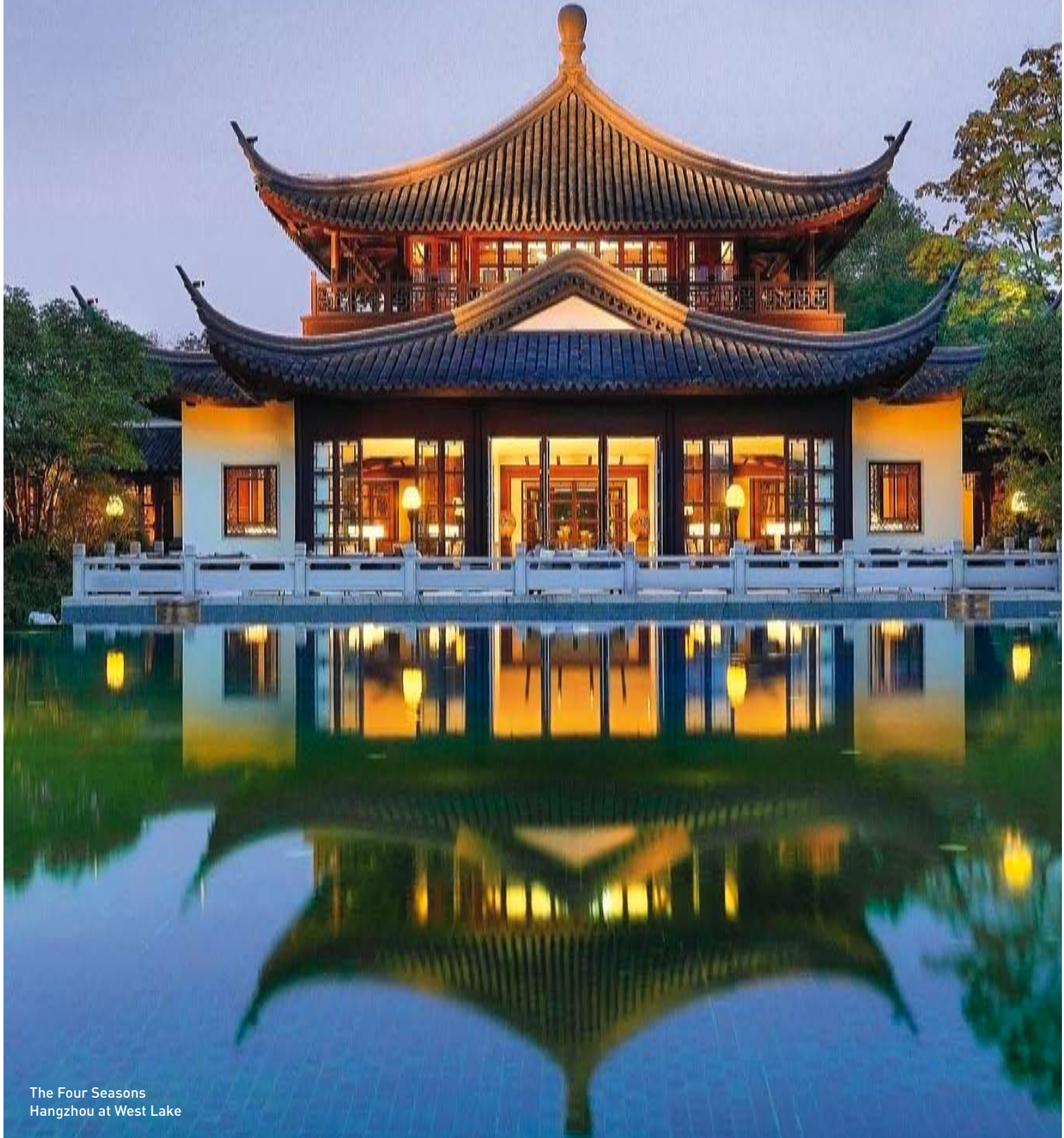
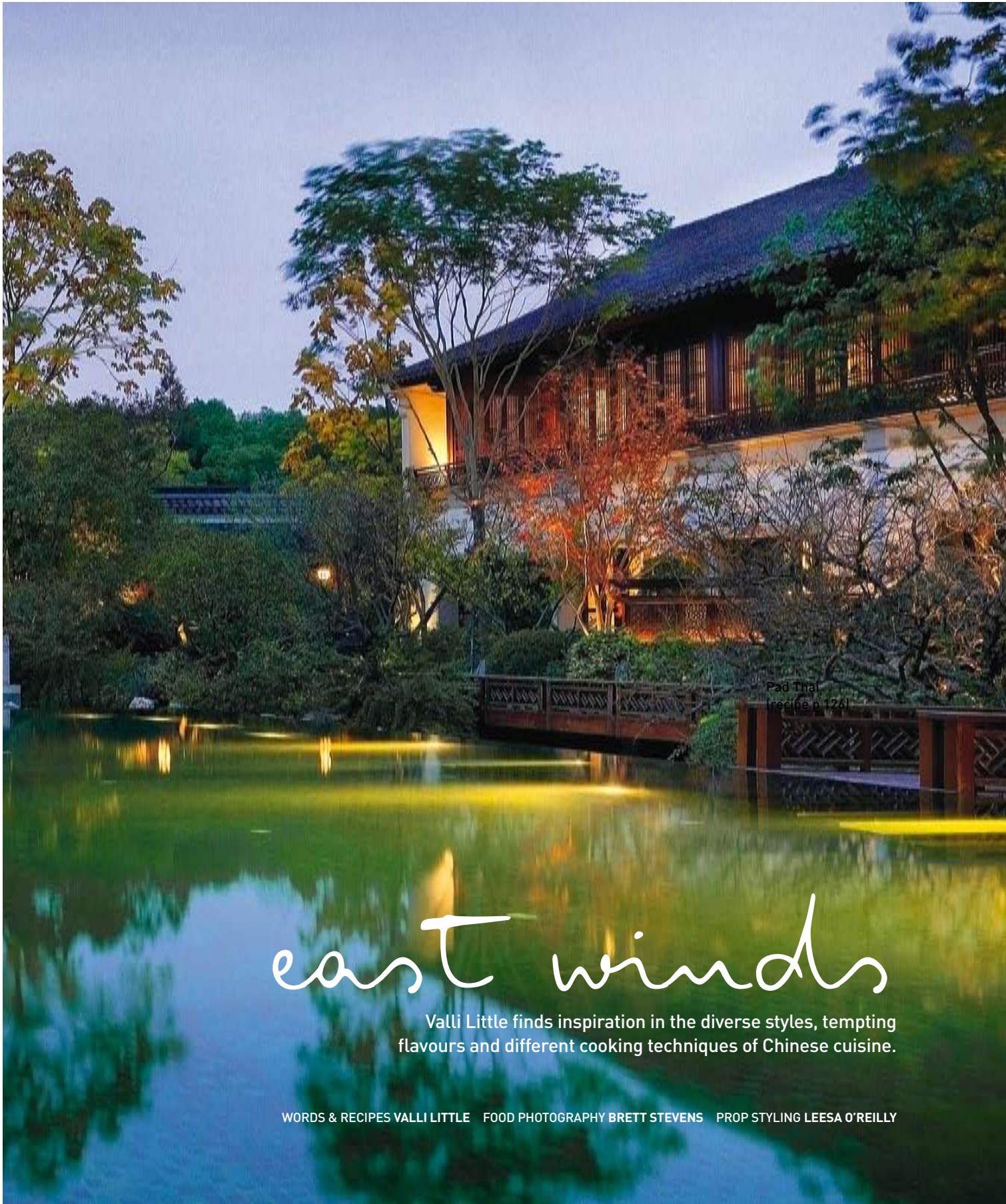


global flavours.



The Four Seasons
Hangzhou at West Lake



Pad Thai
(recipe p 126)

east winds

Valli Little finds inspiration in the diverse styles, tempting flavours and different cooking techniques of Chinese cuisine.

WORDS & RECIPES VALLI LITTLE FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BRETT STEVENS PROP STYLING LEESA O'REILLY

china town

Valli Little delves into the sights and sounds of China and finds a few days in this culinary hotspot is never enough.

It's hard to get the measure of China in a few days, but my recent trip certainly opened my eyes to the depth of this vast, exciting country.

There's nothing quite like starting in the sprawling metropolis of Shanghai. Our taste buds are first awakened following a visit to the Yuyuan Garden and the celebrated Nanxiang dumpling restaurant, where we breakfast on their fragrant sweet dumplings. Art Salon, in the French concession, is a small family-owned eatery, serving up classic family-style dishes amid contemporary Chinese paintings and artworks. In contrast, many foreigners, including ex-Melburnian Michelle Garnaut and celebrated French chef Paul Pairet, have set up elegant Western-style restaurants on The Bund. Here you can eat world-class food produced by international chefs at their respective restaurants, M on The Bund and Mr & Mrs Bund.

Hangzhou and West Lake offer a welcome respite as peace and serenity prevail here. A drive through the tea plantations of Longjing give us a glimpse of local life, followed by lunch at Dragon Well Manor (known as the Chez Panisse of China). Our nine-course degustation in one of the many garden pavilions is a memorable dining experience. Owner Dai Jianjun has reclaimed the traditions and age-old techniques of his ancestors, using only seasonal, locally sourced produce. We spend the night at Four Seasons Hangzhou at West Lake.

Our final destination is Beijing. A morning walk on The Great Wall leaves us in awe of its magnitude. We then head to The Green T. House Living for lunch. This part-gallery, part-restaurant, owned by design guru JinR, offers beautifully presented dishes that blur the lines between food and art. Over the next few days we work our way through the myriad experiences on offer, including a cooking class in a Siheyuan, the best Peking duck at Dadong, and a farewell dinner at Capital M on Tiananmen Square. This exotic journey has left me spellbound and I can't wait to return and peel back more of the layers of China. **d.**

The writer travelled with V & A Travel (tel: 1300 376 835 or visit: vandatravel.com.au). Qantas flies daily to Shanghai and Beijing (visit: qantas.com.au).



From top: the impressive skyline of Shanghai; inside Green T. House Living; Tiananmen Square; a tea picker in Longjing; The Great Wall stretches into the distance.

