

Shanghai - The Shangri-la of Food & Wine

How are the cuisine and wine scene developing in Shanghai, a city locked in between modern trappings and a much-cherished tradition?

LIM HWEЕ PENG visits the cosmopolitan metropolis and checks out its offering.

By Lim Hwee Peng



LIM HWEЕ PENG is an accomplished wine writer, notably when he was the wine columnist of Wine & Dine publication, where he shared his passion in his monthly wine column. His contribution in wine journalism was rewarded with the winning of World Gourmet Summit Awards of Excellence, Regional Wine Article of the Year in 2002 and 2003. Currently, he has a diverse portfolio of clients, including the Singapore Airlines (SIA) Air Sommelier group; SOPEXA wine activities that include wine publications and wine training for the trade professionals, and also conducting corporate programs for banks and private institutions. Hwee Peng can be reached at hweepeng@winecraftmktg.com.



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The Wine Residence

provide a golden opportunity for both local and expatriates (including visitors) to experience different cultural products and practices that will shape the future food and wine scene in Shanghai.

Though deemed as the financial centre of greater China, it is not surprising that many visitors to Shanghai are solely there for the business of pure pleasure.

THE WINE RESIDENCE is an ambitious project undertaken by ASC Fine Wines, one of the major wine importers in China. Essentially a members-only wine club, Wine Residence is renowned for its premium wine selections as well as the various premium facilities that it offers to members. Nevertheless, selected services in this grand wine club are also open to the public. The club is located at the corner of No 57, *Jianguin Lu* (a stone's throw from nearby Marriott Hotel), housed in a 100-year-old stately mansion. Though it is marketed as a swanky wine club for Shanghai's wine-loving elite, visiting connoisseurs should also

make a stop at this elegantly re-structured brick mansion. Check out the riches of its facilities, which include an underground cellar that houses fine wines for its members, wine appreciation sessions as well as light fare at the wine bar. A Singaporean wine connoisseur is responsible for the opening and running of the Wine Residence, so do expect the usual Singapore warmth and reception if you are popping by.

The Restaurant Scene

Xin Tian Di (literally means the New World) may be a de rigueur stop for many Shanghai visitors, but its history is much more significant than its present existence as a restored F&B 'village'. Conceptualised much like Singapore's Clarke Quay, *Xin Tian Di*, to the locals, has since lost some of its traditional nuances since it adopted an active commercial flavour.

Nevertheless, for most city dwellers, especially tourists and expatriates, a trip to *Xin Tian Di* can bring back some sense and perspective of a seemingly faraway land.

Of the prominent restaurants in the cluster of eateries, Chef Justin Quek, Singapore's prominent French cuisine expert, has three outlets under his care. **Fountain Bistro and Wine Bar**, and nearby, **Le Platane** (French Fine-Dining) and **Villa du Lac** (Modern Chinese Private Dining).



Xin Tian Di

A great start to a day can be experienced at Fountain, where it serves five sets of breakfast, namely, English, American, Continental, Hong Kong and Singapore style. The Bistro also provides personable services for the executive warriors, such as shoe-shining, international news on big plasma screens, major newspapers and magazines, available to enhance the most important meal of the day. Quek will also ensure that his important guests are thoroughly pampered at the Le Platane; complete with private dining rooms separated only by a glass partition from the busy kitchen, which allows patrons to watch the culinary maestro in action whipping up fine French fare.



Fountain Bistro & Wine Bar

Observant visitors to Shanghai would have noticed a unique development of the city. Wedged amongst the contemporary infrastructure of this bustling metropolitan are 19th century traditional buildings. The destiny of those architecture pieces is either to be transformed into modern lifestyle outlets, enticing both locals and visitors, or to be left in its untouched state waiting to be altered into another eye-catching destination.

Thus, like everything else in Shanghai, the wine and food scene is also evolving in a similar path as the urban landscape. Indeed, attentive connoisseurs cannot be faulted for identifying two different dynamics at work in the food and wine sectors – imported international brands vis-à-vis domestic food and drinks that have been treasured for years.

Shanghai is comfortable in showcasing not only its time-honoured cuisine, but also its international flair, judging from the array of fine French cuisine, comfort American food, cafes, wine bars and other food and beverage joints that are commonly found in developed and contemporary cities.

Such clash of culture, however, is benefiting Shanghai, where the different offerings not only complement each other, but also

If privacy is the name of the game, Villa du Lac will be an ideal venue for such pleasure. This modern Yangzhou cuisine restaurant is designed with only private rooms for groups of 10 or more. Butler-like service is on hand to indulge diners with attentive assistance.

If one thinks that no more surprises can be had for modern classic cuisine, then a visit to **Jade on 36** may change one's mind. Jade is a premier restaurant at Shangri-la hotel in Pudong, located on the 36th floor of the international hotel chain. Jade on 36 not only boasts a modern and stunning interior, this self-proclaimed avant garde cuisine eatery also takes pride from an inventive chef that impresses many food and wine pundits with its intriguing method of preparing and presenting its food. The best way to tantalise one's palate is to enjoy one of the five choices of *Table d'Hôte*. My personal recommendation is to make an early reservation at this popular restaurant, then take time to



Jade On 36 - Main Dining Area

bask in the Shanghai Bund views with a glass of bubbly, and whiling away the night with the indulgence of flavours that the restaurant chef took pains to create. In my opinion, Jade on 36 does not just serve food, but flavours, in its purest form.



Underground Cellar @ Wine Residence



Jade On 36 Wine Cellar @ Entrance Corridor