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Walking The Bund and sailing the Huangpu River are great, but there's no better way to get a feel for the heartbeat of China's



most glamorous (and populous) city than by following your tastebuds. Here's Dilvin Yasa's Shanghai in 7 dishes...



‘Come to Shanghai and eat us out of house and home’ was perhaps *not* the brief I was given when I landed in the ‘Paris of the East’ recently, but with a sweeter-than-average cuisine heavy on ‘drunken’ chicken and crab how can anyone resist? Four days, 60 kilograms and endless unbelievable dining experiences later, I present to you the seven dishes (and in the case of one restaurant, experience) you need to pop in your ‘must do’ journal immediately.

1. Peking duck

When I was instructed to book a table at the recently opened W Shanghai’s upscale YEN restaurant and order myself chef CK Sau’s modern take on Peking duck, I thought they were confused. The centuries-old dish – one of the main dishes on imperial court menus back in the 1300s – hails from Beijing, not Shanghai and the request is not unlike someone in Coober Pedy asking you to try their ‘famous’ seafood platter.

But oh, what a revelation! Rather than stuff a pancake with duck meat, spring onion and cucumber, Sau pairs the duck with a surprising piece of melon and serves it up with a rose-infused sauce. It sounds wrong, but tastes oh so right.

2. Xiaolongbao (soup dumpling)

If you’re hankering for traditional street food, it doesn’t get any more authentic than Jia Jia Tang Bao, a hole-in-the-wall at the People’s Square as notorious for its loooooong lines and plastic-stool ambience as it is for its made-to-order soup dumplings – or xiaolongbao.

Most locals swear you can do no better than the hot parcels of pork and soup, but I’m convinced pure crab is the clear winner. Regardless, give yourself extra time and prepare to go straight on the nod afterwards.

3. All 20 courses at Ultraviolet

Technically, I'm cheating, however no dining compilation of Shanghai is complete without Ultraviolet, a three Michelin-starred 'experiential' restaurant conceived and executed by French chef Paul Pairet, located somewhere so secret, no one actually knows where it is (a bus transports you to an unmarked entrance somewhere near Suzhou Creek).

What comes next is the ultimate multi-sensory experience for 10 guests only, featuring 20 courses served by a team of chefs, servers and producers who activate sounds, lights, scents and videos from a nearby control room. The dishes too also remain closely guarded – although a quick scroll on Instagram shows diners enjoying the likes of Coca Cola duck. Got a spare \$800? You can make a booking and tell us all about it.

4. Sesame noodles

If you've ever wondered what eating in a prison dining room must feel like, pay a visit to Wei Xiang Zhai, a decades-old restaurant where the scenes are so chaotic that many food reviewers often refer to it kindly as being a somewhat 'unforgiving' environment.

People keep coming back however, because their signature sesame noodles – angel hair wheat noodles slicked with molten sesame-chilli paste and topped with your choice of meat – is so good, it's worth fighting the hordes off to get a seat and then showing off your shiv anytime someone hovers by your table. I plan to go back the minute I'm next in Shanghai. If they'll have me.