

Only ten seats. A total-immersion dining experience.

A CHEF WHO CHALLENGES
THE RULES

In Shanghai, the Cultural Revolution of Paul Pairet



Paul Pairet, Guerilla fighter
for surprising cuisine.

RECENTLY AWARDED A THIRD STAR AT THE RELEASE OF THE MICHELIN GUIDE ASIA IN SEPTEMBER 2017, PAUL PAIRET HAS BEEN REVOLUTIONISING AND TRANSCENDING THE CLASSICAL RULES OF GASTRONOMY FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS IN HIS AVANT-GARDE, EXPERIMENTAL RESTAURANT IN SHANGHAI: ULTRAVIOLET.

BY FRANÇOIS-XAVIER ROUGAGNOU, PHOTOS BY SCOTT WRIGHT/LIMELIGHT STUDIO



“The advance post of avant-garde cuisine”

It was in the Café Mosaic in Paris that we started hearing of a young chef who had returned to France after several years of “culinary wanderings” that had taken him to Hong Kong, Sydney and Jakarta. Armed with these years of travelling through Asia and Australasia, and the influence of his experiences, he was now impossible to classify in terms of his cuisine: strong French roots in technique and culture, but clearly different and foreign in its creativity and unabashed innovation. At the time, he was considered a rival to the Spoon of Alain Ducasse who, impressed by the talents of the young man, encouraged him to apply them at the Ritz-

Carlton Istanbul, making it one of the most popular restaurants of the Ottoman capital.

But Paul loved Asia and returned in 2005 to open the restaurant of the brand new Shangri-La Pudong in Shanghai: the Jade on 36. In three years, he gave the Jade on 36 an international reputation, whose cuisine, while sometimes denounced for being too original, was also recognised for its perfect technique and personality, already deftly playing on textures and temperatures, some-

times with excess.

This is where he unconsciously started to lay the foundations for the cuisine of his future restaurants: Mr & Mrs Bund, and later Ultraviolet, able to provoke surprise thanks to the precision and spirit of his creations; a singular cuisine that was already the talk of the town and noticed in the specialised press, thus giving birth, unwittingly, to an advance post of avant-garde cuisine in Asia.

He opened Mr & Mrs Bund in April 2009, expressing his modern version of simple, popular French cuisine, revisiting the classical repertoire. He developed a concept of “sharing” simple, perfectly executed



Every dinner is a surprise. The décor changes every night and Pairet officiates in his combat gear.

dishes, just like Heston Blumenthal would later do at his Dinner restaurant in London. For Pairet it was a hugely popular success, probably the biggest success for a French cook in China.

In 2012, Pairet and his partners launched a unique, bold and exciting concept: Ultraviolet, a project he had been thinking and dreaming of for many years. With room for only ten guests, the idea is this: a restaurant that uses multi-sensory technology, creating a “total immersion” dining experience. Every dish created and imagined by Paul Pairet, every new chapter on the menu is associated with a visual, musical and olfactory experience, staged and choreo-

graphed in an almost theatrical way. Twenty scenes, all different, inspired by his life, his emotions and his fantasies, some frightening, some sad, but where each dish remains the centre of attention.

Paul Pairet claims that the basic idea comes from one of his most fundamental principles: conviviality.

“Ten people having dinner around one big table brings us back to the “tables d’hôtes” and inns of the 17th century, long before the invention of modern restaurants,”

“The biggest success of a French chef in China”

explains Paul. “I haven’t invented anything, just modernised and revisited what already existed. I wanted the customers to feel surprised, but also involved. Tension makes you more attentive. The concept of Ultraviolet is anchored in the idea that controlling the atmosphere and the relevance of its parameters improves the dining experience.”

It may seem rather complex, but that is the innovative genius of this chef. Ultraviolet is not a show, Ultraviolet is not just the most secret, best hidden and smallest gastronomic restaurant in the world. No, Ultraviolet is a unique experience, and the first restaurant to blend food with a total sensory immersion, ➤

► of which the ingredients include the lights, the sounds, the music, the scents, and the temperature of the air.

This idea of a chef's table has always haunted Paul, mostly to free himself of "à la carte" menus, but also to take control of time and give the best of himself in a simple, personal, almost "homey" way: "...taking my time, creating my menu, choosing the lights, the music and organising the atmosphere by adding ingredients to this moment of sharing." Why not, for example, serve a beef rib, under the soft light of a candle, while listening to Beethoven?

On an October day in Shanghai, a minibus came to pick us up in front of the Mr & Mrs Bund restaurant, to bring us to the secret location, far away from Bund, the historic centre of town. We arrived thirty minutes later. We walked into a dark room, almost completely black. An elevator seemed to be taking us underground, and that was the starting point of a crazy and fabulous evening. An indescribable journey to the centre of flavour and emotions, in a world filled with lights, tastes, smells, pleasing sounds and unearthy visions.

This unique experience brings you deep inside your own memories, and through paths of childhood recollections, increasing your emotional sensitivity, slowing the beating of your heart. The chef is in control, setting the tempo of the moment. He is the conductor; we become actors and spectators of a magical dinner with breathless rhythm.

Yes, I don't hesitate in saying this, Paul Pairet is a sorcerer, a magician of contemporary cuisine: he controls

A MENU THAT MAKES YOU THINK

I had the privilege of travelling inside Paul Pairet's universe and sampling the marvellous creations of his last menu "UVC", a symphony in four acts: land, sea, Asia, and dessert.

ABALONE PRIMITIVE

A primal technique: cooking abalone in front of you with a flame, served with yuzu, ash and dill, in the shell; an indescribable tribal atmosphere, with the music of the movie "Ghost in the Shell", alongside some wonderful Françoise Bedel champagne.

CARABINEROS DE HUELVA

Beautiful Gamba, a cousin to the Palamos gambas, coming from the south of Andalucía... Served with a fake shell with a grainy texture and a Condrieu from Maison Guigal, while listening to confusing American hip-hop.

VERY SEA SEA SCALLOP

Superb raw scallop and a sea-urchin, just to add on to the maritime, salty character of the composition. Extraordinarily fresh. Lime and sea water have been put in nitrogen and reconstituted in the shape of a shell. For the music, the famous adagio cantabile by Beethoven, a Barco Del Corneta to drink, a beautiful white from Castile.

SURF SURF TURF TURF

Start of Act II, with a soft transition from the sea to land, in the Californian spirit of surf and turf. Grilled oyster, the skin of a squid, foie gras and duck jus, with a Beach Boys song, and served with a fantastic Jumilla de la Bodega El Nido.

PICNIC TIN

At this point in the evening, the table is illuminated in green colours, like a long, beautiful stretch of grass, a definitive passage to the land theme. The idea is of a picnic among friends. D.I.Y.B.L.T. – Do It Yourself Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato. Guided by the maître d'hôtel, the guests are invited to make their own sandwich, served with a tomato and basil water, to a tune by Claude François.

and enflames your gustatory emotions and immerses you in his multi-sensory culinary world.

The food is obviously the first reason to try Ultraviolet, and the taste is the main reason behind the experience, but believing that eating is only about tasting would be very naïve, claims the chef.

After the dinner, Paul Pairet shared his intellectual journey and the long gestation of his project by explaining his philosophy and roots: "At the end of the day, eating is about emotion, and emotion goes beyond simply tasting. Emotion is influenced by our mood, our memory, what surrounds us, and even the people sitting next to us; the lights, the memory of music, of sounds and visions, the memory of perfumes, the atmosphere and all the other external parameters will define the preconceived idea of what you are going to taste, and that is what will determine your "psycho-gustatory" profile. Understanding that taste is influenced by memory, desire, the before and after, the mind before the palate, all these factors angle our perception of taste. Look at a tomato and your brain will ask your memory to recover the taste. Smell a piece of baked bread and you already have the sensation of eating a whole baguette."

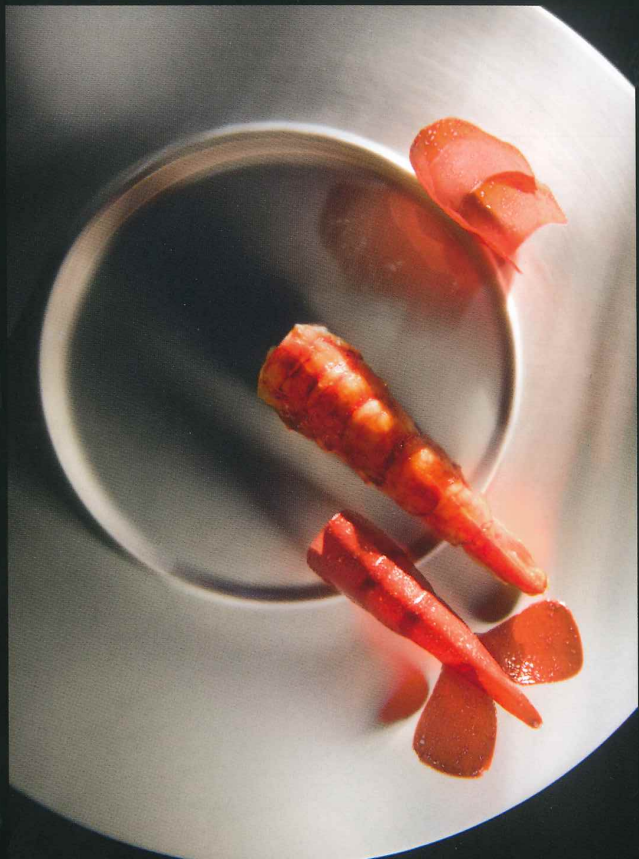
Ultraviolet is a sensory enhancer, combining tradition and technology for the purpose of helping you enhance your perception of food and taste; Paul Pairet is breaking the rules and reinventing the very concept itself of dinner. ☘

Reservation: only by Internet on www.uvbypp.cc
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Address page 120



ABALONE PRIMITIVE



CARABINEROS DE HUELVA



VERY SEA SEA SCALLOP



SURF SURF TURF TURF