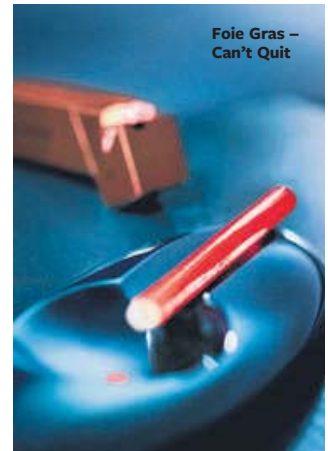




Truffle Burnt
Soup Bread

Food theatrics

Paul Pairet's new multi-sensory restaurant in Shanghai is somewhat like dinner and a movie – really good ones, consumed at the same time. Here's a spoiler alert, says **Lim Sio Hui**



Foie Gras –
Can't Quit



ULTRA CHIC

Above left: The dining room at Ultraviolet lives up to its name; Above right: Paul Pairet shot to fame with his playful, avant-garde cuisine when he helmed Shanghai's Jade on 36



Ultraviolet, Shanghai (location undisclosed)
Bookings can be made at +86 21 6142 5198
or www.uvbypp.cc/bookings

EVEN for those who think that good things are worth waiting for, this is pretty hard to beat. For French chef Paul Pairet, his 15-years-in-the-making restaurant Ultraviolet was an exercise in patience: he'd missed three opportunities throughout his career to realise this vision of an immersive dining experience and even when the project finally went ahead, construction was riddled with delays and took three years to complete.

Conceived in 1996 when he was out of work, the idea was simple enough: in order to be able to cook at his best, Pairet knew that he needed to get rid of the constraints of the a la carte menu, where the food is prepared to a certain extent if it was going to be delivered to the guest in a timely manner.

"You need to cook like you're at home: to know at what time and how many people will get here so you can plan your menu. And you can control the atmosphere: play some music and dim the lights."

While simple technologies would have sufficed for the original idea, the 47-year-old has moved with the times and today, the concept has evolved into a full-blown, multi-sensory setting combining state-of-the-art technology – pairing each dish with sound, visuals, and even scent – befitting the chef's penchant for molecular gastronomy techniques.

Pairet, who shot to fame with his playful, avant-garde cuisine when he helmed Shanghai's Jade on 36 between

2005 to 2008, is also behind the city's hugely successful restaurant Mr & Mrs Bund, from where guests are shuttled over each evening for Ultraviolet's one seating.

It is housed in a secret location in order to ensure diners arrive at the same time and holds just 10 seats, but despite its inaccessibility, Ultraviolet still opened last month to much fanfare and critical acclaim. The first guest was Pairet's mentor Alain Ducasse, who raved about the restaurant and its opening table, "Table Zero", which raised 70,000 yuan (\$14,204) at a charity auction.

Favourable reviews are not a surprise: most dishes from the current menu are taken from Pairet's repertoire honed over the years – just taken to a whole new level with the pairing of drink and ambience. Take the suggestively titled Foie Gras – Can't Quit: the dish is served with a haunting Ennio Morricone soundtrack accompanied by wraparound, black-and-white visuals of a blown-up cigarette burning itself out projected onto the walls – an evocative reminder that each bite is a sinful indulgence.

Every detail is so meticulously orchestrated that

'You need to cook like you're at home: to know at what time and how many people will get here so you can plan your menu. And you can control the atmosphere: play some music and dim the lights.'

Chef Paul Pairet

guests even require someone to guide them through the dinner, which takes place in a minimalist, cemented room tricked out with video and light projections, scents, hot and cold air machines, and even a museum-quality sound system that allows the chef to speak directly to each person at the table.

Restaurant director Fabien Verdier plays "host", encouraging you to dip the foie gras "cigarette" in the cabbage "ash" it's served with; to take a whiff of the cigar smoke trapped inside the glass dome covering the Truffle Burnt Soup Bread.

Priced at 2,000 yuan, the 22-course experience may not come cheap, but Pairet is quick to point out that operational costs alone – bearing in mind a staff count of 25 – would require 5,000 yuan to break even. There are plans to commercialise the project in the future, but for now, Ultraviolet is a labour of love for Pairet and long-time backers VOL group, as well as a long list of sponsors.

The downside to something as high-profile as this is always the hype that precedes it, which is a concern for Pairet. He went through the trouble of explaining the rationale behind every aspect of the restaurant on its website, where the curious can read a 13-page brochure, as well as download an extended thesis of sorts on his food writing and biographies of the core team and partners.

"I don't usually try to justify a project because at the end of the day, the judgement lies with the people who come. But this is very small and very new and there's always a kind of prejudice as soon as you do something like this; that we are adding (bells and) whistles to the food," he says. "I don't believe we're trying to do that here. The only thing to do is to come and try it."

btnews@sph.com.sg

PUBLISHED JUNE 16, 2012

DINING

Food theatrics

Paul Pairet's new multi-sensory restaurant in Shanghai is somewhat like dinner and a movie - really good ones, consumed at the same time. Here's a spoiler alert, says Lim Sio Hui



Truffle Burnt Soup Bread

"You need to cook like you're at home: to know at what time and how many people will get here so you can plan your menu. And you can control the atmosphere: play some music and dim the lights."

- Chef Paul Pairet

**Ultraviolet, Shanghai (location undisclosed)
Bookings can be made at +86 21 6142 5198
or www.uvbypp.cc/bookings**

EVEN for those who think that good things are worth waiting for, this is pretty hard to beat. For French chef Paul Pairet, his 15-years-in-the-making restaurant Ultraviolet was an exercise in patience: he'd missed three opportunities throughout his career to realise this vision of an immersive dining experience and even when the project finally went ahead, construction was riddled with delays and took three years to complete.

Conceived in 1996 when he was out of work, the idea was simple enough: in order to be able to cook at his best, Pairet knew that he needed to get rid of the constraints of the a la carte menu, where the food is pre-prepared to a certain extent if it was going to be delivered to the guest in a timely manner.

"You need to cook like you're at home: to know at what time and how many people will get here so you can plan your menu. And you can control the atmosphere: play some music and dim the lights."

While simple technologies would have sufficed for the original idea, the 47-year-old has moved with the times and today, the concept has evolved into a full-blown, multi-sensory setting combining state-of-the-art technology - pairing each dish with sound, visuals, and even scent - befitting the chef's penchant for molecular gastronomy techniques.

" Pairet, who shot to fame with his playful, avant-garde cuisine when he helmed Shanghai's Jade on 36 between 2005 to 2008, is also behind the city's hugely successful restaurant Mr & Mrs Bund, from where guests are shuttled over each evening for Ultraviolet's one seating.

It is housed in a secret location in order to ensure diners arrive at the same time and holds just 10 seats, but despite its inaccessibility, Ultraviolet still opened last month to much fanfare and critical acclaim. The first guest was Pairet's mentor Alain Ducasse, who raved about the restaurant and its opening table, "Table Zero", which raised 70,000 yuan (S\$14,204) at a charity auction.

Favourable reviews are not a surprise: most dishes from the current menu are taken from Pairet's repertoire honed over the years - just taken to a whole new level with the pairing of drink and ambience. Take the suggestively titled Foie Gras - Can't Quit: the dish is served with a haunting Ennio Morricone soundtrack accompanied by wraparound, black-and-white visuals of a blown-up cigarette burning itself out projected onto the walls - an evocative reminder that each bite is a sinful indulgence.

Every detail is so meticulously orchestrated that guests even require someone to guide them through the dinner, which takes place in a minimalist, cemented room tricked out with video and light projections, scents, hot and cold air machines, and even a museum-quality sound system that allows the chef to speak directly to each person at the table.

Restaurant director Fabien Verdier plays "host", encouraging you to dip the foie gras "cigarette" in the cabbage "ash" it's served with; to take a whiff of the cigar smoke trapped inside the glass dome covering the Truffle Burnt Soup Bread.

Priced at 2,000 yuan, the 22-course experience may not come cheap, but Pairet is quick to point out that operational costs alone - bearing in mind a staff count of 25 - would require 5,000 yuan to break even. There are plans to commercialise the project in the future, but for now, Ultraviolet is a labour of love for Pairet and long-time backers VOL group, as well as a long list of sponsors.

The downside to something as high-profile as this is always the hype that precedes it, which is a concern for Pairet. He went through the trouble of explaining the rationale behind every aspect of the restaurant on its website, where the curious can read a 13-page brochure, as well as download an extended thesis of sorts on his food writing and biographies of the core team and partners.

"I don't usually try to justify a project because at the end of the day, the judgement lies with the people who come. But this is very small and very new and there's always a kind of prejudice as soon as you do something like this; that we are adding (bells and) whistles to the food," he says. "I don't believe we're trying to do that here. The only thing to do is to come and try it."

btnews@sph.com.sg