

A Different Summer

# DELICIOUS

**PAUL PAIBET**

THE LOGIC OF  
ESSENTIALISM

**MARVIN GAUCI**

LYNANT TERRIBLE

**JOAN ROCA**

A MASTER OF BALANCE



# THE LOGIC OF ESSENTIALISM

Interview with  
**PAUL PAIRET,**  
Ultraviolet

**I**t is by no coincidence that French chef, Paul Pairet is regarded as one of the best talents in the current global food industry. He is a true visionary with an impeccable skill to take food to another level. Chef Pairet worked in kitchens all over the world before settling in Shanghai, where he now runs three restaurants: the irreverent bistro Mr and Mrs Bund, the meat-centric The Chop Chop Club and the highly acclaimed and highly secretive Ultraviolet. Chef Pairet shared with us his interpretation of essentialism, the essence of Ultraviolet and his plans for the future.

To whom did you look up to in your early steps in the food industry?

Joël Robuchon for his precision and perfectionism. Jacques Maximin, Michel Trama, and Alain Senderens for their creativity, and, at a later stage, Alain Ducasse for his philosophy.

In a recent interview you noted; “passion is the key to succeeding in this industry, but passion must be actively nurtured and allowed to develop.” Can you elaborate?

Working in this industry is a hard work. Many people join this industry because of their passion; many quit because of the frustrations from the challenges and difficulties along the years, which eventually overtake their passion. I think the stamina is important, the mental stamina, the capacity to carry on with a project. And ultimately this can be sustained only by a passion that you nurture. You nurture



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the passion. It's not something that is a natural everyday passion, sometimes you need to step back and remember why you are doing that trade. It's a bit like when you are with somebody, you can always look at the other girls, there are always some beautiful girls around, but sometimes you need to remember why you are with somebody. It's the same for cooking, you need to evaluate it a bit like a love story. Why do I still love cooking? The day I will have enough, I will probably quit. You need to maintain that passion, to actively maintain it.

How do you see the world with the "baby's eye"?

I approach cooking, ingredients, techniques, textures and flavours with an equal lack of prejudice and unbiased opinion without regard for national boundaries or 'class' devoid of context, and reputation. I taste something as if it was being tasted for the first time, and perceiving without discrimination. A canned sardine is not a lesser sardine than a fresh one, but simply a different product. Likewise, foie gras is not intrinsically more suited to fine dining than a piece of bread, or a truffle more interesting than the Coca Cola.

In what way do mistakes help you develop into a better person?

I don't know if mistakes made me a better person. Nevertheless, I do know mistakes and failures can lead you into more depth in discovery of cooking and kitchen. Failure is a great parameter for success; if you don't know when you fail, you can't know when you succeed.

What lessons did you learn during your time in Australia?

I experienced the horizontal mix and fusion of different cultures of cuisine. I also learnt the importance of simplicity. The great lesson from Australia came from a lady who will never probably know how much she influenced me. I didn't even understand exactly what she was saying at the time. That was Gay Bilson. She is a bit of an icon of Australian cooking. She was an old lady when I was lucky enough to meet her. I had still my vision, my Hong Kong vision of my "restaurant du France", and I was still dotting the plates a bit Robuchon-style, but it was not really creation, it was just a pile of all the knowledge I had. She was trying to explain to me the sense of being natural, and the fact that of course you can have an idea but you still need to express something that is good, and, for this, you need to make it as simple as can be. That's the summary of what she said.





In what way is Ultraviolet the culmination of a two-decade long dream?

Ultraviolet is the crystallization of all my experience, through a single project. It's the project of my life. It's everything I believe in, with flawless execution on par with the concept. Ultraviolet is a crystallization of all the mistakes I've done, all the goals that I had in mind. It's a crystallization of my travels, my errands, from being in France, getting lost in Hong Kong, going to Australia, passing by Indonesia, coming back to Paris to end up in Istanbul. All those things combined could add up to what defines me as a global chef, a global traveler, yes, French spine, but definitely open-minded

Tell us about your decoded Menu.

Ultraviolet offers three different menus on different dates, each priced the same and labelled UVA, UVB and UVC. Highlights include Tomato Mozza And Again, where two versions of the same dish are served side by side – one sweet, one savoury – and Foie Gras Can't Quit, an edible cigarette made from crisp red fruit skin, filled with foie gras mousse and served in an ash tray sprinkled with cabbage ash.



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Why do you feel that the money, the time, and the energy required to make a restaurant is something of another time?

It's not on par with the society of today. You need patience, you need very secure investments, you need a lot of things. Not to say there is not a commercial project that can work straight away, a pizzeria maybe, but the effort to open most places is immense.

Being honest in this industry, which means good value for money, you have to give more than you receive. That is the reality of this job, which makes it a beautiful job! That's one of the things that makes this job a job of another time.

What does essentialism mean to you?

It is to express clearly the concentration of an idea, without adding anything unrelated to the focus of that idea, without compensation. A dish is ready when there is nothing left to add or take away. A dish could be: interesting, new, daring – perhaps shocking – beautiful, maybe comforting, even funny, but always good.

What's next for you?

COVID-19 has affected my future plans to such an extent that I had to go back to the drawing. Priority is given to the current situation the world is experiencing and any plans we had in mind had to be suspended or modified. Our focus is to make sure we survive this crisis caused by the pandemic.