like rigatoni and meatballs with a smoked chilli-tomato ragout. But sometimes it surprises with homemade ricotta topped with a savoury strawberry jam that just begs to be smeared across a sourdough crostini. And that's not all: Mercato's wood-fired pizzas are among the best in the city. They exit the oven bubbling, perfectly charred and topped with anything from salami and broccolini to farm eggs to locally made stracciatella.

M ON THE BUND

米氏西餐厅

7th floor, Five on the Bund, 20 Guangdong
Road, near Zhongshan Dong Yi Road
黄浦区广东路20号外滩5号7楼, 近中山东一路
Metro East Nanjing Road, exit 3

Tel 6350 9988

www.m-restaurantgroup.com

À la carte ¥600

ELEGANT, AUSTRALIAN-MEDITERRANEAN

In the 1990s the Bund was a quiet strip of architectural relics along Huangpu River. But in 1999, Michelle Garnaut, an Australian restaurateur with vision and courage, opened the stunning M on the Bund. This set in motion a development renaissance that eventually turned the area into one of Shanghai's premier dining and nightlife destinations. Fifteen years later, M is still going strong. Executive chef Hamish Pollitt does straightforward, unfussy food with a focus on quality seasonal ingredients and time-honoured preparations. A colourful and conversant menu draws inspiration from the Mediterranean with traditional Middle Eastern meze and Moroccan tagines. Hearty flavours play prominently as well, with homemade ham and rabbit sausages, a traditional beef Wellington or the house speciality, roasted suckling pig. And, of course, there is a reverent nod to Garnaut and Pollitt's home country of Australia with a pavlova – not to be missed. In the warmer months a terrace with sweeping riverside views makes M an ideal spot for al fresco dining and a leisurely weekend brunch.

MR & MRS BUND

6th floor, Bund 18, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi
Road, near Jiujiang Road
黄浦区中山东一路18号外滩18号6楼,
近九江路, metro East Nanjing Road, exit 3
Tel 6323 9898, www.mmbund.com
À la carte ¥600

CREATIVE CONTEMPORARY FRENCH

Arguably one of the most popular restaurants in Shanghai, Mr & Mrs Bund is the brainchild of French chef and master of molecular gastronomy Paul Pairet. The maestro seldom cooks with a straight face. His repertoire is full of sly in-jokes and visual gags. Bread service comes with a tuna mousse served in a half-opened tin. Order a Really Large Fry, and that is

precisely what comes to the table: a single large French fry. His Long Short Rib is a caricature of the carnivorous diet. It's presented as a small, tender morsel of braised and lacquered beef on an oversized rib bone. Other dishes evoke Proustian memories, like a sous-vide chicken breast grilled, chilled and served with a light-as-air aioli. The name, appropriately, is Picnic Chicken. But all of this playing around in the kitchen belies Pairet's technical acumen. He is a serious chef with a passion for innovation. He steams prawns in a jar to fragrant perfection with lemongrass, vanilla and citrus. He transforms chewy beef tendon into a fiercely crunchy salad ingredient. He flips a classic lemon tart inside out and then stuffs it in a candied lemon rind. A voluminous tome of a menu features all of the above and more, served sharing style. Pared-down versions are available for lunch through the week and for late night supper Tuesday to Saturday.

SIR ELLY'S 艾利爵士餐厅

13th floor, The Peninsula, 32 Zhongshan Dong Yi Road, near East Beijing Road
黄浦区中山东一路32号半岛酒店13层,
近北京东路, metro East Nanjing Road, exit 6
Tel 2327 6756
<http://shanghai.peninsula.com>
Fixed-price menus ¥780 to ¥880,
à la carte ¥750

SEASONAL, EUROPEAN, CHIC

Sir Elly's ticks the Western box on The Peninsula hotel's list of restaurants. It's name is a tribute to Elly Kadoorie, the grandfather of The Pen's current chairman and a legendary Shanghai tycoon from the early 20th century. The decor has just the right amount Art Deco details balanced out with subtler Chinese accents, like panes of textured glass and angular corner mouldings and porcelain vases. It is handsome, understated – perhaps so as not to distract from the commanding view of the Huangpu – be sure to reserve a window seat. Chef de cuisine David Chaveau's seasonal menu is a study in refined dining.

His medium is luxurious ingredients, including truffles, ceps, Ibérico ham, caviar, even gold leaf. He puts it to use in recipes that celebrate the best of European cuisine, such as *foie gras au torchon* with rhubarb, pistachio and chocolate balsamic; saffron paella; and pan fried turbot fillet with baby artichokes and cauliflower puree.

TABLE NO. 1

1st floor, The Waterhouse at South Bund
1-3 Maojiayuan Road, near Waima Road
黄浦区毛家园路1-3号水舍·上海南外滩酒店
1楼, 近外马路交汇处
Metro Xiaonanmen, exit 2
Tel 6080 2918, www.tableno-1.com
Fixed-price menu ¥788, à la carte ¥400

COMMUNAL DINING, FASHIONABLE

Stylish, casual star chef Jason Atherton was once a key lieutenant of celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay. His nine-year tenure was marked by two restaurants in the Ramsay empire: the critically acclaimed Maze and Maze Grill in London. But with the ink barely dry on his letter of resignation to Ramsay, Atherton was already in Shanghai starting his own thing: a casual gastropub in the fashionable Waterhouse Hotel. It's a small, sparsely appointed dining room in a restored riverside warehouse-turned-boutique hotel. Seating is mostly communal – just a few rows of long tables that can accommodate several parties, the idea being to create a shared dining experience. Likewise with the food; it's all meant to be shared. The menu doesn't feature courses, per se, just snacks, plates big and small and platters referred to as "sharing tables". What comes out of the kitchen covers a broad range of influences and flavours. It can be delicate and refined, like tea-cured hamachi with exotic Sichuan peppercorn. Sometimes it's rustic and comforting, like braised beef cheek and oxtail with smoked mashed potatoes. Other times it's adventurous, like crispy pig ear slices with Parmesan vinaigrette foam. Or it just might be simple and unassuming, like a bowl of citrus-flavoured olives.

ULTRAVIOLET

Address not disclosed, online booking only: www.uvbypp.cc

Fixed-price menus ¥3,000 to ¥ 5,000

Closed for lunch and all day Sunday and Monday

MULTI-SENSORY DINING

For chef and restaurateur Paul Pairet, the conventional restaurant was always an insufficient delivery system for the sensations he wanted to evoke with his cooking. Dining, he believed, should stimulate all the senses, not just the ones in the closest proximity to our forks. It took over a decade, but he finally found some investors who shared this vision. The result is this high-concept, avant-garde dining experience. The restaurant is at an undisclosed location (online booking should be done at least two months in advance). It comprises little more than a table for ten in an oval-shaped room with

plain white walls. The guests take their seats, and what ensues is multi-sensory dining experience in approximately twenty courses. Each course is accompanied with its own sound and visual elements. For instance, a fillet of sea bass comes to the table. A sophisticated digital imaging system projects the lapping waves of the ocean on the walls. Fragrance dispersion devices release the smell of sea spray into the air. Other dishes are paired with quirky pastiches of music, popular culture, wordplay, nostalgia, abstract imagery – any number of things that happened to be running through Pairet’s mind when he designed the menu. It’s cuisine as an extended metaphor, equal parts dining and performance art. And somehow it manages to not be gimmicky in the least. Pairet’s cooking is masterful and could stand well enough on its own.

DECIPHERING A MENU

Restaurants in Shanghai tend to be accommodating to foreigners. With the exception of the really lower-end places, bilingual or translated menus are quite common, almost the norm. There is no guarantee that the translations will always be clear and helpful, but even then, a great many restaurants use illustrated menus. So in most places the worst-case scenario is ordering food by pointing at pictures.

Most restaurants serving regional Chinese cuisine offer at least a handful of common core items. Almost all Shanghainese restaurants, for instance, will have *hongshao rou* (learn more about this dish under The City Special), and if they don’t carry that, they will offer a similar preparation, such as *hongshao tipang* (pork shoulder) or *hongshao changyu* (pomfret).

Da zha xie, or hairy crab, is another quintessential Shanghai delicacy. Named after its oddly furry claws, the hairy crab is harvested from Yangcheng Lake in nearby Jiangsu province. It is prized for its sweet roe which is often stewed with tofu or packed with pork in *shizi tou* (“lion’s head meatballs”). The leg meat is usually shelled and stir-fried with asparagus in a dish called *lu sun xie jiao*. Hairy crabs can also just be enjoyed whole with rice vinegar, shredded ginger and warm yellow rice wine. Late October to December is the peak season for them.

Denizens take their dumplings seriously, too. The most famous is the *xiao long bao*: a delicate little pouch filled with pork, chicken, shrimp or crab mixed with an aspic made with pork stock. As the dumplings heat up in the steam, the aspic melts into a soup. Pure genius. The technique also works with Shanghai’s other famous dumpling, the *shengjian bao*, which is made of leavened dough instead of a thin wrapper. Rather than steaming, *shengjian bao* are pan fried to a crisp golden brown.

OPEN AFTER MIDNIGHT

The people of Shanghai live to eat, and they don't let their pesky circadian rhythms stop them either. After midnight, there are plenty of solid options around town for a proper meal. These are just a few.

On the Bund, **MR & MRS BUND** is the best bet. Every Tuesday to Saturday it offers a "greatest hits" version of its regular menu. It's available until 2am, and is a perfect way to fuel up before hitting Bar Rouge upstairs.

A proper Hong Kong *cha canting* would never close before midnight. **CHA'S** on Sinan Road, being the archetype that it is, is open until 1:30am. Other options in that category include **XINWANG** and **TSUI WAH**. All three are great for a quick load-up session on carby, fatty goodness like roast goose or fried noodles.

DING TE LE slings yellow croaker noodles, fried pork chops and congee until well into the wee hours. If there are customers to justify it, they will even stay open all night.; while **BELLAGIO** is wide eyed and bushy tailed until 5am. It's Taiwanese cuisine is a godsend to all of the revellers stumbling from the nearby KTV bars.

MR & MRS BUND 6th floor, Bund 18, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi Road, near Jiujiang Road, The Bund, 黄浦区中山东一路18号外滩18号6楼, 近九江路, metro East Nanjing Road, exit 3, tel 6323 9898, www.mmbund.com

CHA'S 查餐厅 30 Sinan Road, near Middle Huaihai Road, Former French Concession, 黄浦区思南路30号, 近淮海中路, metro South Shaanxi Road, exit 4, tel 6093 2062

XINWANG 新旺茶餐厅 175 Changle Road, near South Maoming Road, Former French Concession, 黄浦区长乐路175号, 近茂名南路, metro South Shaanxi Road, exit 3

TSUI WAH 翠华餐厅 A Mansion, 291 Fumin Road, near Changle Road, Former French Concession, 徐汇区富民路291号梧锦世纪大厦内, 近长乐路, metro Changshu Road, exit 3, tel 6170 1282, www.tsuiwahrestaurant.com

DING TE LE 顶特勒粥面馆 No. 22, Lane 494 Middle Huaihai Road, near Yandang Road, Xintiandi, 黄浦区淮海中路494弄22号, 近雁荡路, metro South Huangpi Road, exit 1, tel 5107 9177

BELLAGIO 鹿港小镇 68 Taicang Road, near Shunchang Road, Xintiandi, 黄浦区太仓路68号, 近顺昌路, metro South Huangpi Road, exit 2, tel 6386 5701

The focus of the menu is Cantonese delicacies. It does a brisk business in Hong Kong standards like *charsiu* pork, roasted goose, noodle soups wontons and assorted dim sum like rice rolls, *har gau* dumplings and egg tarts. None of it is visionary or groundbreaking, but that's seldom the point with this kind of food. All of it is expertly executed and reasonably priced. Come weekends, this is one of the hottest dim sum destinations in town. Both floors are packed with leisurely diners. Getting a table can be quite a challenge, so reservations are essential. Either that or plan on a long wait. [See website for other locations](#)

DING TE LE 顶特勒粥面馆

No. 22, Lane 494 Middle Huaihai Road, near Yandang Road

黄浦区淮海中路494弄22号, 近雁荡路

Metro South Huangpi Road, exit 1

Tel 5107 9177

À la carte ¥25

NOODLES DINER, POPULAR

Food trumps atmosphere in this hole-in-the-wall noodle shop. By day it's jam-packed with the lunch break crowd. In the evening it attracts young, hungry punters on their way to or from a night of singing and drinking in KTV bars. The star of the show here is a noodle soup called *xue cai huang yu mian* (雪菜黄鱼面). The kitchen

DINING OUT WITH PAUL PAIRET

For me, restaurants need to pass the test of time. It's not just about trying to cope with the calendar set by monthly magazines and running after what's new. I like Crystal Jade and Din Tai Fung in Xintiandi.

Din Tai Fung is not Shanghainese but it does everything with such purity. And the xiao long bao at Crystal Jade is a genuine culinary icon, like sushi or a Vietnamese spring roll. It's like some kind of running ravioli dreamed up by Ferran Adrià. I prefer the traditional pork xiao long bao. The skin should be very thin and melting, the jus high in taste and the pork a little bit fatty. And the roasted pork at Crystal Jade, the piece of belly, is a winner every time. It says a lot, but is very restrained.

For French food, I like Franck Bistrot, not because Franck Pécol is a friend but because what he does is interesting. I like places that are good irrespective of the context. There's not many bistros here, but take Franck Bistrot and put it in France and it would still be very good. The quality, the selection, the personality of the restaurant – I think it's great.

CRYSTAL JADE 翡翠酒家

2nd floor, Building 6, South Block Plaza, Lane 123 Xingye Road, near Madang Road, Xintiandi, 黄浦区兴业路123弄新天地南里广场6号楼2楼, 近马当路, metro Xintiandi, exit 1, tel 6385 8752

DIN TAI FUNG 鼎泰丰

11A, 2nd floor, Building 6, South Block Plaza, Lane 123 Xingye Road, near Madang Road, Xintiandi, 黄浦区兴业路123弄新天地南里广场6号楼2楼11A单元, 近马当路, metro Xintiandi, exit 1, tel 6385 8378, www.dintai fung.com.tw

FRANCK BISTROT

376 Wukang Road, near Tai'an Road, Former French Concession, 徐汇区武康路376号, 近泰安路, metro Shanghai Library, exit 3, tel 6437 6465, www.franck.com.cn