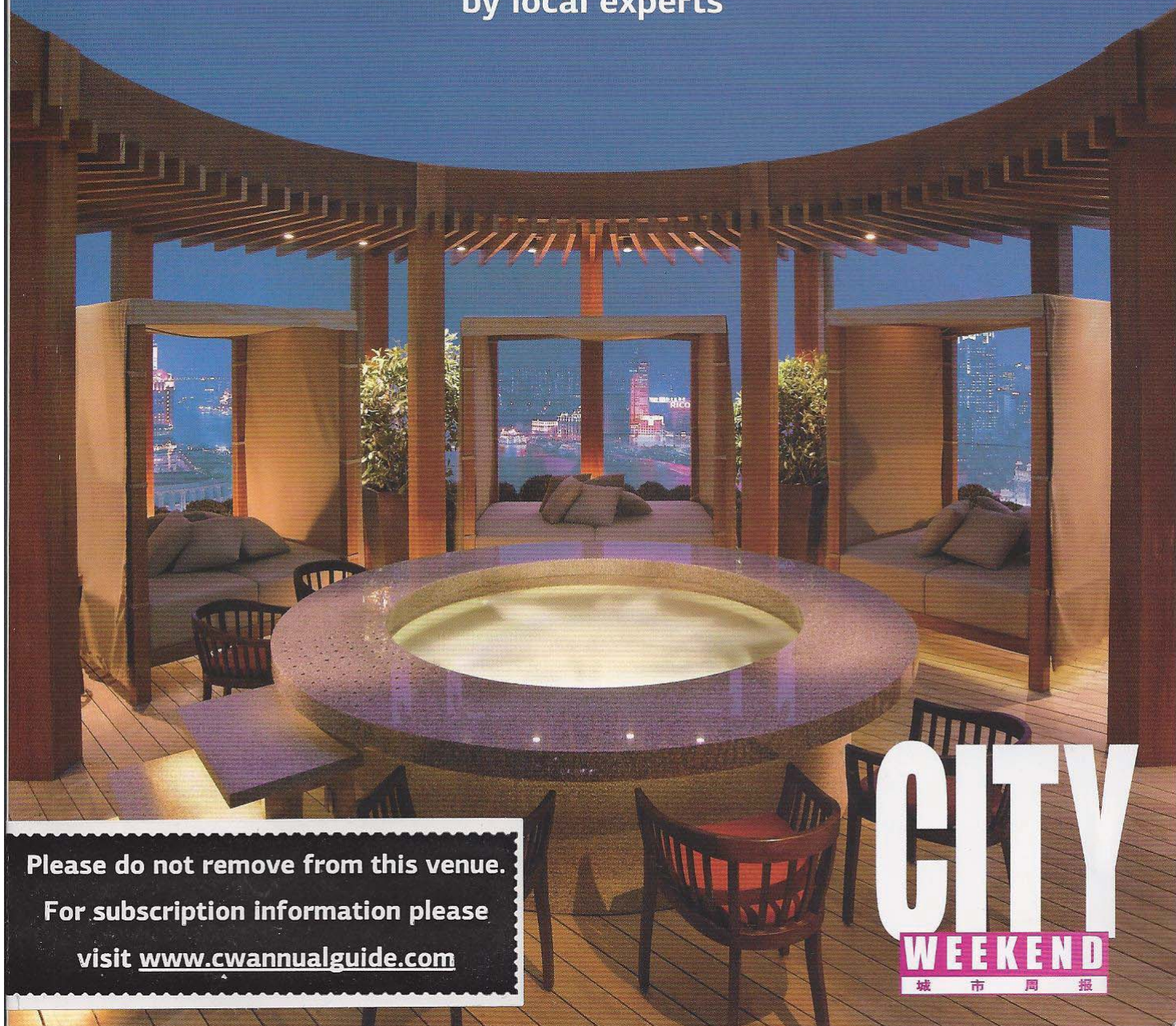


The Shanghai Best Book 2013

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➔ Best of Shanghai * *Restaurants*

Mercato

If Jean-Georges were Italian

This Bund-side spot is Jean-Georges' first Italian spot and second foray into Shanghai. The focus here is on coastal Italian fare, so the longish menu is largely seafood-focused, and servings (and prices) are small to encourage family-style dining. Service is razor-sharp as is the food, though we find the appetizers more exciting than the mains. The restaurant makes its excellent pasta in-house every day, though the pizzas are highlighted as a specialty—thicker than most others in town. They are cooked in a central oven that burns so hot the pies need only 90 seconds to be perfectly ready. They make full use of that oven, with a section on the menu reserved for "simply roasted" options like red snapper and lobster, but we'll recommend you start with the ricotta and strawberry dip that's paired with grilled bread before moving on to an lobster ravioli (both appetizer and entrée sizes are available)—the densely packed meat stuffed within bursts with flavor out of a wonton-thin wrapper. Elegantly decorated in the raw warehouse style currently en vogue and with prices that can't be beat on the Bund, Mercato is more than worth a try.

Find it: 6/F, 3 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu 中山东一路外滩3号6楼, Tel: 6321-9922

Mr & Mrs Bund

Shanghai's signature French restaurant

With its Bund-side views and welcoming terraces, this modern eatery by Chef Paul Pairet is not one to be missed. It serves up global French fare with family-style service in a dining room with an almost Alice in Wonderland-like twist. It loosely describes itself as a French bistro, but the fare here is much fancier than the label suggests. With Pairet's molecular gastronomy-influenced presentations, your dish might end up looking like nothing you've ever seen before. The black cod Hong Kong, for example, comes to the table in the clear plastic bag it was steamed in. With 250 classic dishes and 32 wines by the glass, there's something delicious for everyone, though you'd be a fool not to finish your meal with the superb lemon tart. Mr & Mrs Bund is also one of the few spots on the Bund that offers late-night fare—a variation on their value-priced set lunch menu comes online from 11pm to 4am. It comes in handy if you're partying on the Bund or, even better, in the restaurant itself—the spot regularly hosts parties on weekend nights in conjunction with Bar Rouge above.

Find it: 6/F, Bund 18, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu 中山东一路18号6楼, Tel: 6323-9898

Sponsored Listing

Mexico Lindo

Nothing puts a smile on our face like a table full of Tex-Mex, and Mexico Lindo delivers grins in bucket loads. They cover the whole spectrum, from nachos to tacos to mole and chili. Their burrito tortillas are house made, and the pulled pork in the carnitas sandwich is the best we've tried. Regulars come for the food and weekly specials and stay for the 40-strong selection of margaritas and regular live music sessions.

Find it: 39, Lane 3338 Hongmei Lu 虹梅路3338弄39号, Tel: 6465-9336



Mr Willis

Always friendly Aussie spot

Chef Craig Willis' restaurant is an exercise in simplicity. The space is adorned with exposed wood and soft, black leather seats, with track lighting shining a single beam of light down on each table. The restaurant's official name doesn't even have any capitals or punctuation. Mr. Willis himself prefers a black shirt with jeans, a basic look that's always punctuated with a basic silver necklace and a silver ring. And while the Australian chef may have named his restaurant after himself, that's where the vanity ends. Sit down and you're presented with a basic clipboard menu with no cover and perfectly roughed brown pages. It opens with the phrase, "We suggest a meal to share." The most popular dish here is Willis' roast chicken that, like everything else in the eatery, is delectably simple and served with visible grill marks and the crispy skin on. It's one of the few staples on the menu though. The rest get refreshed by Mr. Willis weekly. You can also order pizza from La Strada, the attached pizza spot downstairs.

Find it: 3/F, 195 Anfu Lu 安福路195号3楼, Tel: 5404-0200

Ultraviolet

3-D your meal

This 10-seat restaurant is Chef Paul Pairet's (also of Mr & Mrs Bund) dream restaurant and was 10 years in the making before it finally opened in 2012. Every dish on the 20-plus course set menus comes paired with sights, sounds and smells to match, all courtesy of the state-of-the-art equipment (including a 360-degree projection screen) that's been installed in the dining room. The idea, according to the chef, is to activate your "psychotaste," everything that leads up to, accompanies or has the remotest chance of changing how you take in a dish. It's all presented with cinematic flair, from the credits that roll at the end of the meal to the dishes themselves, which are created as molecular gastronomic masterpieces with fun and unexpected quirks around every corner. You'll laugh, you'll cringe, your senses will swim in wonderment as every dish comes and goes—very little is exactly as it seems at this restaurant. Each seat costs ¥2,000 including wine and drink pairings, but reportedly costs the restaurant ¥5,000. Book well in advance online. Diners are asked to meet at Mr & Mrs Bund before being bussed over to the "secret" location.

Find it: <http://uvbypp.cc>

Xibo

Dressed up Xinjiang fare

Apart from the big ¥20 bottles of Sinkiang black beer, Xibo has nothing in common with any of the other Xinjiang restaurants currently plying Shanghai crowds in dingy venues. In addition to the mutton-based everything of Xinjiang cuisine, Xibo also serves with a purpose. It aims to expose diners to the traditionally lighter fare of the Xibo, a tiny ethnic minority descended from Manchu archers who traveled to Xinjiang 250 years ago on Imperial mandate. They do all this in an elegant, minimalist space that could double for a wine bar at an eco-friendly hotel. It's got slate concrete walls, loofah-like lights and a spacious back patio. Cultural artifacts from the region decorate the space, including a wall of ornate, embroidered hats. Portions here are slightly smaller than at other Xinjiang spots, but the restaurant is consistently busy. The most popular dishes here are the big plate chicken (da pan ji) and the delicate pumpkin dumplings. As good for a date as it is for catching up with a group of friends, Xibo is especially hard to book in the spring and fall, when their slightly hidden but large patio is most comfortable.

Find it: 3/F, 83 Changshu Lu 常熟路83号3楼, Tel: 5403-8330

Urban Soup Kitchen

Quick quality bites

This casual eatery is a New York City-style soup, salad and sandwich place that features a range of quick and easy lunch fare. The small operation has the best—and possibly widest—selection of Western soups in town, offered on a rotating basis throughout the month. We're big fans of their punchy mulligatawny and smooth, chilled gazpacho, while the chicken noodle cures colds like nothing else in Shanghai. They even serve up a passable gumbo. All soups come steeply discounted (up to 50 percent off) when ordered as part of a combo with one of their quality sandwiches, salads or pastas, though our usual pick is the chicken Caesar wrap. Fresh, filling and refreshingly simple, it satisfies with a pliant laffa bread shell that's balanced out by the eager crunch of the lettuce, and welcoming chew of thick, meaty strips of lightly grilled chicken tossed in a tangy, black pepper-tinged Caesar sauce. Neither of the spots in this two-part chain is especially big, but they're both cozy and, more importantly for the office crowd, do reliable delivery.

Find it: 280 Madang Lu 马当路280号, Tel: 3331-1861; 1035 Kangding Lu 康定路 1035 号, Tel: 3331-1861

Xindalu

Best duck in Shanghai

With a seven-ton brick oven imported from Beijing firing up succulent roast duck, Xindalu China Kitchen does duck as tasty and authentic as anything in town. Thanks to the open kitchen, diners can marvel at the crispy, thin-skinned fowl roasting over a bed of red dates and green apple wood. Xindalu's duck is the best in town—so good that there's no longer any need to trek to the capital to get a taste of this imperial delicacy. Not a fan of duck? They've also got some great Shanghai and Hangzhou-style fare if you're looking for something more local. The succulently fatty, delicately constructed dongpo rou is a real highlight, and the beggar's chicken, which you'll need to order in advance, is a traditional dish that features an endlessly tender bird cooked in "mud." Both are Hangzhou specialties cooked by chefs that get regular refresher courses from the hotel chain's sister property in the nearby city. This is by no means a place for a cheap meal, but given the five-star fare, service and surroundings, your meal will still come at something of a relative discount.

Find it: 1/F, Hyatt on the Bund, 199 Huangpu Lu 黄浦路199号上海外滩茂悦大酒店1楼, Tel: 6393-1234 ext. 6318