

# print edition

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## WEEKEND MENU

### Shanghai surprise

LUCY WAVERMAN

In case you haven't heard, China is rising, taking its people and its cities to heights (quite literally).

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Shanghai, a city often called the Paris, or New York, of Asia. It has a lot to live up to, and does so with style, class and great energy -- especially when it comes to cuisine.

The food scene has come alive with restaurants that range from little local spaces where no English is spoken to sophisticated outposts such as Jean Georges (from New York). Several of the buildings on the Bund (the historic area along the riverfront) have transformed themselves into stylish restaurants and bars where fine dining is the norm.

Traditional Shanghai food is oily, sweet and rich. Because of the cold winters, there are a lot of braised dishes with strong soy-based sauces. The move now, in trendy restaurants at least, is to lighter dishes (often with food from other parts of China as well, mainly to attract tourists).

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Still, Shanghai dumplings are a mainstay of the cuisine. Made with pork and chicken stock gelled with agar (a seaweed gelatin), the dumplings are steamed and eaten hot. The explosion of soup and tasty pork in the mouth is wonderful -- and very drippy.



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The best dumplings are supposed to be in the Old City, where, for about 50 cents, you can buy a large plateful at a counter. The favourite has long been the famous Nanxiang Mantou Dian, where patrons line up for hours. The best dumplings I had, however, were at Ye Shanghai (translated as Shanghai Nights) in the restored Xingtiandi complex. They were light and bursting with flavour.

My other highlights: South Beauty, a bustling hot spot, full of rich young Shanghaiese that serves spicy Hunan and Szechuan food with panache, and Jade on 36, a spectacular restaurant designed by Adam Tihany (of Le Cirque fame), where I had my favourite meal. It's food you could weep over.

### Jade on 36 Short Rib Teriyaki

My dinner at Jade on 36 (located at the top of the Pudong Shangri-La, an award-winning luxury hotel) may be the best meal I have ever had. Chef Paul Pairet, a transplanted Frenchman (who came to China via Australia), cooks like a dream. He practises some molecular gastronomy, with foams and gels surrounding his food, but it is his witty, innovative Euro-Chinese dishes that truly delight and excite.

Complimentary sardine pâté is served in a sardine tin. Teriyaki short ribs are surrounded by a pool of velvety mashed potatoes. Caramel-coated foie gras Opera cake is a savoury, not sweet, treat. Shrimps on lemon grass skewers are cooked and served in a Mason jar. Nothing is what it seems, but everything delivers a lot more than you expect. Here is a simplified version of the fabulous short ribs.

*4 1-inch racks of short ribs*

*8 cups beef bouillon*

*Teriyaki Sauce:*

*¼ cup mirin*

*¼ cup rice vinegar*

*¼ cup soy sauce*

*2 tablespoons ketchup*



*Pudong Shangri-La, Shanghai  
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8 cups beef bouillon  
Teriyaki Sauce:  
¼ cup mirin  
¼ cup rice vinegar  
¼ cup soy sauce  
2 tablespoons ketchup  
2 tablespoons honey  
1 tablespoon olive oil

**Preheat** oven to 325 F.

**Pierce** meat between each rib to prevent curling. Lay rib rack meat-side down in a deep pan and cover with beef bouillon. Bring to boil, cover, place in oven and simmer for 2 hours or until beef is fork-tender. Chill meat completely in bouillon. Cut between every two rib bones to make neat servings.

**Combine** mirin, rice vinegar, soy sauce, ketchup and honey in saucepan over medium heat to make teriyaki sauce. Reduce until syrupy, about 15 minutes. Reserve.

**Heat** oven to 400 F.