

Time Out

Shanghai

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THE CITY ON A PLATE

*Where Shanghai's
top chefs go to eat*



**VALENTINE'S SORTED ROBERT DOWNEY JR EXCLUSIVE
THE RETURN OF DISCO THE BEST ARCADES IN TOWN**

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According to Karaku's Toyochiro Seki, his tempura recipe, passed through five generations of the Seki family over 170 years, 'is the most authentic Japanese food you'll find in Shanghai'. The 47-year-old has been cooking his tempura for 24 years, and brought the Karaku brand to Shanghai in 2006, adding to the five branches in Japan, one of which has a Michelin star. Shanghai's branch, housed in an historic building with gardens, boasts exquisite Japanese artworks and immaculate service from Japanese-speaking waitstaff in elaborate kimonos. The defining feature of the Karaku tempura is how astonishingly light it is. 'The key is the oil,' says Seki, whose recipe calls for pure safflower oil.

Favourite Chinese restaurant

I like **Han Lin Xuan**, which feels like a Chinese restaurant in a five-star hotel in Japan. It's very understated and sophisticated. I mainly go for their brilliant dim sum lunches, which are really clean and light, and the barbecued duck – I don't know how they cook it to add so much flavour, but you only get duck like that in China.

Favourite international restaurant

Though it's French food, the chef at **Franck** is Japanese, and we have a similar philosophy on food – the food there is all about delicacy, lightness and the quality of ingredients. Everything from the beef tartare to the wine list is excellent, and

reasonably priced. But I love the whole experience. The service is good, and it's a great location, with trees and greenery all around. But it's still comfortably casual.

Hidden gem

I go to this little yakatori place called **Maido** in front of the Shanghai Stadium once a week. It's straight from Japan, and they always play The Beatles, which suits a guy of my age. In terms of dishes, I eat just about everything on the menu, from the barbecued chicken to the excellent ramen and even these really good mini pizzas that they have. The shochu's really good too, and it's cheap – about 150RMB for dinner with drinks.

Favourite dish

I love the shark's fin and abalone soup at **Hui Yuan Fang**. At 300RMB, it's expensive for a soup, but it's the only soup I know of where you don't need anything else. The flavour is so deep, rich and thick – you can taste the strong flavours of two kings of the ocean. Shark's fin can often be smelly, but it's not here. There are a lot of places that serve the same thing, but for some reason nothing beats the Hui Yuan Fang version for me.



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