

kitchen

firm: **jiun ho**
site: **san francisco**

Seasonal vegetables
are prepped on metal
trays in the Saison
kitchen.

bath



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.

"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. ➤

everything in its season



Clockwise from top left:

The 1888 building housed an electrical plant until 1905 and an automobile repair shop thereafter. Pendant fixtures above a kitchen counter are LED. Dishes are porcelain. All 18 seats have views of the kitchen.

Opposite: By the entry, a partition built from firewood and steel stands 10 feet high beneath the 30-foot ceiling.

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. —James Nestor

kitchen bath

FROM FRONT: MOLTENI; RANGES (KITCHEN); HERING BERLIN; DISHWARE (DINING ROOM); MAHARAM; BANQUETTE FABRIC, THROUGHOUT SORAA; LED FIXTURES; BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.; PAINT; YANSCAPE DESIGN; GENERAL CONTRACTOR



