

# EVERYTHING IN ITS SEASON: JIUN HO DESIGNS INTERIOR FOR SAISON RESTAURANT

James Nestor | January 23, 2014 |

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Where there's smoke, there's fire. And where there's fire, there's often wood. Which explains why wood dominates Jiun Ho's interior for San Francisco's Michelin two-star restaurant [Saison](#), which just moved to a converted 1888 electrical plant in the hot South of Market district.

PROJECT NAME	Saison Restaurant
LOCATION	San Francisco
FIRM	Jiun Ho
SQ. FT.	3,700 SQF

"It all comes back to fire. The roaring flames in the kitchen's hearth, the wide-open ranges, the alchemy of cooking. Fire is the soul of Saison," Ho says.

Wood, accordingly, appears in various colors, textures, and sizes. A stack of firewood and clusters of potted trees punctuate the procession from the curb to the oversize frosted-glass front doors. Inside, you immediately find your path blocked by a 10-foot-high, 12-foot-wide partition built by stacking cords of firewood inside a frame of steel. You must turn right to enter the dining room.

Overhead, broad redwood beams and trusses support the cathedral ceiling. Locally sourced walnut appears in the form of the tables' live-edge tops. That intentional "imperfection" gives a nod to wabi-sabi, the Japanese aesthetic that Ho, whose own ancestry is Malaysian, says is a guiding influence on his work. The decor furthermore reflects the cuisine, refined but unfussy.

The beating heart of Saison is the open kitchen, outfitted in stainless steel and white subway tile, accented by hanging copper pots, and lit almost flashbulb-bright in contrast to the surrounding earthy dimness. Every one of the 18 seats in the elongated 3,700-square-foot space is within direct eyeshot, particularly since a row of refrigerators extends beyond the kitchen proper to line the back of the dining room. A long counter is likewise just a few feet from guests, bringing them even closer to the action.

"There's just so much pressure associated with dining in really nice restaurants. What to wear, how to act, which dish to order," Ho says. "Saison strips that all away to create warmth and comfort, as if you were eating at a good friend's house." We should all have friends who serve 15-course tasting menus.

## Project Team:

Yanscape Design: General Contractor.