



Carbonara egg nest, a highly recommended dish of View 62, is a feast for the eyes, an effect which carbonara rarely achieves.

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IBERIAN HEIGHTS

Revolving high above the city, View 62 is two-Michelin-starred Spanish chef Paco Roncero's first foray in China. **Rebecca Lo** fastens her seat belt and samples his unique brand of molecular gastronomy.

When I was working in Wanchai, my colleagues would often book us a table for dim sum lunch at the revolving restaurant crowning the top of Hopewell Centre. It was always a treat, since the view was always changing, and after chatting and concentrating on our food for a while, we would discover we were looking at an entirely different part of the city.

My only complaint was that it turned a little too quickly and I found the revolving motions an occasional cause for nausea.

Recently, the Igor Group took over and it is now View 62, a fine-dining restaurant specializing in molecular gastronomy by two-Michelin-starred chef Paco Roncero. The Madrid native oversaw the menu's development and has handpicked executive chef Javier Carizosa to take over after the establishment finds its feet.

The best time to dine at View 62 is when the sun is low on the horizon, which is also the perfect time for a pre-dinner cocktail.

We enjoyed our Ladies Choice, Roncero's medley of fruity drinks distilled into four brightly colored balls of flavor served with sparkling wine.

My favorite was the purple one, which turned out to be a grape liqueur after it exploded on my tongue.

As the sky took on brilliant hues at sunset, we debated between the tasting menu and dinner set.

Being an indecisive bunch, we thought the tasting menu would showcase Roncero's deft hand best. The snacks that arrived included frozen gin fizz, olive oil butter, black sesame miso sponge cake, filo pizza, rhubarb with black pepper, truffle dentelle and foie gras with spiced bread.

My personal pick is the olive oil butter, cleverly concealed in a little white tube which you can squeeze on top of crunchy greens and a crisp wafer. Light yet rich, its texture is a superb contrast to the fresh leaves. I didn't care for the rhubarb with black pepper despite being a rhubarb fan: I found it overly sweet and on the limp side while the black pepper was barely distinguishable.

While we nibbled on our inventive snacks, we noticed that we were sitting underneath a ceiling that contains thousands of suspended wooden pendants that formed an undulating river. Near the entrance, there is an eight-meter long black marble bar lined with sparkly mother of pearl —



Celebrated chef Paco Roncero.

just one of the many design features courtesy of Ricky Hung at UN Design.

Tapas followed the snack, and we were treated to a few of Roncero's signature dishes: XXI century omelet, salmon cooked at 40 C with tartar sauce in deconstruction and carbonara egg nest. I loved the salmon's firm moistness from its low temperature oven and thought the carbonara had just the right amount of depth for a dish that looked beautiful — which carbonara so rarely does.



Chilean sea bass is another signature dish by Roncero.

The standout of the night was our main of Chilean sea bass with green bean sauce and Iberico air. Perfectly cooked and flaking away easily with just a touch of the fork, the whisper of ham in the accompanying foam sauce rounded out the freshness of the fish.

Sadly, I had to skip the dessert of chocolate coulant nitro as the revolving restaurant was getting the better of me. But if the spinning slowed, I will definitely be back to tackle the sweets menu.

IF YOU GO

View 62

62/F Hopewell Centre, 183 Queen's Road East, Wanchai. 852-2574-6262.

Average cost per head: Dinner tasting menus at HK\$1,400 (\$181) or HK\$1,800. Dinner sets are priced at HK\$680 or HK\$860. Lunch sets are priced at HK\$298 or HK\$398. Drinks are not included.



PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The dish of roasted pig presented in an artistic way.



Goose liver duet offered by 8 1/2 Otto e Mezzo Bombana.

No half measures for true gourmets

By **LI XINZHU** in Shanghai
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What is the secret to an absolutely fabulous dish? Set aside the intangibles like passion or dreams, and you have only one answer — money. To create a top-class dish, you definitely need top-notch ingredients, and these never come cheap.

That's the general consensus on a restaurant that has captured the imagination, and wallets, of Shanghai's gourmets since it opened in February. The waiting list to get seated is now a month long.

The restaurant has also chalked up thousands of comments on the popular online restaurant guide, Dianping.com. And the most common comment must be: "Expensive but worth it!"

8 1/2 Otto e Mezzo Bombana is located at Waitan Yuan, an original section of the Bund which has been turned into a new planning area with 11 renovated heritage buildings and a collection of luxury retail shops, restaurants and serviced apartments.

Bombana is on the sixth floor of Xiejin Mansion, covering an area of 450 square meters. It also banks on a full view of the Huangpu River and

Shanghai's most famous landmark, the Oriental Pearl TV tower.

Though it is spacious, it has only 40 seats to make sure that every table enjoys the panorama outside the window.

According to Clelia Di Casola, its public relations manager, the entire space is designed to offer a comfortable dining experience. Private rooms with elegant wooden tables are available on request.

A glass cellar gets prime display in the center of the restaurant, where top quality imported hams are wrapped and hung, along with a cornucopia of cheeses.

There are also more than 400 wines from Old and New World waiting for the discerning gourmet.

Thanks to Alan Yu, the executive chef, Bombana Shanghai was nominated for Asia's Best Restaurant of Miele Guide 2012 just two months after opening. His discerning taste for quality ingredients is the key, the chef says.

The first principle to decide which ingredients to use in the dish is the stability of its supply.

"I cannot accept any ingredients that cannot be supplied for any less

IF YOU GO

8 1/2 Otto e Mezzo Bombana

6-7/F, Xiejin Mansion, 169 Yuanmingyuan Road, Huangpu district, Shanghai.

021-6087-2890. Reservation a must.

Average cost per head: 900 yuan

Recommended: warm scallops, roasted pigeon breast, New Zealand Ora King Salmon.

than six months," Yu says, emphasizing that quality must have continuity.

A taste menu that includes five courses without wines and priced at 888 yuan (\$142) is the most popular choice, according to the chef. More than half of new customers normally opt for the degustation menu rather than the la carte choices.

The slow-poached New Zealand Ora King Salmon is highly recommended. The chef says the fish is imported from New Zealand, where the fish quality is better.

Another popular main course is the roasted pigeon breast with goose liver and fresh Italian black truffle, another dish that is pricey but worth every penny.



Nox Bar in Taipei.

Nox on nostalgia

By **PAUL CHEYNE** in Taipei
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A little over a year ago, a few like-minded friends decided to take their mutual passion for epicurean appreciation and create a space where people can simply come, relax, have a chat and drink and unwind while indulging in a few of life's little luxuries.

If you can imagine the old-style taverns in which people would order a drink and confide their woes as the bartender wiped down the bar and shared a shot, this is the place which brings that scene back to life. Only this is Taipei.

Right from the intriguing double door entrance, visitors can easily imagine leaving the hustle and urban bustle behind as they enter the calming, low-key lounge and bar space.

With around 150 different varieties of Japanese, American and Scottish whiskies on offer, it goes without saying what their choice of poison is. But if whisky isn't your thing, there are plenty of other beverages including a wide selection of spirits, beers and cocktails. The only thing you do not get here is wine. For that you have to go across the road.

I was told that if you had a favorite cocktail in mind, they would do their best to conjure it up. And when they say "on the rocks" here, they literally mean it. Drinks are served on a huge ice ball handcrafted by NOX bartenders out of a large block of ice, so your drink remains cold without too much watering down.

Here, you can buy drinks the standard way or purchase a bottle and leave it with them for the next time if you cannot finish it all. But unlike other bars in Taipei which offer a similar service, once a bottle is purchased at Nox, there is no on-going "service charge" each time you choose to enjoy your bottle. A minimal fee only applies if you choose to share it with others.

There is also a selection of imported cigars on offer, as well as an Asian fusion tapas-style menu extracted from Taiwanese, Malaysian, Korean, Indian and European origins, prepared by a chef who used to work in Shangri-La Hotel.

This place is delightfully soft-spoken but has real talent humbly displayed in a gorgeous environment.

Another good feature of NOX is the clientele that it attracts: It ranges from business suits to the T-shirt brigade. There is little pretension here — everyone is made to feel welcome and comfortable, which generates an environment in which people from all backgrounds can come together.

IF YOU GO

Nox Bar

1/F, 7, Anhe Lu Second Section Lane 71, Da An district, Taipei. 886-02-2732-5826. Sunday-Thursday, 9 pm-3 am; Friday-Saturday 9 pm-4 am.