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Mr & Mrs Bund, Shanghai

Posted on November 10, 2014 by Resume Eating

Bund 18, 6F, 18 Zhong Shan Dong Yi Road, Shanghai, China

Ph: +86 21 6323 6886 | [www.mmbund.com](http://www.mmbund.com)



French chef Paul Pairet is a prominent presence in Shanghai's dining scene. His two restaurants, the 10-seater Ultraviolet and Mr & Mrs Bund, have been voted the eighth and eleventh best places to dine in Asia (and the 58th and 72th respectively in the world). As the only two entries from mainland China on the highly regarded lists curated by 900 industry experts and critics, high praise indeed. Ultraviolet is the newbie, only having opened in 2012, while Mr & Mrs Bund has been around for five years in a heritage-listed British colonial building overlooking the Bund river, which splits Shanghai in two.

Ultraviolet is an expensive and intimate affair, but Mr & Mrs Bund, with its homely, inviting name, is a more open experience. In a huge ballroom style space on the sixth floor, the mood is very casual, with a bar atmosphere, a long table in the centre for group dining, and a sharing menu. For such a highly rated restaurant, it has a surprisingly laid-back approach, and a far cry from the sometimes stiff, corporate world atmosphere that many top-end restaurants share.



Mr & Mrs Bund is ideal for night owls, which is ideal since it doesn't open for lunch anyhow. Serving food until 2am, it seems to have maintained its mass popularity since its 2009 opening, and on the evidence of one night's dining, a lot of business comes from tourists. Presumably due to the nocturnal view of west Shanghai's business district skyline of illuminated skyscrapers, and an international reputation, the room is full.

Despite the push towards casual Gallic-themed dining, there is a great deal of technique in these dishes, especially the centrepiece of the tasting menu, the roasted teriyaki beef rib (420 Chinese yuan renminbi/\$A78, pictured above) for two. Shanghai dining, at least for visitors and the upper middle class-to-rich locals wishing to eat at the high end, isn't particularly cheap, but Paul Pairet is one of only a few chefs, including Heston Blumenthal, who has two restaurants on the 'best of lists.



Another standouts are the "meuniere" truffle bread (120 RMB/\$A21, above), a deliciously thick slice of bread with a truffle foam and mushrooms, cooked in a variation of the traditional rustic French brown butter sauce. And try the jumbo shrimp steamed and served in a clear glass jar with orange and lemongrass (180 RMB/\$A33, below), an impressive looking starter.

Pairet's Ultraviolet is a more immersive experience, with visuals and smells to enhance the meal, and a hefty price tag. Mr & Mrs Bund's more populist and affordable approach works, and makes the top end more accessible. A marriage made in heaven, then.

