

如意-古典复兴

ruyi renaissance

The creator of the first modern luxury tableware designed for Chinese cuisine has inspired a gastronomic rebirth.

BY MAMIE CHEN

A WAITER DISCREETLY POURS a cup of Dongding oolong tea from a pristine white porcelain teapot that gleams with the same luster and warm translucence as fine jade. Admiring its auspiciously round, full shape, Desmond Chang pauses to contemplate the size. Have the practicalities of the custom-made extra large teapot overwhelmed the delicate balance and elegance of the design? He mentally files it away for later consideration.

As partner of Legle France, Chang should certainly know best, for the teapot is a central piece in the brand's Ruyi tableware collection. He jointly conceived and designed the line with Creative Director Peter Ting as a result of an epiphany that came one day in France while chatting about food. Though Legle France's collections were perfectly well-suited for French gastronomy, the products' profiles, such as the weight and depth of the bowls and the shape and balance of the spoons, weren't quite right for the needs of Chinese cuisine. Both men were struck by the realization that there wasn't one luxury tableware service meeting those needs.

"It was like I suddenly woke up," recalls Chang. "I said, 'Peter! Your mission is here. You are Chinese, you understand Chinese cuisine, and you are a professional porcelain designer. You must design a modern tableware service for Chinese gastronomy – for us and for all Chinese around the world.""

Ting, a renowned name in the field, drew inspiration from the antiques, artifacts, and architecture of China (and from one classic Italian shoe designer),



Shanghainese and Private Kitchen 上海及私厨飨宴

MONARCH RESTAURANT IN SHANGHAI 上海康乾宴

"This was a great starting point for the whole Ruyi Gastronomy experience. In the old days, the best chefs didn't work in restaurants, they worked privately for the best families. So we presented a private kitchen experience in an old French Concession house."
[以此作为如意宴巡回起点再好不过了。以前在中国,最一流的厨师不在餐厅,而是落脚在富贵人家,专责一家的餐点,所以我们选择了旧法国租借区洋房,提供独享的私厨体验。]

侍者手持清莹的白瓷茶壶,映出顶级玉 材特有的亮泽及温暖光晕,为客人倒上 一杯冻顶乌龙茶。法国丽固执行董事张 聪着迷于茶壶具吉祥意涵的圆形、完满 的形状,忍不住端详茶壶大小起来。实 用性的客制化特大茶壶是否破坏细致平 衡及优雅设计的美感?过了半饷,他决 定将该问题留待稍后考量。

身为品牌合夥人,没人比他更清楚 答案为何,此一茶壶正是旗下如意餐具 系列中的主要产品。系列概念来自他和 创意总监丁念祖在法国聊起食物时的灵 光一现,接着共同发想并设计出产品。 用法国丽固系列产品来享受法式美食可 说是天衣无缝,然而产品的规格,如重 量、碗重及碗深、汤匙形状及整体平衡 似乎与中国菜有点格格不入。想到市场 尚无任何符合相关需求之奢华餐具组, 张聪才萌生打造顶级中国餐具的想法。

张聪回想那天表示:「就像突然自梦 中惊醒,我和念祖说,你有事情要忙了! 你是中国人,你懂中国菜,同时也是专 业瓷器设计师,一定要设计一套用以享 用中式美馔的现代餐具组一不仅为我们, 也是为了全世界的中国人。」

丁念祖为业界名声显赫的人物,由 中国古董、器物及建筑,以及一位经典 意大利鞋类设计师之中寻求灵感,于系 列里注入中华文化的精髓,再度引入古 典形状之美,以现代观点重新演绎中国 哲学及风水等概念。招牌的如意形状一 圆弧角度、流线曲线及干净线条,在在 体现「外圆内方」的中式哲学,凸显慷 慨气度及协调美德之余,内心仍能保有 原则及规律。

他也专精于细腻的设计细节,让享 用中式美食过程中可能碰到的困扰迎刃 而解。注意到人们常用手持饭碗,设计 师贴心加上底缘,加上顶端的喇叭型开 口,完全不用担心接触到饭碗的热烫处。 汤碗底端则是特别加厚,搭配厚实碗盖, 保热性一流。中式汤匙形状已加调整, 较为窄长,匙身同时加深,握手弯成 Ferragamo招牌高跟鞋一般的美丽弧度, 让汤匙的实用性及设计美感进一步提升, 也兼顾轻量及造型平衡的需求。

张聪则负责妆点丁念祖所设计的各 式造型,曾为艺术家的身份让他在钻研 中国历史不同时代的经典设计及图形时



"When we first started the Ruyi Gastronomy, we didn't even know if anyone would be interested. But after the Ruyi at the Ritz-Carlton, where Tin Lung Heen produces some of the most sophisticated Cantonese cuisine in the world, we knew we were on to something very special and that the concept was highly appreciated by a lot of restaurateurs and hoteliers."
「推动如意宴初期,谁会有兴趣我们毫无头绪,但于丽思卡尔顿的如意宴之后一切变得明朗,天龙轩打造的粤菜,精致程度于全世界首屈一指。我们顿时知道自己做的事有多特别,同时也受到许多餐厅及酒店经营者好评。」

乐此不疲。战国时期的仿玉项链装饰于圆 顶盖上,缀着金色斑点的玫瑰色餐盘展现 的是中国最早出口的奢侈品-唐朝漆器之 美。如意系列产品之宋朝龙泉开片纹路、 元朝釉里红,以及明清两代备受推崇之青 花瓷纵贯中国数千年历史,展现中华文化 的博大精深之处。

投身中国艺术历史,用餐相关的古代 传统及社会礼俗让张聪惊艳不已。唐朝时 期画作中关于音乐、舞蹈以及细腻的餐酒 搭配多有着墨,丝丝入扣。他也发现在宋 朝,用餐必须行礼如仪,就像今日造访米 其林三星餐厅一般,如在矮桌前跪屈以及 一道道依序分食等需要遵守的各种规矩。

张聪指出:「分餐制度源自中国,很多 中菜厨师还以为这种上菜服务来自西方, 真的是大错特错。即使到1890年,分餐

Cantonese 广式美馔

THE RITZ-CARLTON, HONG KONG 丽思卡尔顿酒店,香港

都还是宫廷或富贵之家的唯一用餐方法。 这种文化及所有高级用餐传统如今已不复 见。」

张聪由此切入,打造互动性的平台展 示如意系列产品,除了让更多人意识到餐 具在享用中式美馔过程中扮演的重要角色 之外,也希望藉此唤回中华文化中奢华且 精致的用餐艺术。如意宴于上海打响第一 炮后,陆续巡回大中华地区多家餐厅限量 登场。对此他可说亲力亲为,从打点菜单 及菜色搭配,和各大名厨密切合作,到以 当代风格演绎各地美食等等。如意宴赋予 每道菜的故事,引领中国美馔继续往前迈 进。着墨的不仅是食物的味道,摆盘及视 觉印象,服务质量及整体用餐体验也都是 关键所在。

如意宴从许多层面来看,已经成为张

聪生活的一大寄托,至今办过超过300场 如意宴,让宾客浸淫于纯正中式飨宴丰富 的历史、传统及风华当中。「中华美食的文 艺复兴是我的终极目标,让现已不复见、 礼赞美食的华美烂漫文化再现。我真的想 让大家了解,中国人曾经知道奢华及精致 为何物。」他接着问道:「我们的美感、生 活以及美食的品味到哪去了?灵魂又在哪 里?」

目前为止,如意宴已让宾客体验过六 大地方菜系:上海、淮扬、香港、广东、 台湾及北京。每次飨宴均是客座大厨发挥 创意精心打造,于精挑细选的地点举行, 服务品质不在话下外,也考虑市场的接受 度。台北文华东方酒店的如意宴计划进行 至今年一月底,并正商讨廷长之可能性。 之后计划落脚上海开设据点、于欧洲提供 instilling the essence of the Chinese ethos in the collection by reviving ancient shapes and introducing modern interpretations of Chinese philosophy and feng shui traditions. The signature Ruyi shape – rounded corners, fluid curves, and clean lines – embodies a Chinese principle, *wai yuan nei fang* ("round on the outside, square on the inside"), that extols the virtue of displaying generosity and accommodation while remaining principled and disciplined at heart.

Ting also dealt with small design details to address the pragmatic concerns specific to Chinese cuisine. Recognizing that rice bowls are generally held in the hand, he has added a generous footrim to the bottom of the bowl and a flared lip at the top so that the diner's hand need never touch the heated part of the bowl. He has fashioned the soup bowls with extra thickness on the bottom and a heavy lid to ensure heat retention. Even the shape of the Chinese soup spoon has been narrowed, the bowl deepened, and the curve of the handle arched like the silhouette of Ferragamo's iconic high heel, enhancing both the utility and artistry of the spoon while preserving its light weight and balance.

Meanwhile, Chang took responsibility for dressing the shapes created by Ting. Chang delighted in researching classical designs and patterns from different periods throughout Chinese history. A replica jade pendant from the Warring States period tops a domed lid. A rose-colored dish flecked with gold represents Tang dynasty lacquer, the earliest luxury items exported from China. Integrating thousands of years of Chinese history and culture into the Ruvi collection are the cracked celadon patterns from the Song dynasty Longquan kilns, underglaze red decorations from the Yuan dynasty, and the celebrated cobalt blue and white qing-hua porcelain of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

It was while delving into Chinese art history that Chang was stunned to discover the ancient traditions and social mores around dining. Paintings from the Tang dynasty depict sophisticated features like music and dancing and the pairing of food with alcoholic beverages. He learned that the dining experience during the Song dynasty was as ritualized as a modern-day visit to a threestar Michelin restaurant and included such formalities as kneeling before low tables, known as *an*, and the personal service of separate courses in sequence.

"The Chinese were the first to have the degustation," says Chang. "Many Chinese chefs today think that serving course by course is a Western style, but they are absolutely wrong. Even as late as 1890, it was the only way to serve meals at the imperial courts or in the homes of the rich. But we lost our culture and all the traditions of Chinese haute cuisine."

Chang saw an opportunity to showcase the Ruyi collection by means of an interactive platform that would reclaim tableware as an important element of Chinese gastronomy and help to revive the lost art of sumptuous, sophisticated Chinese fine dining. For the inaugural Ruyi Gastronomy experience in Shanghai and all the subsequent limitedrun collaborations with restaurants around Greater China, he personally curated the menu and dish pairing, challenging the respective chefs to present modern interpretations of their regional cuisines. In leading Chinese gastronomy forward, Chang worked to ensure that every single dish had a story behind it. His attention was not focused solely on the taste of the food, but also on the flow of the menu, the presentation and visual impact of the dishes, the quality of service, and the overall dining experience.

The Ruyi Gastronomy has in many ways become Chang's calling in life. He has already hosted well over three hundred Ruyi Gastronomy events, reintroducing guests to the history, traditions, and splendor of authentic Chinese banquets. "My ultimate goal is to inspire a renaissance in Chinese cuisine," he says, "to bring back the beauty and lavish celebration of food that we had at one time and have lost. I really want to remind people that

Beijing 北京美馔

"I always wanted to bring the Ruyi to Beijing, but we had to be patient. Ideally, it should take place in a siheyuan [traditional Chinese quadrangle]. Even after the Waldorf Astoria offered their location, I found the menu to be very challenging. Because, what is Beijing cuisine? In my formula, Shangdong cuisine made up the backbone, with representation from imperial court cuisine, Manchurian cuisine, and Tan cuisine."

「在北京办如意宴一直是我的梦想,但 这事情急不来。理想来说,如意宴最 好可以在四合院(传统中式四方形建 筑)办。华尔道夫酒店作为场地定下来 后,我们便开始伤脑筋要呈现什么菜 色。说到底,北京菜是什么?我的想 法是以山东菜作为骨干,再融合宫廷 菜、满州菜及谭家菜等不同元素。」



the Chinese once knew luxury and sophistication, and then ask, 'What happened to our sense of beauty, our taste for life and for food? Where is our soul?"

To date, the Ruyi Gastronomy experience has explored six regional cuisines: Shanghainese, Huaiyang, Hong Kong, Cantonese, Taiwanese, and Beijing. Each stop on the Ruyi journey has involved a careful consideration of the creativity of the chef, the appropriateness of the venue, the quality of the service, and the readiness of the market. The Taiwanese Ruyi Gastronomy at Mandarin Oriental, Taipei is currently scheduled to run through the end of January 2016 with discussions underway for a possible extension. Future plans include a permanent venue in Shanghai, pop-up experiences in Europe, and further touring around Chinese regions – Sichuan tops Chang's list, but he is patiently waiting for the right market conditions in Chengdu.

Ultimately, Chang is hoping to spark a movement among the Chinese gastronomy



community. "The Ruyi Gastronomy is just one voice," he says. "We can be the first to raise the questions, but we are too small to be the ultimate answer. If Chinese chefs and restaurateurs roll with the concept and present their version of a Ruyi 2.0 – say, modern Cantonese or modern Beijing gastronomy – then maybe the renaissance in Chinese cuisine will happen." And for Desmond Chang, creator and chief evangelist of the Ruyi Gastronomy, that would be a dream fulfilled. **●** 快闪体验,并继续巡回大中华地区一四 川目前是张聪的第一优先,但他并不急, 会继续观察,等到成都市场成熟再进场。 张聪最终想在中式美食界掀起一股 风潮,他强调:「如意宴只是其中之一, 我们或可当提出问题的前行者,但要拿 出最终解答的话,我们仍力有未逮。如 若中餐厨师及餐厅经营者群起效尤祭出 如意宴 2.0 版一像现代广东或现代北京飨 宴,那确实就离中菜美食复兴到来不远 了。」那一天,对于如意宴创始者及灵魂 人物张聪来说,想必有如美梦成真。