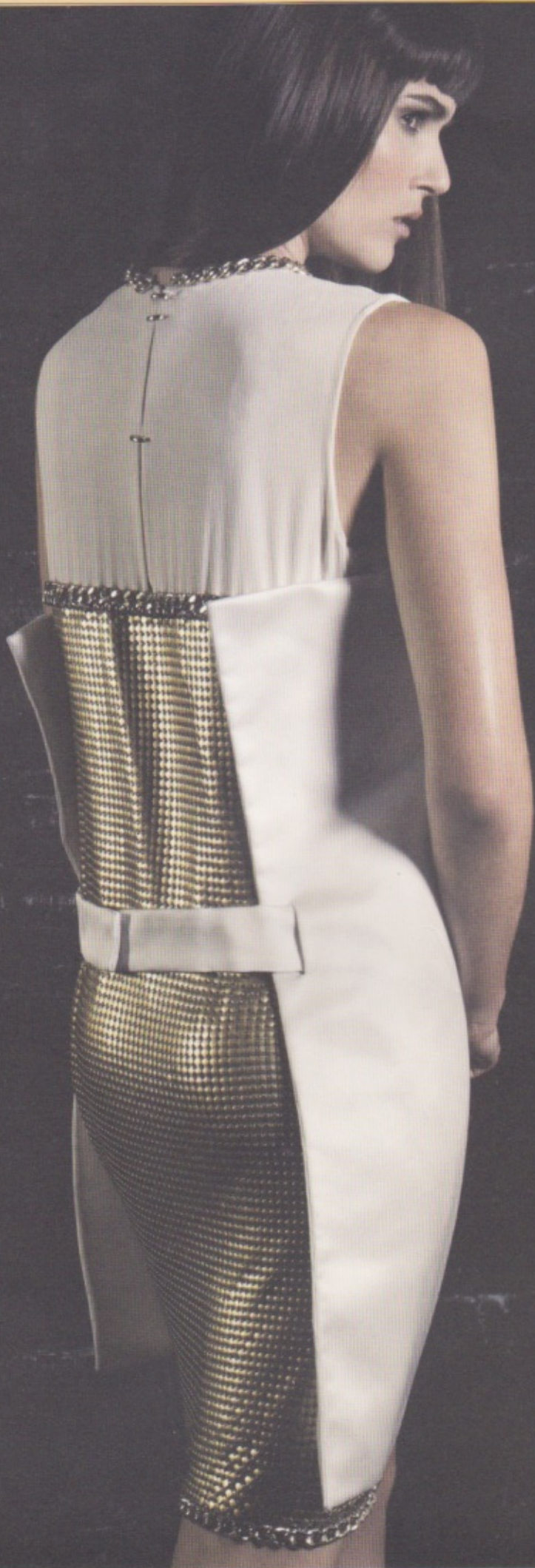


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OUT OF THE FOG

San Francisco is redefining Northern Californian cuisine, writes Marcia Gagliardi.



Bar Tartine

San Francisco is known as a diner's city, its restaurants revered for their diversity, use of local ingredients, and often simple style. Something else in the culinary scene is brewing, too, and it's not just all the new "third wave" coffee roasters like Sight-glass and Four Barrel. A fresh crop of chefs are shaking off their Cal-Med cuisine shackles and letting loose with an irreverent style that's all their own.

One prime example is **State Bird Provisions** from husband-and-wife team Stuart Briozza and Nicole Krasinski. After taking a break from fine dining, they opened this restaurant in the Fillmore District. Servers wheel custom-made dim sum carts and circulate with trays throughout the intimate dining room, presenting an ever-changing array of small plates as they come out of the kitchen. Dishes like an irresistible green garlic fry bread topped with creamy burrata and the namesake fried quail shouldn't be missed—and desserts are inspired. The mood is light and interactive, with guests returning often to enjoy some of the most memorable food in the city now.



Chad Robertson at Bar Tartine

Another hotspot catching the attention of discerning locals is **Bar Tartine**, the Mission restaurant from Chad Robertson and Liz Prueitt of Tartine Bakery fame. Chef Nicolaus Balla's menu defies classification: does the fried langos (potato bread) mean it's Hungarian? But what about the Danish smørrebrød served on the weekends, with herring and brisket topping thin slices of sprouted rye bread? The food is vibrant and rustic, full of bright notes from all the housemade pickled items and paprika. The extensive beer list fuels the convivial atmosphere in a stylish dining room rich with wood elements, one that is full of light during brunch and the sandwich service for lunch.

Just blocks away is **Namu Gaji**, a corner izakaya from the three Lee brothers. The space is dominated by a long communal table made of bay laurel, while wood beams evoke their Korean background. Chef Dennis Lee's flavour-forward menu features shareable plates like uni shiso tempura, a rotating crudo selection



Namu Gaji

with accompaniments like fermented chile leaves, and cubes of pickled, grass-fed beef tongue cooked on a sumi charcoal grill. It's all built to pair well with the well-chosen list of beers, wines and sakes.

On a desolate street in the Mission is **Saison**, a restaurant that has captured national attention for its painstaking culinary approach. Chef Joshua Skenes composes a nightly tasting menu full of foraged ingredients (many picked that day), aged meats, and truly

beautiful presentations, with the hearth out back playing a central role. The wine pairings by Mark Bright are engaging, and the dining room hits the perfect note of elegance with California naturalism. There's only one seating a night, so you can linger and enjoy the experience.

A new opening in the Mission is **Central Kitchen** from the Flour + Water team (a popular Cal-Ital outpost). Chef Thomas McNaughton is switching gears here, veering away from Italian cuisine and focusing more on Northern California as the inspiration, using whole animals (and vegetables), with many items prepared on the coal- and wood-



Namu Gaji

fired grill and rotisserie. There is an à la carte and nightly tasting menu.

For those up for an adventure (and who don't mind standing up while they eat), the city's food truck and street food scene has really taken off, with everything from Indian to Vietnamese to nitrogen ice cream vendors, all with their own spin. Swing by the Ferry Building Marketplace for lunch on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays, or hunt down an **Off the Grid** gathering of trucks, like Friday evenings at Fort Mason.

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Street Food
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Market
W: cuessa.org/markets

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