

# Time Out

## Shanghai

# 新旅行 Voyage

英文版

www.timeoutshanghai.com

FREE!

June 2014

No 54

全国统一刊号:

CN42-1750/G0

ISSN 1674-5116

9 771674 511093

# CHINA ON A PLATE

Navigate the country's Eight Great Cuisines  
without leaving Shanghai

Prestigious Address In Beijing  
Iconic Office In Asia



# Food & Drink

Edited by Crystyl Mo  
food.sh@timeoutcn.com



Q-Ing up Marja and Jean-Georges Vongerichten's latest venture looks set to be another popular one.

## New Korea move

As Marja and Jean-Georges Vongerichten bring modern Korean to The Bund, they talk to **Crystyl Mo** about their newly opened restaurant CHI-Q

**K**orean-American Marja Vongerichten never thought she'd open her own restaurant. But being married to prolific restaurateur Jean-Georges Vongerichten, one of the world's most acclaimed chefs, eventually led to an opportunity to partner with him on a project of her own. The just-launched CHI-Q at Three on the Bund combines the foods and flavours of Marja's birth country with Jean-Georges' modern restaurateur sensibility.

**How did you first get the idea for opening CHI-Q?**

**Marja** One of the owners of Three on the Bund had seen my TV show *Kimchi Chronicles* and she proposed the idea to do a restaurant with Jean-Georges and me together. I've always been so against opening a restaurant, just because I'm married to it. But after I saw the project was really going forward I got excited about it.

**How would you describe CHI-Q?**

**Marja** It's a modern Korean restaurant

married to my staunch traditionalist flavours. It's really a marriage of the two of us: Jean-Georges' contemporary take plus the food that I serve at home to my family.

**You've written a Korean cuisine cookbook for home cooks. How different was the process for developing restaurant recipes?**

**Marja** I spent about three weeks in the kitchen at Jean Georges [the restaurant] in New York with Jean-Georges and his chefs and that was quite a process. I was creating new recipes while maneuvering between 75 cooks in the middle of service. I've worked in commercial kitchens before but not that hectic. That was quite a learning curve for me but we had a lot of fun.

**What kind of food did you eat growing up?**

**Marja** Up until age three I ate Korean food and then I was adopted by an American couple. With my adoptive parents, I ate typical American food: fish sticks, chicken fingers. My mother was a lawyer and my father a colonel in the Marine Corps; both of them were workaholics.

**When did you first start cooking?**

**Marja** As a kid, I'd always wanted a catering business, I thought it was so much fun. I started cooking at age 12

with things like packaged muffin mix and my parents were always so patient. They would eat my dry eggs and they would always encourage me to try again. At 14 I cooked Thanksgiving dinner for the whole dinner and I was really proud.

“  
**The first time I tasted kimchi was when we moved in together**  
– Jean-Georges

**When did you first start eating Korean food again?**

**Marja** After I found my birth mother. I hadn't had Korean food in 17 years. The very first day I met my mother she cooked all my favourite dishes from when I was three. I took the first bite, I think it was *bulgogi* or something, and this flood of memories came back. After that it was like each dish I tasted was just another memory explosion. For me, this woman, my mother, was a virtual stranger to me but tasting her food was my one true visceral connection to this culture. After that, I dropped out of college and moved in with my birth mother. I had to follow my heart, something was telling me to do it. I'm her only child.

**So you learned to cook Korean from your mother?**

**Marja** Yes, the first thing she taught me was seaweed soup, and that recipe is on the menu at CHI-Q. Later, my mother's sister came to America when I had my daughter Chloe and helped me take care of her for four years and also taught me to cook more Korean foods. Now my mom says I've surpassed her as a cook.

**Jean-Georges, did you eat Korean food before you met Marja?**

**JG** Korean food was very new for me. The first time I tasted kimchi was when we moved in together. I thought something died in the fridge but it was just kimchi.

**Marja** He was a bachelor; in his fridge he had yogurt and San Pellegrino...

**JG** And Champagne! But I learned to like the Korean flavours.

**What have been the challenges of working together on CHI-Q?**

**Marja** Actually it's been surprisingly great to work together in a professional setting. At home he can't cook when I'm cooking because I use every utensil in the kitchen and I'm messy which he can't stand. At home I hate it when he touches my dishes.

**JG** Yes, so when we did the training, I used the other chef [CHI-Q's head chef Bina Yu] to tell her things, I said 'Bina, can you tell Marja...' [laughs]. I just had Bina suggest things to her.

**What have been your different roles in developing CHI-Q?**

**JG** At a restaurant, consistency is the most important thing, but also the balance of the menu. There's a lot of pork and beef in the Korean dishes and I wanted to have more vegetables. For CHI-Q, Marja did a seafood soup and a kimchi soup that's vegetarian with mushrooms. The menu is probably 70 per cent Marja and 30 per cent from me, adding in my restaurant experience.

**Marja** Jean-Georges does this with his eyes closed, so I could really just come in and do the creative part, what I love to do best.

**CHI-Q** Second Floor, Three on the Bund, 3 Zhongshan Nan Yi Lu, near Guangdong Lu, Huangpu district (6321 6622). Open 6-10.30pm Mon-Sat.  
© Nanjing Dong Lu, 黄浦区中山路3号2楼, 近广东路