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THE DISH: Top Chefs, Top Bargains

Instructions for **extravagant eats at bearable prices**



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For the last few months, I've tried to bring you affordable and tasty choices for recession dining. But we can't always be scrimping on the details; sometimes we want lushness and spoiling. Here are two places where I've lately had divine nights on a relatively modest budget.

The Park Hyatt's Pantry, on the same floor as the **Dining Room** offers some of the highest tables in town—from here you actually look down on the Jin Mao building. The hotel's Dining Room features scrupulously plated and garnished lamb (my top lamb chop in town actually) and foie gras for an average dinner bill of over ¥700 per person. But now The Pantry has a **new buffet** overflowing with many of the same ingredients, cooked up by the same chefs and presented by the same impeccable staff as its higher priced neighboring restaurant. At ¥380 (plus 15 percent), it's not cheap, but it's a worthy splurge.

The intimate Pantry seats just 52. The spread of cold dishes exemplifies meticulous precision, a rarity at buffets. Among many lovely offerings which include foie gras terrine and freshly-mixed beef tartar, I loved most a giant platter with four handsome fillets of smoked fish—two hot smoked and two cold smoked. I went back for fourths of the cold smoked salmon and snapper—and I hadn't even begun to work through the hot menu: 40 dishes ranging from garlic razor clams to a smoky chargrilled Aussie sirloin which was so good, it converted a "sometimes vegetarian" companion into an exultant omnivore.

After experiencing Paul Pairet's creations at **Jade on 36**, one expects to be dazzled at his new project, **Mr and Mrs Bund**. Indeed, I've been charmed after several visits here—not with provocative cuisine, but with simple flavors, superlative ingredients and professional execution. Plus, the bread here could save you the price of a ticket to Paris to taste a real baguette—and the half-salted Normandy butter? I will be making the trip to the Bund just for this bread basket. And I've heard they will have retail sales of the bread in the future.

Much has been made of Pairet's massive menu which could take an hour to peruse. Don't be flummoxed: demand detailed guidance from the knowledgeable staff. Here is my recommendation for a frugal dinner for two: picnic chicken (¥95), beef bourguignon (¥150), mashed potatoes (¥40), eggplant tahine (¥50). Add two glasses of wine for ¥60-70 and you have an exquisite feast for about ¥230 each. Splurge on the superb cheese plate (¥130) which comes with fun tableside service, or Pairet's mythical lemon tart, and you'll only add about ¥50 per person. *Yuan for yuan, it's a delicious bargain.*

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on 9th 2009 1:35p.m. by Crystyl Mo

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