

# bon appétit

AMERICA'S BEST NEW

# RESTAURANTS

SPECIAL  
ISSUE



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this restaurant?  
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**The Hot 10**  
P. 119

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**51** GREAT RECIPES  
FROM OUR  
FAVORITE SPOTS

PLUS

**Our Dish  
of the  
Year**

You'll never guess  
what it is... P. 168

**LET'S GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY:** Eating at Saison, Joshua Skenes's 32-seat stunner, is expensive. *Very expensive.* Figure \$248 for the prix fixe (the only option), and \$148 more for the wine pairing, which you should get. You'll also want a few cocktails at the bar first. Six hours later, your table of two will have spent around \$1,018.25. At least, that's what it cost me. And here's the real shocker: It was worth it.

For most, this price tag is a deal-breaker. But consider that a full-time staff of 24 crafts your 18 exquisite courses—which are made from maniacally sourced ingredients at their ultimate peak and served on museum-worthy plates and bowls—and dinner starts to sound like a relative bargain. Bookended between a house-made rhubarb-soda gilded with forget-me-nots and a sesame seed soufflé that would make Escoffier cry is a dazzling array of miniature works of art. Imagine Parmesan custard topped with gold leaf; blue wing sea robin *crudo* with foraged yuzu; abalone liver and rice stew; and duck dry-aged for 30 days.

Skenes, the guy cooking in an untucked dress shirt, is a flawless technician who's at the top of his game at just 34 years old. He's making some of the most personal food out there. If, like me, you'd rather spend your money on a once-in-a-lifetime meal than on a new laptop or Super Bowl tickets, it's time to book a table. —A.K.

#### FIREWOOD AND CHARCOAL

**\$700/WEEK**

Almond, fruit, and smoking woods—plus high-end binchotan charcoal—keep the custom hearth, wood oven, and smoker blazing.

#### OVERHEAD

**\$24,000/MONTH**

Rent, occupancy costs, and utilities make up a substantial chunk of Saison's operating budget.

#### TREND SPOTTING

**Wood-Burning Ovens**

*"Despite all the technology in the kitchen, I realized chefs just want to play with fire."* —A.K.

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## Saison

San Francisco, California

Dinner for two at Joshua Skenes's stunner will set you back—gulp!—\$1,000. **Let's run the numbers**

### FLOWERS

**\$800/WEEK**

Natalie Bowen Designs provides custom arrangements.

The custom buildout for Saison's kitchen and dining room came in at a cool **\$2,800,000.**