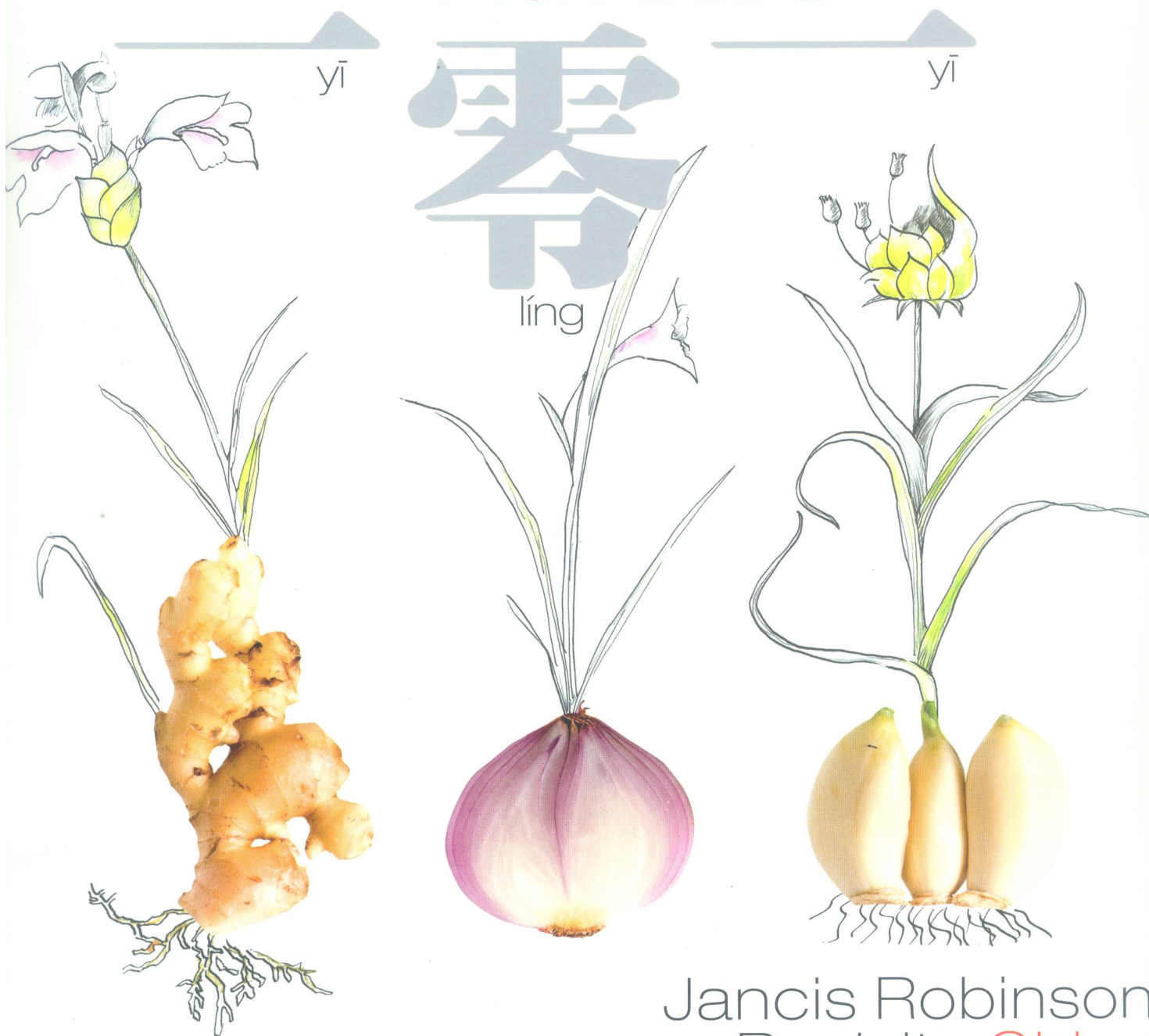


CUISINE & WINE

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Jancis Robinson
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Shanghai's New Culinary Icon



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CHINA IS ON THE VERGE OF TRANSFORMATION AND SHANGHAI IN PARTICULAR IS POISED TO BE THE MOST INTERNATIONAL CITY OF ASIA IN THIRTY YEARS. IN LINE WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT, A HOST OF WORLD-CLASS CUISINE COMES KNOCKING ON SHANGHAI'S DOOR. FRANCIS K LOULOSE WALKED THROUGH THE DOORS OF JADE ON 36, RIGHT INTO A PROMISING CULINARY ICON OF SHANGHAI.

If you want to have food with a great view to match, Shangri-La's Jade on 36 will definitely not disappoint. Perched on the thirty-sixth floor, Jade on 36 is situated at exactly the right height to capture the spirit of Shanghai; on one side of the restaurant, the bund view captures the nostalgia of those days in the 1930s, when Shanghai was known the world over as "the Paris of the Orient." On the other side, the Oriental Pearl TV Tower and the space-age skyscrapers of Pudong remind diners that Shanghai is beginning an entirely new era as Asia's cosmopolitan business center.

The restaurant itself, designed by uber-decorator Adam Tihany, is a contemporary blend of natural and high-tech materials. Tihany's inspiration for Jade on 36 is derived from the four traditional Chinese elements; the blue and white porcelain rice bowl, an image of imperial robes, a jade jewel box and a snuff bottle. These elements are transformed into components for modern China that fuses the past with the future. Diners pass through a 4.3-metre tall metal and lacquer sculpture of a deconstructed traditional rice bowl in the dining room, set in the backdrop of floor-to-ceiling views of Pudong's impressive skyscrapers.

Jade on 36 features critically acclaimed Chef de Cuisine Paul Pairet, whose avant-garde talents are frequently mentioned in the same breath as those of giants like Alain Ducasse. Pairet's "cuisine de voyage" is a culinary journey that seduces and surprises. Dishes at Jade on 36 are influenced by a multitude of culinary traditions from around the world, in partnership with new, often revolutionary techniques. Together, they create tastes and textures that are innovative, yet familiar; unusual, yet harmonious. With influences from his peripatetic nature, revealed in an enthusiastic adoption of culinary traditions all over the world, together with his background in science, it often allows him to employ revolutionary techniques in his creations. Pairet said: "It is not enough to be good. A dish has to be more than that; interesting, new, daring and even funny." Food is indeed a journey to seduce one's taste buds and surprise one's soul. Pairet added: "There is nothing that I would not consider as an ingredient, though I may not use that ingredient in the traditional way."

Pairet recommends that guests sample the tasting menus, which feature six perfectly structured and balanced samplings of the restaurant's offerings. Paul Pairet, an inventive Frenchman is greatly influenced by Ferran Adria, the avant-garde Catalan chef. You will get foam and fancy combinations. But the results are delicious. The set menus are priced at US\$60 for five courses or US\$110 for seven courses. The most amusing dish on our tasting menu must be Pairet's take on potatoes - fluffy potato croquettes served with a dollop of ketchup sorbet. Besides a perfect flavour and texture combination, it proved to be a good twist, high on the novelty factor. This dish was so simple, it just got me smiling and thinking to myself "very smart!" Equally

sardine mousse served in a tin with a paper thin crouton



invigorating was the foie gras wrapped with caramelised tamarind sheet, which is basically a foie gras lollipop, served with a quaffer of warm honey infused cardamom 'tea' topped with champagne. We can just say that this is pure genius at work!

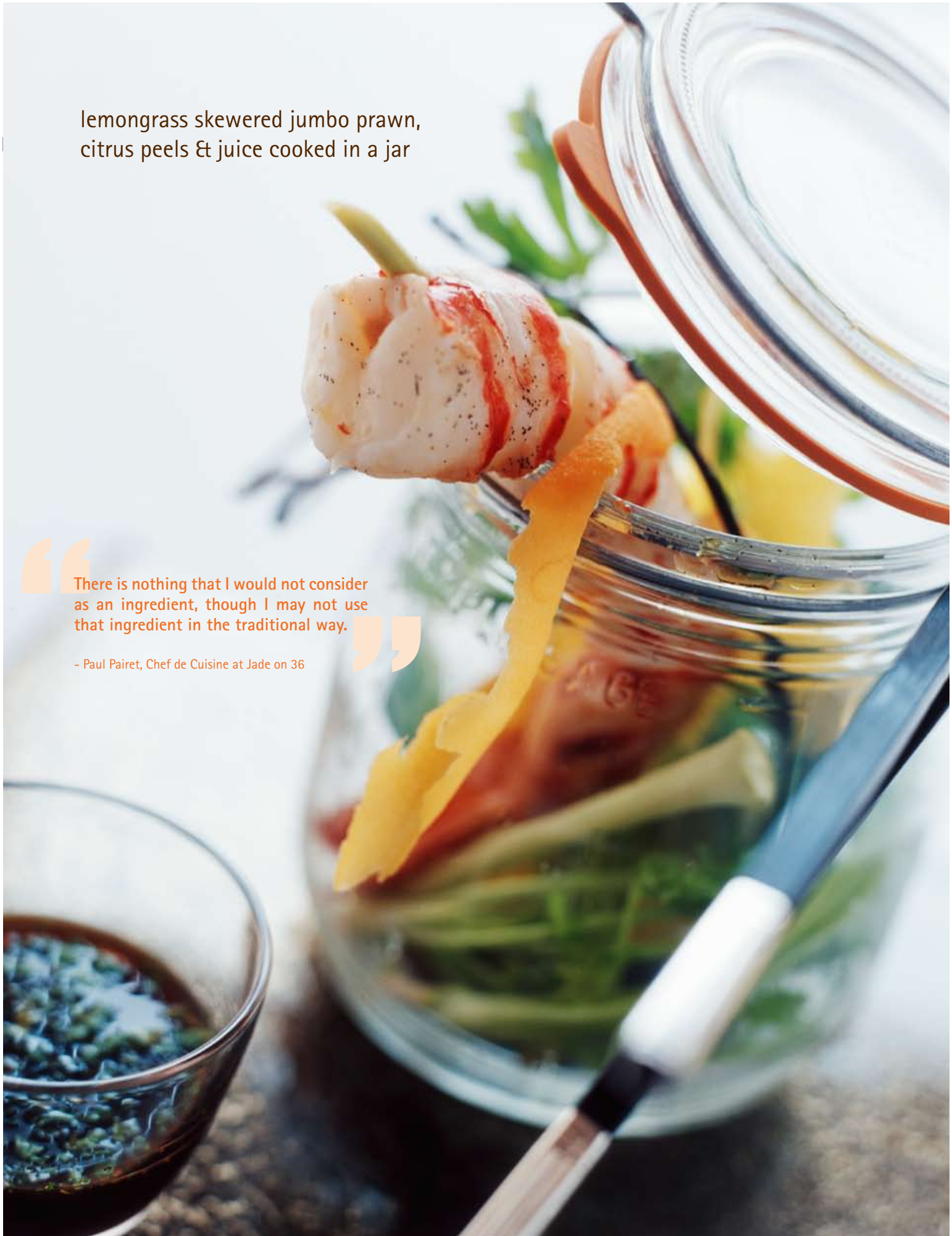
We can't find the exact words to describe the next dish, sardine mousse served in a tin. This must be the lightest and most flavourful foam I have ever had, combined with a mélange of flavours and just a slight infusion of kaffir limes and lemongrass for that depth and complexity. Or how about the dill infused ravioli which encases a succulent piece of lobster in every parcel and served with pomelo sorbet, grapefruit pulp and a basil reduction. It's a dish where you must have a spoonful of everything at the same time as every bite oozes with a burst of intense flavours. I likened every bite of this to a party in your mouth but then a sense of calm appears when the umami flavours become more apparent.

Besides building up a portfolio of innovative cuisines, Pairet has also tried to give old-style dishes a new twist. For example, the jumbo prawns cooked in a jar, where such air-tight jars have been used for food preparation in Europe for a long time. Pairet uses the technique well when he combines lemon peel, orange peel and bay leaves with a lemongrass skewered jumbo prawn and vanilla pod. Opening the jar reveals a perfume of nuances that teases you in anticipation of what will follow. We also enjoyed the twist on the classic Cantonese steamed cod. A fresh piece of cod steamed to perfection with orange peel, then glazed with a soy-based sauce and topped with herbs. Nothing unusual, you may say, but it comes served in a clear plastic bag which is gingerly cut open at the table, plated and then served.

lemongrass skewered jumbo prawn,
citrus peels & juice cooked in a jar

“ There is nothing that I would not consider
as an ingredient, though I may not use
that ingredient in the traditional way. ”

- Paul Pairet, Chef de Cuisine at Jade on 36



foie gras wrapped
with caramelised tamarind sheet



candied lemon
served with a lemon sablee



The desserts were definitely a special treat. It may sound simple - candied lemon - but it was a real wonder. A whole poached lemon cored through a very small orifice, filled up with lemon custard and Chantilly cream which was folded with citrus segments then finally laced with a syrup before being plated. Each spoonful was perfectly balanced, the cream taking the edge off the sourness from the pulp and then perfectly complementing the poached zest which just had a tad of sweetness. Simply divine, we all agreed. We also enjoyed the sweet pizza which was thin filo crackers cradled with a dollop of frozen olive oil yoghurt, then served with black olives laced in licorice syrup, cherry tomatoes marinated in raspberry coulis, mozzarella and basil.

Jade on 36 is all about taste, purity and simplicity. The great ambience combined with the haute cuisine takes Jade on 36 to the pinnacle of the gastronomic experience that one would not easily forget. Fine food, a dramatic setting and breathtaking views are Jade on 36's recipe for a truly unforgettable evening. FKP

Jade on 36 Restaurant & Bar
Level 36, Pudong Shangri-La Shanghai
33 Fu Cheng Road
Pudong, Shanghai 200120, China