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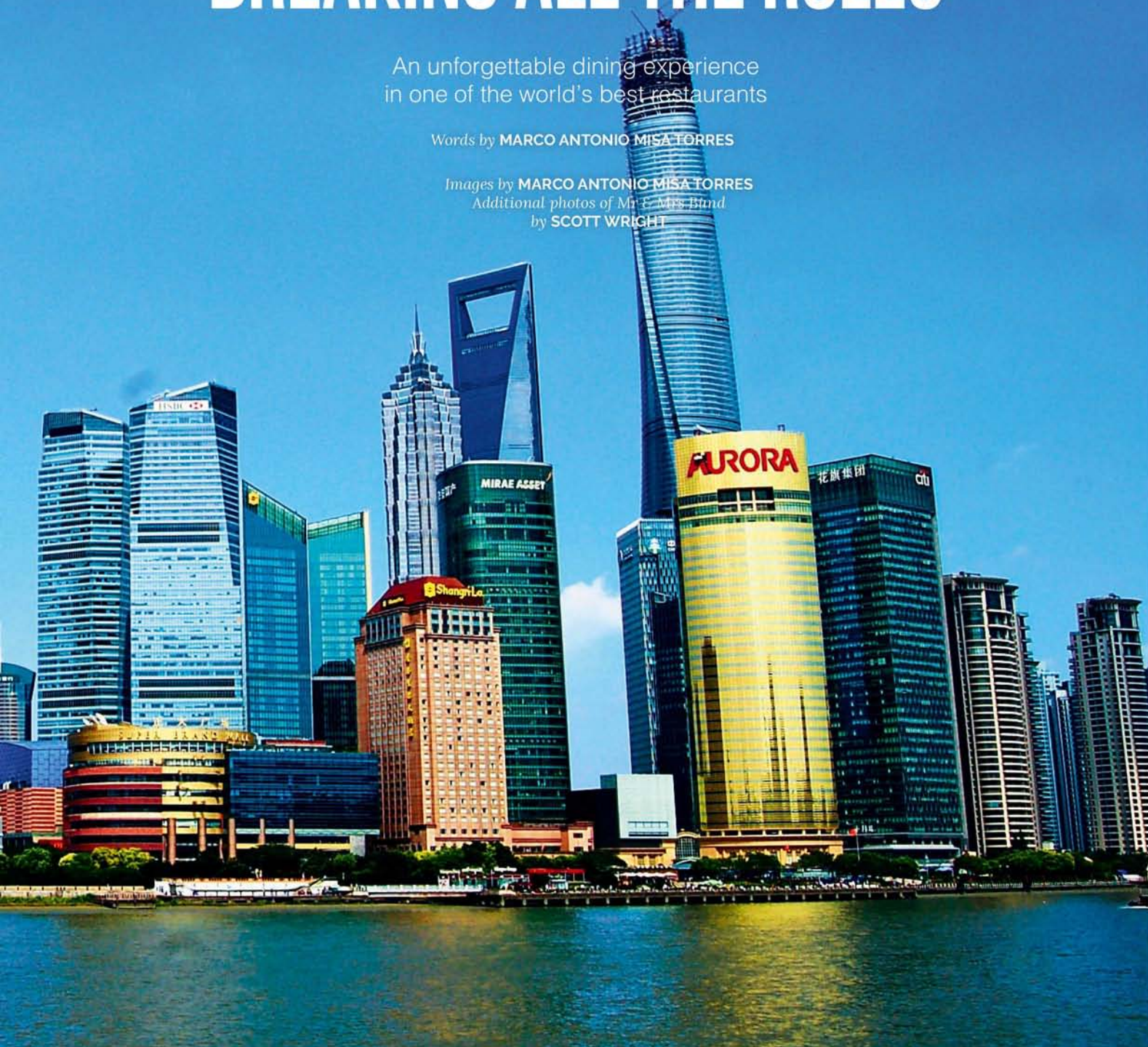
MR & MRS BUND: BREAKING ALL THE RULES

An unforgettable dining experience
in one of the world's best restaurants

Words by **MARCO ANTONIO MISA TORRES**

Images by **MARCO ANTONIO MISA TORRES**

Additional photos of Mr & Mrs Bund
by **SCOTT WRIGHT**





WITH A VIBRANT LIFESTYLE

set in an eclectic city of traditional and modern architectural marvels, Shanghai is undoubtedly one of Asia's hottest tourist destinations for world explorers. For those looking for gustatory exploits, it's even more scorching. Wolfgang Puck, Joel Robuchon, Jean Georges Vongerichten and Jason Atherton are just some of the culinary heavyweights who have launched Shanghai addresses. Even Gucci's first-ever full-fledged restaurant can only be found in Shanghai.

A visit to Shanghai with its infinite attractions will surely be filled with a wide array of memorable adventures. As you rendezvous in the city, though, make sure you take the time out to indulge in Shanghai's many culinary facets. Make sure you have your fill of Shanghaiese delicacies like *xiao long bao* (soupy dumplings) and *hong shao rou* (braised pork). After that, don't miss out sampling some of the best culinary experiences you won't find elsewhere in the region.

Paul Pairet's Mr. & Mrs. Bund, for one, is a mandatory experience. After all, it's not often one gets a chance to dine in one of the world's best restos. Also, it should be an item in every Shanghai visitor's cultural to-do list. After all, Shanghai was once a French colony and in this eatery, East meets West. You can have fine French cuisine served as they always do in China, "family-style."

Mr. & Mrs. Bund also offers iconic views of Pudong, probably the world's most futuristic, intergalactic landscape. In addition, dining here means getting inside one of Shanghai's trademark colonial buildings in the Bund.

The breathtaking Bund views, the casual, whimsical setting, the Instagram-worthy food styling and the consistent year-in, year-out raves of food critics are just some of the reasons why you can't avoid a date with Mr & Mrs Bund when in Shanghai. In the end, it's really all about the food. I could use a thousand superlatives to describe how good it

is but for the best articulation, let me simply use "delicious."

It's hard not to have high expectations when you step into one of the world's best restaurants. After all, it has consistently reaped accolades since it opened in 2009, has made it to the list of World's 50 Best Restaurants in 2013 and has been a mainstay at the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants List in the last three years. The Miele Guide as well as *Food & Wine US*, *Elle France* and *Eat Magazine Germany* likewise only have raves for it. If the Michelin Guide covered Mainland China, it would be hard to deny it a star or two.

But don't just take the critic's word for it. Ask the people who have actually dined there, and they will say that it's the food set in a casual homey setting that keeps Shanghai's beautiful set coming back.

A culinary egalitarian: Chef Paul Pairet

Mr & Mrs Bund was created by Chef Paul Pairet who many consider as a



Opposite page, clockwise: Shanghai's Trinity of 88-story and above buildings; the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel ride is as surreal as it gets; the Yu Garden is one of Shanghai's most iconic landmarks; colonial Euro-style buildings by the Bund. **This page:** Mr & Mrs Bund's central dining area; the master behind the magic, Chef Paul Pairet; the resto's balcony with stunning views of the Bund.

"culinary egalitarian" for being able to create sophisticated, avant-garde dining from the simplest ingredients and vice-versa, being able to produce the simplest French dishes using sophisticated, avant-garde techniques.

Chef Paul first came into public notice with Paris' Café Mosaic, where he successfully fused his Hong Kong, Sydney and Jakarta influences to create dishes that are French-but-not-French style. Mosaic made such an impact with food critics that it was soon being compared with Alain Ducasse's Spoon. He would be credited with the successful launches of the Ritz Carlton's Cam in Istanbul as well as Shangri-la Hotel Pudong's flagship restaurant, Jade on 36 in Shanghai. The latter won over gourmards, and Jade went to scoop numerous honors and awards globally. By 2009, Chef Paul launched Mr & Mrs Bund, which aimed to marry sophisticated avant-gardism with populist simplicity. The result, as they say, is culinary history.

Relaxed without sacrificing an ounce of chic

Because of its un-French way of serving food – that is, family-style sharing concept, as well as the reputed large portions – I had to drag a friend to share the Mr & Mrs Bund experience.

Here, we indeed found out how the food is served in large-enough portions, as opposed to the usual measly French portions, and definitely to be shared. Though their tables are not exactly the huge round ones with lazy Susans you find in Chinese banquets, the place is predominantly one huge open hall. Having said that, each plate is still artistically styled to perfection.

The gustatory journey begins

Our Mr & Mrs Bund experience began with one of its signature cocktails, the Mrs Bund Martini, a refreshing concoction of vodka, peach liqueur, apple juice and passion fruit.

Cost: RMB400++. You can get better deals if you can hold the hunger pangs and do late dinner (RMB250 + 10% service charge).

Time open: Open every day for dinner (5:30 pm onwards). Late-night dinner (with reduced prices for set meals) is available from Thursday to Saturday, 11:00 pm to 2:00 am onwards. Brunch is on weekends (11:30 am-2:30 pm).

Reservations: It's always best to reserve first to guarantee a seat. You can either call or book online at <http://www.mmbund.com/resa>.

Service: Attentive, superb, courteous, the servers are well-briefed and can speak English, which is a rarity in China.

Tip: Chef Paul knows best. Trust his recommendations. Look for the red "&" sign.



SHANGHAI FOR STARTERS

- Visit the Yuyuan Garden. This Ming Dynasty respite built in 1577 is Shanghai's most popular cultural landmark. Afterwards, shop till you drop at the renovated Qing Dynasty Old Street in Fangbang Road for souvenirs.
- Gaze into the future from The Bund. Stroll at the new Bund promenade, take the evening cruise or party late at night, and enjoy the free light show from the towers.
- Cross from the past to the future, from Puxi to Pudong, in a weirdly amusing psychedelic time machine. The Bund Sightseeing Tunnel (RMB70 round trip). When you get to Pudong, scale either the Pearl TV Tower, Jinmao, or Shanghai SWFC.
- Chillax at Xintiandi. This upscale establishment on traditional alleyway homes (*longtang*) is perfect for coffee and chit-chats.
- Explore the Jade Buddha Temple or JingAn Temple, two of Shanghai's active monasteries brimming with hyperactive tourists.
- Relive the past in one of Shanghai's many ancient water towns. You won't need to take a time machine to return to ancient China. Within Shanghai, decadent water towns resembling period film sets abound. Zhujiajiao is a cab ride away, while Qibao can be reached by subway. Aside from postcard-perfect images, there are plenty of Shanghai street delicacies to snack on.
- Be enthralled by some of the world's best acrobats at the Era Acrobat Show: <http://www.era-shanghai.com/era/en/spotlight/>.



This page: The Jumbo Shrimp in Citrus Jar tastes as sublime as it looks. **Opposite page, clockwise:** The complimentary tuna mousse will set you off to a good start; the Long Short Rib Teriyaki is long on juiciness; the Black Cod in the Bag has all of its flavors sealed in the bag; char-grilled to perfection is the Picnic Chicken Ailloli.

As we sipped our light and fruity martinis, a partially opened tin can of tuna with its lid laid before us. The fact that a tin can was served in this dandy setting brought a huge grin on my face. It felt like an exciting omen. The Tuna Mousse had a good balance of sourness and spice and went perfectly with the thin roast bread that contrasted its textures. It made absolute sense to me why this dish was served complimentary to all diners: it's so good it sets everyone off to a good start.

The gustatory 4-course journey consisting of a hot dish, a cold dish, a main, and a dessert was now about to begin. My friend and I made sure we ordered different dishes to duplicate the experience. This means we got "to share" eight different courses.

Naturally, with an extensive wine list that includes a selection of over 32 wines by the glass, each dish was meticulously paired with the perfect glass to match. Each glass was labeled with the variety, year produced and

source. Among our favorites were the Susana Balbo, a 2012 Malbec from Mendoza, Argentina and a Louis Latour, a 2013 Chablis Chardonnay.

We began with a couple of cold dishes. The Foie Gras Light Crumble, a light duck foie gras mousse topped with raisin hazelnut crumble, was light and fluid. The foie gras was balanced perfectly with the rich textures of the crumble which included bits of caramelized fruits and nuts. You have to make sure you scoured from the bottom to make sure you capture all the flavors in one bite. The Picnic Chicken Ailloli, char-grilled cold Hainan chicken breast served with garlic mayonnaise and an herb salad, was delicately tender without being too soft. The server explained that the chicken had to be pre-cooked in very low temperature before it was char-grilled to perfection. I loved its slight smoky flavor.

These were followed by hot dishes. The Jumbo Shrimp in Citrus Jar, a steamed jumbo shrimp in a glass jar with citrus,



lemongrass and vanilla, was such an objet d'art we couldn't help Instagramming shots one after another. The server explained that the reason it was served in a jar was to lock the pre-cooked prawn's flavors with the rest of the ingredients. The result was bitefuls of succulent prawn. Our second cold dish, the Meunière Truffle Bread, a layer

with Cantonese sauce. I'm normally not a big fan of cod, but this one changed that. Apparently, the cod was marinated in milk to remove all traces of fishiness then locked in plastic with the sauce. The result was a well-balanced succulent fish that was tender to the bite. The Long Short Rib Teriyaki, a roasted whole rib basted

Finally, we capped the experience with two wonderful desserts that were utterly divine. The Strawberry Chantilly (strawberries, strawberry sorbet and vanilla chantilly) was sweet yet very light. The Lemon & Lemon Tart (candied whole lemon, lemon sorbet and curd, vanilla chantilly and sable) was a new experience in itself. The lemon skin was thinned and candied to perfection, which gave it an extraordinary bittersweet tanginess.

Mr & Mrs Bund is as French as Chef Paul, though non-French influences from his many world travels do get fused with his offerings. Each dish we savored had the right balance of contrasting flavors and was served exactly at the perfect moment – not a second early nor late. But there was always an element of daring, resulting in some pleasant surprise.

"Mr & Mrs Bund was aimed at marrying sophisticated avant-gardism with populist simplicity. The result, as they say, is culinary history."

of toasted bread, light meunière and truffle, was both crispy and light and wonderfully intense. The truffle was naturally exquisite but what made the dish unforgettable was how it worked so well with the meunière topping. For the main course, we had the Black Cod in the Bag, a huge slice of cod simmered in a heat-proof bag

with teriyaki and orange reduction, was cooked the way steaks should be, well-done on the outside and juicy inside. It was very flavorful, thanks to two days of marination, so the side dishes of Arugula Mushroom Truffle and the Mash Tradition were great to neutralize its flavor.