

Gourmet Shanghai

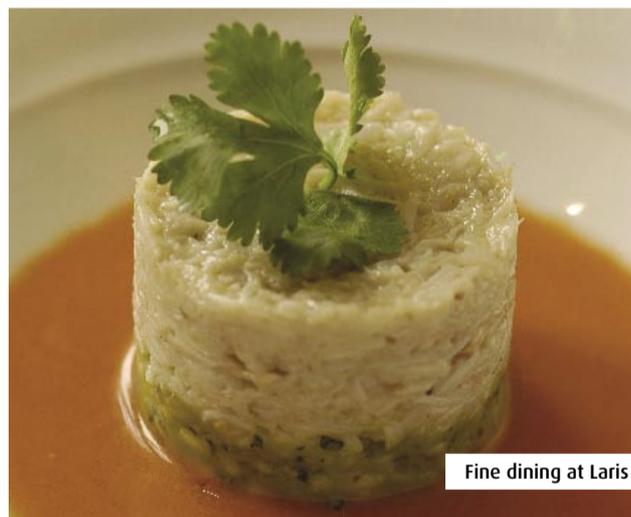
Winnie Yeung takes a bite out of the big city.



Watch your chef cook for you at Vue



Have a tapas dinner at Indalo



Fine dining at Laris

Who's got better food, Hong Kong or Shanghai? It's an age-old rivalry, but I always used to hold this sense of superiority deep down that, no matter what Shanghai could offer, ours was better. But after a weekend trip there, I realized this pride is completely misplaced – Shanghai, in fact, has restaurants as good as ours, in many cases better, if you just know where to look.

The Best Vue

There was a time, not too long ago, when you couldn't be this spoiled in Shanghai. I'm sitting at Vue, the fourth-floor restaurant-cum-bar on top of the swish new Hyatt on the Bund, having some really fine wine, sitting before the panoramic view of both the Bund and Pudong (trust me, not that many buildings have an angle like that). As if that's not enough, I'm watching two chefs prepare my meal right in front of me.

Dining at Vue is basically about getting the extreme out of the extreme. Remember how they used to make the Caesar salad dressing right from scratch in front of you at Hugo's in the Hyatt Regency? Executive chef Dieter Lengauer has brought the tradition to Vue – the final touches on all the dishes are performed by chefs at a cooking station right next to your table.

Surprisingly, the prices here are fairly reason-

able and the portions quite generous. Expect to pay \$600 a head for dinner and wine. You could get a lot worse with that money in Hong Kong. Soon, a meal at Vue will be a must-do on any trip to Shanghai.

Where 30/F-33/F, Hyatt on the Bund, 199 Huangpu Lu, (86) (21) 6393-1234, www.shanghai.bund.hyatt.com

But say this to the taxi driver "Huangpu Lu" – asking them to take you to the new Hyatt will get you nowhere.

Tips for Tapas

If Vue is about hardcore indulgence, then Indalo Restaurant is the exact opposite. But don't get me wrong, this low-profile Spanish restaurant is equally great. Located in a quiet part of Luwan, just opposite of the old Sun Yat-sen home, this little joint may seem to be hidden away, but boy is it popular. It was a full house on Saturday night – something to do with the laidback vibe and the excellent, extensive tapas menu. Expect huge portions at very low prices (the most expensive tapas dish was only RMB55). I recommend the mushroom cakes and chorizos. And of course, no Spanish meal is complete without some paella – it was wonderful here; large, full of flavor, and only RMB100. The wine list was also extensive, with lots of choice and some very good ones under RMB200. There is really nothing fussy about Indalo, just honest, good, cheap food served by friendly people.

Where 4-1, Xiang Shan Lu, (86) (21) 5382-0738, www.indalorestaurant.com

But to the taxi driver Xiang Shan Lu, Sinan Lu.

Stylish Eats

For extra, uber-fashionable on the Bund, try Laris, a high-end western-fusion restaurant. Found in the neo-classical building of Three on the Bund, everything about the experience is super-stylish, including the pitch-black elevator you ride to get there. The cuisine here is as striking and simple as the white marble décor. We had a fabulous crab with avocado salad and lemongrass gazpacho to start, before moving on to the cod fillet with mono miso emulsion, and sea urchin and braised daikon, which is far more delicious than it sounds. If you still have room, I recommend visiting the chocolate room, where they hand-make all of their delicacies, including a series of chocolate Mahjong tiles. Expect to drop at least RMB500 per person for a meal there – not exactly cheap but it's well worth it.

Where 6/F, Three on the Bund, 3 Zhong Shan Dong Yi Lu, (86) (21) 6321-9922, www.threeonthebund.com

But to the taxi driver Zhong Shan Dong Yi Lu, san hao (number three) – don't say "The Bund" to them unless you want to get them started on how unpatriotic it is to call a place such a "colonial" name.

Shanghai Brunch

Brunch in Shanghai is pure extravagance, where you pay hundreds of dollars to wash down lots and lots of food with champagne on a lazy Sunday morning (nevermind the noodle shop next door dishing out breakfast for as little as RMB2). I went to M on the Bund for brunch because I wanted the rooftop view of Pudon (plus, I was craving their famous pavlova). For just RMB258, you can have a champagne cocktail, three courses and a coffee. I went with sauteed duck liver with a frisse salad as a starter, and cannelloni with salmon spinach in saffron sauce as the main. I picked sautéed duck liver with a frissé salad as starter and a (massive) cannelloni with salmon and spinach in saffron sauce as the main. I was feeling pretty stuffed, but no guilt would stop me from ordering the pavlova – a generous slice that seems to end up on every table in the restaurant. Even the perpetually dieting Japanese tai-tais each had one in front of them.

Where 7/F, 5 The Bund, 5 Zhong Shan Dong Yi Lu, (86)

(21) 6350-9988, www.m-restaurantgroup.com

But to the taxi driver Zhong Shan Dong Yi Lu, wu hao, Guangdong Lu.

Art, Food and Music

If you're coming to Shanghai in search of food, contemporary art, historic architecture and good live music, head to Yin, a Shanghainese/Japanese restaurant – it has all that and more. Yin is located in the historical Jinjiang Hotel, and it really has a nostalgic vibe with the red brick walls, silk partition screens and scattered wooden Chinese furniture. Out of the two cuisines it serves, I really recommend the Shanghainese. From simple stuff with fresh ingredients like fried vegetables to difficult gourmet dishes like eight-treasure duck (braised duck stuffed with eight kinds of nuts and beans), everything is of fabulous quality, and at reasonable prices (the duck is RMB188). They also have live music every night on a stage decorated with a Zeng Fanzhi painting. That one must've cost something like \$5 million...

Where: Door No. 2, Jin Jiang Hotel, 59 Maoming Nan Lu, (86) (21) 5466-5070

But to the taxi driver: Maoming Nan Lu, Lao Jin Jiang. >>

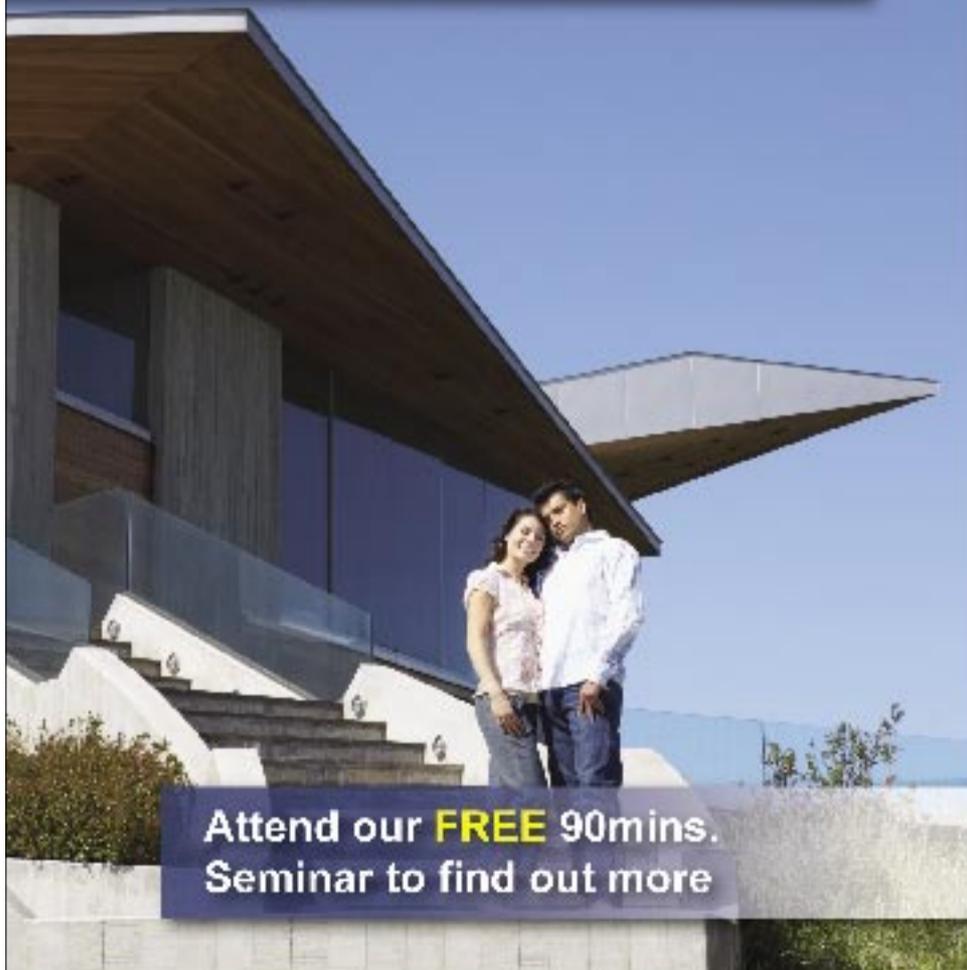


Eat, eat and eat at M's brunch



Live music and contemporary art at Yin

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Weekday Seminars

- Afternoon sessions at 12:30pm
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Jan - 7th, 8th, 9th, 15th, 16th

- Evening Sessions at 6:30pm
Dec - 16th, 20th
Jan - 8th, 17th

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- at 11:00am & 3:00pm
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Eat at the Original

No one should come to Shanghai in late autumn without cracking a few hairy crabs at Noble House. Though the famous fine-dining Chinese restaurant has become a bit of a chain these days, with outlets opening in most big cities around the country, the best is still the original, located in the Xujiahui area. Renovated from a Spanish mansion built in 1936, Noble House has kept most of the homey yet luxurious décor as is. All the dishes we had were made of crab roe and meat, and of course we had a steamed whole crab as well (prices start at RMB288).

Where House 1, An Ting Villa Hotel, 46 An Ting Lu, (86) (21) 6433-3666

But to the taxi driver An Ting Lu, Yong Jia Lu.

Sugar, Sugar, Sugar

These days, bars are springing up in Shanghai at a breakneck pace, and you're going to need to have more than just expensive décor and an extensive cocktail menu to make yours work. The largely Hong Kong-financed Xintiandi area is probably the most competitive thanks to the exorbitant rents. The king of the hill over here looks to be The Collection, a new bar in three parts: Pure serves sushi, Sugar serves desserts and Cube serves the booze. It seems like a strange combination, but those are three of Shanghai's favorite tastes. The décor also takes on three personalities, with Pure looking more like a bistro; Sugar, well, all white; and Cube in that shiny nightclub black. We went on a Friday night when it was completely packed out for "Sugar Addict" night, where the main difference between themed nights in Hong Kong and Shanghai was pretty apparent: they do it hardcore up north. We were escorted to the bar by a door bitch dressed as a sexy nurse. We were then served marshmallows all night with cocktails named "Skittles." It may be relatively pricey at The Collection, but it's about the same amount of cash you'd drop on Wyndham Street.

Where House 2, Xintiandi North Block, Lane 181, Tai Cang Lu, (86) (21) 5351-0007, www.thecollectionsh.com.

But to the taxi driver Xintiandi, Taicang Lu, Huangpi Lu.

The Essentials

The Hotel

The brand new Hyatt on the Bund really stands out with its uber-modern décor, modern facilities, and really spacious rooms – all 631 of them have open bathrooms (equipped with bathtubs and rainforest showerheads), flatscreen TVs, iPod docks, DVD players and excellent views of either Pudong or The Bund.

199 Huang Pu Lu, (86) (21) 6393-1234, shanghai.bund.hyatt.com. Rates start at RMB1,980.



The Flight

Dragonair has at least 15 flights to Shanghai everyday. Fares start at \$2,200, 3193-3888, www.dragonair.com.hk.

The Packages

Cathay Pacific Holidays is now offering two food-themed packages to Shanghai:

- Two nights accommodation at JC Mandarin, return flights by Dragonair and a hairy crab dinner at Noble House, price starting from \$4,399.

1225 Nanjing Xi Lu, (86) (21) 6279-1888, www.jcmandarin.com

- Two nights accommodation at Skyway Landis Shanghai Hotel, return flights, and a Chinese dinner at Peace Mansion, price starting from \$3,799.

15 Dapu Lu, (86) (21) 3318-9988, shanghai.landishotelsresorts.com

A three-day package with return flights by Dragonair and two-night accommodation at Hyatt on the Bund is also available, with rates starting at \$2,899.

Cathay Pacific Holidays, Suite 1608-1613, Cityplaza One, Tai Koo, 2747-4388, www.cxholidays.com.

Currency

HK\$1=RMB0.94

Back to the Real World

There's only so much indulgence one can take. Because really, there is a preponderance of fantastic, honest – and cheap – food all over Shanghai. Before I left, I stumbled into Wu Jiang Lu, a food street famous among the locals. Though you can get any street snack you can imagine there, the best is Yang's Fried Dumplings. Well, if you don't mind a 20-minute wait for crispy buns with pork stuffing. And it's only RMB1.5 for four. Yep, not even two bucks. Or if Shanghainese noodles is what you're after, go to Cang Lang Ting, a 50-year-old noodle restaurant that is always busy at lunchtime. The noodles are all around RMB20 and big enough for two. Try the noodles with braised fish and vegetables with crab roe – simple, but full of flavor.

Where 689-691 Huai Hai Zhong Lu, (86) (21) 5382-4370

But to the taxi driver Huai Hai Zhong Lu, Si Nan Lu. ■



Snacks at Wu Jiang Lu

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Christmas Day 9-course dinner	HK\$ 1,268
New Year Eve 10-course dinner	HK\$ 2,988

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