



Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet, Shanghai, China

The Shanghai restaurant that puts the multi into sensory dining also displays a deep regard for its guests' enjoyment

Ultraviolet is renowned as one of the most avant-garde, game-changing restaurants in the world – a perennial fixture in the upper echelons of the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list and a regular on The World's 50 Best list for good measure. Chef/architect/impresario Paul Pairet's grand vision sees taste, touch, sound, smell and sight all play virtuoso roles in his gastronomic symphony, which is played out to a super-exclusive audience nightly in Shanghai.

What is sometimes overlooked, however, amid the awe and the technical brilliance, is just how finely executed the performance is at this 10-seat restaurant. The notion of hospitality is central to the immersive UV experience – and it is this ability to marry the truly innovative and surprising with the emotional and personal that is celebrated in this award.

Guests gather not at Ultraviolet but at Pairet's equally well-established eatery, Mr & Mrs Bund, on the banks of the city's Huangpu River. From that moment on, they must give themselves over to Pairet's expert team, led by Kim Quach: first driven in a blacked out minibus to a secret location; then arriving in a nondescript back alley; finally entering through an unmarked door. That initial trust is rewarded as diners find themselves in a cocoon-like pod with each of their names lighting up a seat at the single table.

The next few hours fly away in a blur of 20-plus brilliantly choreographed dishes and presentations, masterfully and sometimes theatrically served with the aid of projections, olfactory infusions, soundtracks, light shows, comedic dances and a strong dose of deliciousness. The drinks pairing is, as you'd expect, as equally imaginative and evocative as other elements of this precision-engineered flight of fancy.

Crucially, the service team discretely check each guest's mood and enjoyment levels, explaining the background of the dishes in detail to those who enquire, electing to let others sit back and soak it all up. At a point in the evening, one white wall suddenly slides away to reveal the kitchen, into which Pairet himself (ever clad in his trademark blue cap) welcomes his guests with Gallic charm.

Since opening in 2012, no restaurant has pioneered the notion of experiential dining more than this international destination. Now Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet is also being recognised for its subtle but equally vital ability to master the art of hospitality.

Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet

Somewhere in Shanghai

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Images: Scott Wright of Limelight Studio