

SALAD DAYS Warm seafood salad at Mercato, Jean-Georges Vongerichten's newest outpost on the Bund, below. Right: The dining room at Colagreco.



TURNING THE TABLES

On the Bund and beyond, a new clutch of restaurants is upping Shanghai's culinary ante
BY AMY FABRIS-SHI

It has been eight years since superstar chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten tipped his toque to Shanghai, taking a gamble on the fast-developing city with the opening of his only namesake restaurant outside New York, Jean-Georges at Three on the Bund. China's capital of cool has since exploded with deluxe dining destinations from almost every corner of the globe, and judging from the latest crop of openings, the scene is showing no signs of slowing down.

Leading the pack is Vongerichten himself, back in Shanghai for seconds. The Alsace-born chef has taken over the entire sixth floor of dining and shopping mecca Three on the Bund

for his first Italian-inspired outpost, **Mercato** (86-21/6321-9922; threeonthebund.com). More relaxed than Jean-Georges downstairs (and almost half the price), Mercato serves deliciously straightforward fare with a focus on house-made ingredients that sing, from pastas and ricotta to fruit-infused Proseccos. The big, open dining room also reflects this artisanal approach. Raw concrete walls and floors of reclaimed wood contrast with the neon-skyline views through arched windows. Book a window seat, or go communal at the pizza bar.

Mercato isn't the only new big-name attraction at Three on the Bund, which has re-established itself as an on-trend gourmet



COURTESY OF MERCATO; COURTESY OF COLAGRECO

destination. On the building's second floor, Mauro Colagreco, a 36-year-old Argentine chef with a two-Michelin-starred restaurant on the Côte d'Azur, is behind sexy Latin newcomers **Colagreco** (86-21/5308-5396; colagreco.asia) and **Unico** (86-21/5308-5399; unico.cn.com). Commanding close-up views of the Bund and the Huangpu River, Colagreco's dimly lit dining room boasts a touch of the tropical courtesy of a garden conservatory with its own cockatoo. This sense of whimsy extends to the kitchen, where chef Thibaut Pouplard translates Colagreco's light-of-touch creations such as "sea tartare" (raw prawn, oyster, scallop, and sea urchin served with crisp rice cakes) and grass-fed Uruguayan steaks, paired with what must be Shanghai's most extensive Argentine wine list.

Colagreco flows straight into Unico, a lounge dedicated to cocktails, tapas, and live music. Giant lanterns and colorful armchairs set a more up-tempo vibe, as diners choose from a fun menu arranged according to compass coordinates that span Latin America.

Farther along the Bund, in a 1911 building recently revamped as an Italian fashion emporium, suave Naples-born chef Enzo Carbone and Singaporean hotelier Yenn Wong have launched their second Shanghai restaurant this year. Hot on the heels of Pudong pizzeria Matto, **Capo** (86-21/5308-8332; caposhanghai.com) is a buzzy Neapolitan steakhouse set in a basilica-inspired attic space, with colonnaded aisles clad in rough grey brick, funky pew-like seating, and Renaissance-style paintings. The "altar" is reserved for a pair of pizza ovens that turn out wood-fired pies and charcoal-cooked Australian Wagyu.

Two more Shanghai-based chefs with a loyal following have also expanded their gourmet empires of late. American-Chinese chef Austin Hu, who cut his teeth at New York's Gramercy Tavern, has reopened his ultra-popular **Madison** (86-21/6437-0136;

shanghai.com) in bright, high-ceilinged digs in the former French Concession. This time, he has added an airy bistro-bar called Madi's. Known for his bold New American cuisine, Hu makes a point of sourcing local produce, right down to the unpasteurized Reberg beer. His brunch, served at both Madison and Madi's, is a weekend ritual for those in the know. The duck-fat fries are carb-loaded goodness.

Meanwhile, Craig Willis—of Mr Willis restaurant renown—has brought his Oz-Med comfort food to the corporate towers of Nanjing Road. **Henkes Trattoria** (henkes.com.cn; 86-21/3253-0889) is tucked away in a luxury fashion mall, with a large terrace fronting Jing'an Park. The horseshoe bar is proving a popular post-work pit stop for a vino and some fancy antipasti, such as Serrano ham with house-pickled pears.

And for late-night noshing, former Chicago private chef David Brode has combined his love of oysters and gin into Shanghai's first "seafood speakeasy," the **Plump Oyster** (86-21/5418-3175; theplumpoyster.com). The cozy lounge, on a third-floor walk-up behind the touristy Tianzifang, serves some 15 varieties of freshly shucked oysters flown in from seven countries. An oyster-friendly drinks list covers a selection of crisp wines and bubbly plus 34 types of gin, which Brode considers a better match than the usual vodka. That said, he does mix a mean dirty vodka martini, topping it with—what else?—a pickled oyster. ☺



NICE TOUCH Clockwise from above: Capo's Enzo Carbone putting the final touches on a dish; clams casino are on the comfort-food menu at Madi's; window seats at Mercato.

COURTESY OF MADI'S; COURTESY OF MERCATO; COURTESY OF CAPO