

T+L DECODER

Our Definitive Guide to

San Francisco

A culinary scene to rival New York City's, eye-popping design, and a laid-back, outdoorsy ethos are just three reasons to visit San Francisco right now. **Jaime Gillin** takes a tour. Photographed by Alanna Hale



Overlooking the Proxy Project, a pop-up collective in San Francisco's Hayes Valley. Opposite: Cappelletti with beets, Gorgonzola dolce, and poppy seeds at Cotogna, in Jackson Square.



EAT

SHOP

STAY

SEE+DO

LOCAL TAKE



Clockwise from left: Outside Cotogna; a pizza with pea shoots, prosciutto, and an organic egg at Cotogna; Saison's potato crisp topped with trout roe.

Lay of the Land

Union Square

Big-name luxury boutiques border this central plaza downtown.

Mission District

The fast-gentrifying neighborhood is known for its Latino culture and standout restaurants and bars.

Hayes Valley

A stone's throw from the opera and symphony hall, Hayes Street is chockablock with chic shops and cafés.

Pacific Heights

Come to this mansion-filled hilltop for postcard-worthy views of the city.

SoMa

This sprawling area includes a plethora of museums, destination restaurants, and the ballpark, all amid a sea of parking lots and highway ramps.

Getting Around

Taxis and public transportation are plentiful—the BART light rail system (bart.gov), Muni trains and buses (sfmta.com), and the city's cable cars can get you most places.

Eat

The city's hottest tables dish up an enticing mix of fusion cuisines.

BENU

Chef Corey Lee has reinvented the city's fine dining scene with the clean-lined Benu, in SoMa. Here, every detail is carefully considered, from the porcelain tableware to the Eastern-inspired chef's tasting menu (a 1,000-year-old quail egg; salt-and-pepper squid; lobster-coral *xiao long bao*, or steamed buns). benusf.com. \$\$\$\$

RICH TABLE

You'll want to come back again and again to this homey restaurant owned by husband-and-wife chefs Evan and Sarah Rich. Dishes perfectly balance acidity and texture, and highlight surprise

ingredients—the addictive sardine-laced potato chips are served with horseradish sauce; the chicken lasagna is sprinkled with crunchy popped sorghum. richtablesf.com. \$\$\$

COTOGNA

At the lively Cotogna, most plates come from the open hearth, including succulent, spit-roasted meats and wood-fired pizzas. As is the case at its sister restaurant Quince, the pastas are a must—try the buttery *raviolo di ricotta* with farm egg. cotognasf.com. \$\$

STATE BIRD PROVISIONS

Waiters roam the room serving innovative small bites from dim-sum-style carts at this casual, buzzy spot. Luckily, the food stands up to the quirky concept: the seafood selections in particular are worth flagging down for delicacies such as black-garlic aioli on a fried nori chip. statebirdsdf.com. \$\$\$

SAISON

After its smaller, scrappier spot received two Michelin stars, the farm-to-table Saison, run by chef Joshua Skenes, moved to a grander space in a SoMa historic building. Choose from an 18-course or

a seven-course tasting menu—both highlight local ingredients, sourced from foragers and farmers' markets. saisonsf.com. \$\$\$\$

MISSION CHINESE FOOD

This raved-about restaurant may have a divey interior, slack service, and an hour-long wait—but the food is worth it. Founding chef Danny Bowien (who last year opened an outpost in New York) calls his cuisine "Americanized Chinese food"; think fiery kung pao pastrami and a cardamom-laced beef brisket soup. Can't brave the line? They deliver. missionchinesefood.com. \$\$

Shop

Five stylish boutiques not to miss.

RAND & STATLER

Co-owners Catherine Chow and Corina Nurimba have built a mini fashion empire in Hayes Valley, with the opening of Azalea in 2003 and Welcome Stranger in 2010. Their latest bid for retail domination is Rand & Statler, which is stocked with cutting-edge looks from the likes of Alexander Wang and Acme. randandstatler.com.

WILKES BASHFORD

After a top-to-bottom refit, the town-house-style emporium in Union Square now has a men's store featuring Brioni and Kiton boutiques and a made-to-measure bar for suits. wilkesbashford.com.

HEATH CERAMICS

The 65-year-old, Sausalito-based houseware company, renowned for its heirloom-quality tableware and tile, recently opened

this 20,000-square-foot factory, shop, and café in the Mission District. Glass walls give visitors a peek at tile production while they browse the bowls, vases, and table linens. heathceramics.com.

HARPUPS

Proprietor Gus Harput turns out avant-garde pieces that look deceptively simple on the rack. Most can be worn a multitude of ways; the three-hole blazer and the swacket (sweater-jacket) are travel essentials. harputsown.com.

MARCH

This gallery-like space specializes in goods for the kitchen, home, and pantry. Owner Sam Hamilton has commissioned work by local artisans, including Carrara worktables, leather bags, and Japanese indigo-dyed clothing. marchsf.com.



Clockwise from left: A silk dress at Rand & Statler in Hayes Valley; housewares at Heath Ceramics, in the Mission District; stoneware mugs at March, in Pacific Heights.

Stay

Want to know where to check in? Here, the hotels we're excited about.



A room at Hotel Zetta, in Union Square.

New & Noteworthy

HOTEL ZETTA The Viceroy Hotel Group's latest property attracts a high-tech crowd thanks to its sleek interiors (a curved wooden wall above the bed; butcher-block desks), a game room off the lobby, and a floor-to-ceiling Plinko installation that you can actually play. viceroyhotelgroup.com. \$\$

ST. REGIS SAN FRANCISCO

With its luxe rooms—cream-colored leather and Mozambican wood on the walls; acres of marble in the bathrooms—the St. Regis brings a dose of glamour to the SoMa district. The Japanese-themed restaurant Ame only adds to the appeal. stregis.com. \$\$\$\$

INN AT THE PRESIDIO

Set within the 1,491-acre Presidio park, this intimate, 26-room inn was carved out of two historic buildings—a 1903 brick structure and a neighboring clapboard house. What we love best: the hiking trails out the back door. innatthepresidio.com. \$\$

MYSTIC HOTEL

Star chef Charlie Palmer recently took over the Victorian-era Mystic, exposing brick and adding vintage mirrors to the rooms and opening a speakeasy-inspired tavern that has quickly become a local favorite. mystichotel.com. \$\$

The Classics MANDARIN ORIENTAL

The just-renovated Mandarin

has some of the best views of the city, especially from the Bridge to Bridge rooms (binoculars included). mandarinoriental.com. \$\$\$\$

RITZ-CARLTON SAN FRANCISCO

Fresh from a makeover (good-bye chintz, hello earth-toned geometric patterns), today's Ritz, near Nob Hill, still has dotting service. ritzcarlton.com. \$\$\$\$

HOTEL DRISCO

Expect a residential feel, turn-of-the-20th-century architecture, and plenty of complimentary perks (including bicycles) at this hilltop property in Pacific Heights. hoteldrisco.com. \$\$

See+Do

1 Ferry Building This is what foodie heaven looks like: dozens of local purveyors, hawking everything from cheese and chocolate to cupcakes, line the arcades of this historic waterfront building. Two standouts are Miette Patisserie and Acme Bread. Three days a week, the city's most seductive farmers' market—perfectly piled heirloom carrots; a full spectrum of peppers—sets up out front. ferrybuildingmarketplace.com.

2 SF Jazz Center The new \$64 million, 35,000-square-foot SF Jazz Center is America's first stand-alone space for jazz, with a 700-seat auditorium designed to evoke both a club and concert hall. The adventurous programming encompasses both emerging talent and established stars including Ahmad Jamal. sfjazz.org.

3 Golden Gate Park A green jewel in the city's crown, Golden Gate Park is a must-visit not only for its Herzog & de Meuron-designed de Young Museum but also for lesser-known gems such as the Victorian-era Conservatory of Flowers, paddleboating on Stow Lake, and a paddock where rare American bison roam. golden-gate-park.com.

4 Crissy Field Sun-seekers, runners, dog-walkers, and kiteboarders come to this scenic bay-front beach and promenade. Pass through the restored tidal marsh en route to the Warming Hut, a cozy stop for lunch. Visit in the morning if you can; the wind picks up in the afternoon. parksconservancy.org.

5 Proxy Project A once-vacant lot in Hayes Valley has been transformed into the popular Proxy Project: a collection of converted shipping containers now houses pop-up businesses, including a beer garden, a sportswear shop, and a futuristic ice creamery that uses liquid nitrogen to create scoops in 60 seconds. proxysf.net.



Biking the promenade at Crissy Field near the Golden Gate Bridge.

For more on the best restaurants, shops, and hotels in San Francisco, go to travelandleisure.com/travel-guide/san-francisco.



From left: Contemporary furniture at Dzine, in the Mission District; oven-roasted clams at the Slanted Door, in the Ferry Building; inside the "Rainforests of the World" exhibit at the California Academy of Sciences.



Local Take

Three insiders share their favorite spots.



YVES BÉHAR
Designer

I have lived in the city for more than 20 years, and its spirit for innovation influences every aspect of the city. My go-to spots for great architecture: Daniel Libeskind's **Contemporary Jewish Museum** (thebjm.org) and Thom Mayne's **Federal Building** (90 Seventh St.) in SoMa. For cool contemporary furniture, don't miss **Dzine** (dzinestore.com) and **Arkitektura** (arksf.com). Another boutique worth checking out is **Propeller** (propellermmodern.com), which sells beautiful decorative objects.



MICHAEL MINA
Executive chef,
Michael Mina
San Francisco

For me, the "real" San Francisco is all about food. My ideal culinary tour would include **Swan Oyster Depot** (1517 Polk St.; 415/673-1101; \$\$), the **Slanted Door** (slanteddoor.com; \$\$), and **La Taqueria** (2889 Mission St.; 415/285-7117; \$\$). Another favorite is the Moroccan restaurant **Aziza** (aziza-sf.com; \$\$\$). Chef Mourad Lahlou blows me away with his bold and vibrant dishes such as duck-confit *bastilla*. And the pastries (banana-cream tarts; éclairs) at **Tartine Bakery & Cafe** (tartinebakery.com) are second to none.



JENNIFER SIEBEL NEWSOM
Women's activist
and documentary
producer

I was born here and have lived all over the world but returned when my husband became mayor in 2003. I like to take my kids to the **California Academy of Sciences** (calacademy.org), then walk around North Beach—aside from the strip of gentleman's clubs—and take in the view of the bay from the 210-foot Coit Tower. The vista is breathtaking and reminds me of Italy. For breakfast, I'm a huge fan of **Mama's** (mamas-sf.com; \$\$), on Washington Square Park; try the cranberry-orange French toast.

All Hail the Mixologist

Bartenders citywide are elevating the cocktail with fresh ingredients and creative techniques. At **Trick Dog** (trickdogbar.com), drinks are named for Pantone colors and employ unusual spices and even the odd beet. Try Grandma's Sweater, made with gin, blood orange, and a rhubarb liqueur. • Call ahead to reserve a table at **Wilson & Wilson** (thewilsonbar.com), a detective-agency-themed bar with a three-drink tasting menu. • Rum fanatic Martin Cate opened the new-wave tiki bar **Smuggler's Cove** (smugglerscovesf.com) to spotlight the 400-odd rums he's sourced from around the globe.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAUREN NASSEF