



ESQUIRE'S  
**BEST**  
 NEW RESTAURANTS  
 2010



**WP24 BY WOLFGANG PUCK** LOS ANGELES

What's with Wolfgang Puck? He's sixty-one, has been opening hugely successful restaurants for three decades, and would have every right to be wearing a bathrobe and eating caviar by now. But here he goes opening a high-flying Chinese restaurant on the twenty-fourth floor of the new Ritz-Carlton hotel. The last time he tackled Asian cuisine was 1983, when he gave the world the influential East-West fusion restaurant Chinois on Main, before going on to open a string of Spagos, airport pizzerias, and high-gloss steakhouses. But in many ways WP24 is vintage Puck: dramatic design, adaptive cooking, and a reliance on his chefs. In this case, they are two Americans, Lee Hefter and David McIntyre, who bring flair and inventiveness to Chinese dishes that for decades have foundered as strip-mall takeout—tender spring rolls and dumplings, expertly cooked and carved Peking duck, and Shanghai noodles. Somehow, as Chinois did in its day, the whole endeavor feels rooted in the moment: comfort food made special by high-powered cooking.

• 900 West Olympic Boulevard; 213-743-8824

**ESQUIRE:** Why a Chinese restaurant after all these years?

**WOLFGANG PUCK:** I wanted to create a high-class Chinese restaurant just like the three-star restaurants in Europe. It seems like in L.A., we have many interesting Chinese restaurants, but generally they don't have a great wine list or good service and only a few great dishes on their menus.

**ESQ:** You run scores of restaurants yet you seem to actually be cooking in L.A. Is this true at WP24?

**WP:** I cook in all the restaurants—sometimes not physically at the stove for five hours, but I develop new dishes with all my chefs. These days, I have to be more like a coach. Lee Hefter is as passionate as I am about Chinese and Asian-style food, so he is really the one who is cooking at WP24 every night.

**ESQ:** An American?

**WP:** We can teach a cooking technique to any chef who has passion. One doesn't have to come from China to cook great Chinese food or from France to cook great French food. Lee and David McIntyre, who have worked with me for many years, have the same sensibilities as I do—which makes it easy.

**ESQ:** What's the best thing to do with leftover Chinese rice?

**WP:** I like to make rice pudding with maple syrup, cinnamon, and fresh berries, like my mother used to make.

