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10

## TAIWAN ON TOP

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FUTURE DESIGN CAPITAL

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# THE NEW WORLD

TWO SETS OF CHINA-BASED ENTREPRENEURS HAVE EMBRACED TECHNOLOGY AS THE FUTURE OF WINING AND DINING, WITH RATHER DIFFERENT BUT EQUALLY DRAMATIC RESULTS.

WORDS **SIMON OSTHEIMER**





The 10-seat restaurant combines mind-bending cuisine with cutting-edge design, including computerised RGB lights, LED floor strips, pin projectors, UV bulbs, HD wall and table projectors, dry scent diffusers, tracking shape recognition, infrared cameras, multi-channel surround sound system, laser speakers, and a temperature air turbine. For French-born, Shanghai-based chef Paul Pairet (above), Ultraviolet is the result of a 15-year dream, and the embodiment of his devotion to the 'psycho taste'.

## ULTRAVIOLET

Born and trained in France, Paul Pairet first came to notice in 1998 at Paris' Cafe Mosaic, before landing in Shanghai in 2005 to open Jade on 36 at the Pudong Shangri-La hotel.

The smells, textures, aromas and flavours of his travels have inspired and rooted his very distinctive style of cuisine, and in just three short years, Jade on 36 has come to stand far apart from the hotel restaurant crowd, staking out an international reputation for sophisticated, avant-garde cuisine, and becoming a destination in itself.

In 2008, Pairet left Jade on 36 to join the VOL Group at the heritage Bund 18 building, before embarking on his most challenging creation to date, a 10-seat restaurant with a secret location that presents cuisine attached to raw emotion.

"Ultraviolet is the result of a 15-year dream," says Pairet. "The project crystallises what I believe in the most: the attempt to unite food by staging the otherwise random 'atmosphere' in order to enhance the food served and the memory of it."

Having arrived at the restaurant's secret location following a car ride across town, guests are led to a single table of 10 seats, where they are served a 20-course "avant-garde" set menu. The dinner that subsequently unfolds has been described as a sensory play choreographed by Chef Pairet and the Ultraviolet team.

Food is obviously the main reason to experience Ultraviolet, and taste its primary focus, but Pairet says that to assume food is only about taste is naive. "Food is ultimately about emotion," he says, "and emotion goes beyond taste. Emotion is influenced by your mood, your memories, your surroundings, your expectations, the people sitting next to you, your chair, your subconscious, the lighting, the memory of music, the realism of a sound, a view, a particular scent, the so-called atmosphere, and all external parameters building up your pre-conceived idea of what you are going to taste." The chef has a label for this: the "psycho taste."

According to Pairet, the psycho taste is everything about the taste but the taste. It is the expectation and the memory, the before and the after, the mind over the palate. It is all the factors that influence our perception of taste. For instance, see a tomato, and your mind will call upon its memory to tell you its taste. Smell bread baking, and you can taste the finished loaf. Pairet says we all "psycho taste" before we taste, which is why he is taking control over all influencing factors.

So how will the design of Ultraviolet affect our psycho taste? "Inside there are a table, 10 chairs and white walls. No décor, no artefacts, no paintings, no views," says Pairet. However, behind the pristine surface lies a wealth of cutting edge technology, including computerised RGB lights,

LED floor strips, pin projectors, UV bulbs, HD wall and table projectors, dry scent diffusers, tracking shape recognition, infrared cameras, multi-channel surround sound system, laser speakers, and a temperature air turbine. All this sensory technology is concealed within the ceiling and walls, and controlled remotely from a "techno-room."

The numbers involved in the creation of his vision are staggering: 29.5 tonnes of steel, almost 14km of cables and wires, 32 air-conditioning machines, 131 power sockets, 27 smoke detectors, 45 doors (eight automatic), 10 computer screens, 56 speakers, 12 CCTV cameras, and more than 4,000 pieces of tableware.

It is undoubtedly one of the most technologically-advanced kitchens in Asia, if not the world. Pairet jokingly adds a few more statistics of his own. "Close to 15,000 emails sent, up to 50,000 cigarettes consumed, 8,000 double espressos, a bowl of tears, 10 bowls of rage, US\$2.5 million invested, three years of work and counting, and more than one year's delay." All this work for a 10-seat restaurant.

Considering the expense and time, why only 10? "Because the nature of the project is about creating the best possible experience. It is difficult to make food at the highest level for more than 10 people at one time, so that's why 10 is the perfect number: creating an atmosphere that is convivial yet not intimate." *uvbypp.cc*