

# DestinAsian

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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2012

ISSN 1548-0719 (PRINT)  
ISSN 1548-0727 (DIGITAL)

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At the Oberoi Amarvilas,  
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# NE PLUS ULTRA

Paul Pairet's secret new restaurant is literally a feast for the senses  
BY AMY FABRIS-SHI

The dining room is plunged into darkness. AC/DC's "Hell's Bells" blasts from surround-sound speakers, and a procession of male and female attendants in black suits enters solemnly. We open our lips as a frozen wasabi apple "ostie" is placed on our tongues, communion style. And so begins the otherworldly Ultraviolet experience—a kind of Cirque du Soleil of fine-dining whimsy by French chef Paul Pairet.

Pairet, 47, is already something of a culinary cult figure in Shanghai. The Marseille-born chef has been based here for the past seven years, first flirting with molecular cuisine at the Pudong Shangri-La before

opening his wildly popular modern French bistro, Mr & Mrs Bund, on Shanghai's historic riverfront. All of that, however, was just a prelude to Ultraviolet, a dream project 15 years in the making.

The new 10-seat restaurant is an indulgent experiment in what Pairet terms "psycho taste." The university chemistry major believes that our perception of taste can be altered through engaging different senses and emotion triggers as we eat. "Food is ultimately about emotion, and emotion goes beyond taste," he explains.

We're not just talking about dimmed lights and mood music—every dish in Pairet's 20-course avant-garde set menu is presented with its own taste-tailored choreography of sounds, scents, video projections, and temperatures.

To create the desired effects, Ultraviolet's single-table dining room is fitted out with



an arsenal of technology: 360-degree wall projectors, a multichannel surround-sound system, dry scent diffusers, infrared cameras, plus one of the world's most advanced kitchens and an on-site R&D operation. The setup allows the otherwise featureless room to transform in seconds from a Gothic church to a sun-dappled pasture.

A staff of 25 caters to the 10

**DINNER THEATER** Ultraviolet's single-table dining room in pop-art mode, left. Below: Truffle Burnt Soup Bread, a Paul Pairet specialty.

nightly guests—a ratio that the chef admits is "disastrous" for his bottom line. But it's a boon for those lucky enough to score a seat at this "secret" table (guests are required to rendezvous at Mr & Mrs Bund before being driven to the unmarked location). Courses unfold like scenes of a 20-act play. A red fruit-wrapped cigarillo of silky foie gras arrives on a silvery ashtray. Cigar smoke swirls around the walls as you dip the stick into cabbage "ash" and down a sherry chaser. Another course of foaming lobster and seaweed is accompanied by eddying rock pool scenes and the salty whiff of ocean.

Other times the effects are less extreme—a simple side of perfectly grilled Wagyu is served with a glass of Bordeaux in a classical Parisian restaurant setting. "It's not about distraction, but rather pushing the experience of the food a bit further," Pairet says.

While it could easily spiral into the realm of pretentiousness, Pairet's subversive wit keeps things lighthearted and fun. In fact, the last time we see him—over a dessert of frozen gummy bears and cola "rocks"—he's chasing human-size gummy bear projections around the room, with a huge smile spread across his face. ☺

*Reservations at Ultraviolet can only be made online at [uvbypp.cc](http://uvbypp.cc); a 20-course set dinner with drinks costs RMB2,000 (about US\$315) per head.*