

# San Francisco Chefs Dish on Where They Go to Eat

T+E

Some chefs would laugh at the idea of having a day off but here's a roundup of where the city's culinary innovators like to go when they aren't inside their own kitchens.

Words & Photos by Nelson Tam

Chef **Charles Phan**, founder of the **Slanted Door Group**, prefers Chutney in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighbourhood for Indian/Pakistani takeout.


**"If you can get a drink at Bourbon and Branch next door...it's the coolest thing, it'll cost you \$25 for two drinks, and \$25 for the dinner."**



### ***The Slanted Door***

1 Ferry Building #3  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
Neighbourhood: Embarcadero  
(415) 861-8032



**More Info** 

### ***Chutney***

511 Jones St.  
(between O'Farrell Street  
& Geary Street)  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Neighbourhood: Tenderloin  
(415) 931-5541



### ***Bourbon and Branch***

501 Jones St.  
(between O'Farrell Street  
& Geary Street)  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Neighbourhood: Tenderloin  
(415) 346-1735



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When the Slanted Door first opened on Valencia Street in 1995, it also opened many appetites to Vietnamese food. Executive Chef Charles Phan took the food of his motherland and elevated it with high-end ingredients, ambience, wine and cocktails — a fresh approach at the time in San Francisco. It was an instant hit, as the restaurant was first to make fine dining waves in the Mission District, now an area many tastemakers claim to be the best dining neighbourhood in the city.

The Slanted Door has since moved twice, finally landing in the Ferry Building in 2004, where it offers diners great views of the Oakland Bay Bridge. That same year, Phan received the James Beard Award for "Best Chef: California." In 2011 he was also inducted into the Foundation's "Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America." Currently, the Slanted Door Group owns and operates seven different restaurants in San Francisco.

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**"(Chef) Amaryll's cooking is so genuine and so soulful – it's great. I love it. I would probably choose lunch there over almost any other restaurant in the city."**

Chef Skenes also loves a Chiu Chow noodle shop called Hai Ky Mi Gia in the Tenderloin neighbourhood.

### ***Saison***

178 Townsend St.  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
Neighbourhood: SoMa  
(415) 828-7990



**More Info** 

### ***Boulette's Larder***

Embarcadero Plaza  
1 Ferry Building Marketplace  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
Neighbourhood: Embarcadero  
(415) 399-1155



### ***Hai Ky Mi Gia***

707 Ellis St.  
(between Larkin Street  
& Polk Street)  
San Francisco, CA 94109  
Neighbourhood: Tenderloin  
(415) 771-2577






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A modest prix-fixe menu of \$60, once a week in a shared space on Folsom Street in the Mission District — these were the humble beginnings of chef and co-owner Joshua Skenes and sommelier and co-owner Mark Bright's vision. Back then Skenes dug a pit behind the restaurant so that he could work directly with fire. In four years, the one-day-a-week venture evolved to five days, and is now a two-Michelin-starred operation in an 18-seat dining room and open kitchen in San Francisco's SoMa neighbourhood. Fire is still a mainstay on his tool belt, but Skenes' menu now

runs about \$248 (before drinks), ranges from 18-20 courses and changes nightly. What you can expect is highly intricate cuisine prepared with techniques geared towards coaxing as much as possible out of the ingredients, even given their natural variations — like how the same orange changes in flavour from one day to the next. The experience is a gastronomical flight that's been meticulously engineered. For those in search of a more casual ride, an à-la-carte menu is also offered in the salon of the restaurant, which seats an additional 12 people.

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***Mission  
Chinese Food***

Lung Shan Restaurant  
2234 Mission St.  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Neighbourhood: Mission  
(415) 863-2800



**More Info** 

***The Alembic Bar***

1725 Haight St.  
(between Cole Street  
& Shrader Street)  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
Neighbourhood: The Haight  
(415) 666-0822




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Mission Chinese Food began as a pop-up restaurant in a space that belonged to Lung Shan Restaurant. Since opening, things have blown up for owner and chef Danny Bowien. (Lung Shan only exists now as letters on the window.) After just over three years in business, hipsters, foodies and everyone in between are still lining up for dishes like Kung Pao Pastrami, Salt Cod Fried Rice and Tiki Pork Belly — and it’s not the service or charming lack of ambience that

brings them back. (That lack of ambience, however, is perhaps the most traditional part of the experience.) Still, the tilted take on traditional Chinese food has caught the attention of the James Beard Foundation. Almost a year after opening a second location in New York City, the Foundation named Bowien “Rising Star Chef of The Year.” Bowien now lives in New York while head chef Jesse Koide takes care of the kitchen in San Francisco.

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**Nicole Krasinski**, co-owner and pastry chef at **State Bird Provisions**, opts for La Ciccia on the edge of Noe Valley.

**“It’s one of those places where you don’t feel like you’re in San Francisco. It’s a husband and wife from Italy that own it and the food is so delicious and it’s Sardinian – so (sea) urchin pasta, flat bread. It’s also one of those places where you don’t feel like it’s necessarily part of the normal circuit.”**

### ***State Bird Provisions***

1529 Fillmore St.  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
Neighbourhood:  
Western Addition  
(415) 795-1272



**More Info** 

### ***La Ciccia***

291 30th St  
(between Chenery St  
& Church St)  
San Francisco, CA 94131  
Neighbourhood: Noe Valley  
(415) 550-8114








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The words “Best,” “New,” “Restaurant,” and “Chef,” have been regular vocabulary in any story or mention of husband and wife Stuart Brioza and Nicole Krasinski’s State Bird Provisions. Here, food is served by way of cart or tray, like dim sum, all on small plates. California’s state bird is the quail and the restaurant’s titular dish, which is buttermilk-marinated, then fried, is a must have. It’s one of the regular menu items, but the night’s surprise dishes, described to you tableside and ready to be consumed, are the real

gems. The concept offers adventure and freedom for the kitchen, which in the early days was building on items as the night progressed, and excitement for its diners. After all, how exciting is it to only see (and maybe smell) your dish right before deciding if you’ll eat it? A clever idea solidified by exquisite execution can have one setback: you’ll have to make your reservation well in advance or arrive early to wait in line. But at least you’ll know you can be eating something the second you sit down.

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**Stuart Brioza**, co-owner and chef at **State Bird Provisions**, chooses Outerlands in the Sunset neighbourhood.

**“It’s owned by this really interesting husband-and-wife (team) who surf by day and wanted to create this really warm, wooden restaurant. They just nailed it on all courses – you go in and you feel good; the food is creative. You can be in flip-flops and shorts if the weather is okay; you can be whoever or whatever you want.”**



### ***State Bird Provisions***

1529 Fillmore St.  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
Neighbourhood:  
Western Addition  
(415) 795-1272



### ***Outerlands***

4001 Judah St.  
(between 45th Avenue  
& 46th Avenue)  
San Francisco, CA 94122  
Neighbourhood: Outer Sunset  
(415) 661-6140



**Melissa Perfit**, chef de cuisine at **Hard Water**, prefers


**“Nopa in the Western Edition (neighbourhood). It’s kind of a big industry place because they serve food until 1 a.m. Their food is very California – you know, fresh ingredients, good salads, a good burger, pork chops. It’s simple but it’s just a fun spot.”**



### ***Hard Water***

Pier 3  
Ste 3-102  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
Neighbourhood: Embarcadero  
(415) 392-3021



**More Info** 

### ***nopa***

560 Divisadero St.  
(between Fell Street &  
Hayes Street)  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
Neighbourhood: Alamo Square  
(415) 864-8643



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Hard Water emerged out of three loves. Charles Phan (of the Slanted Door Group) stumbled upon the space on Pier 3 of the Embarcadero and instantly fell in love with it. He had always loved cooking southern food for his friends and family and when he found success with a fried chicken recipe he developed for a street food festival, that passion catapulted into a business idea. The final ribbon is the love of bourbon Phan shared with his long-time architect, friend

and co-owner, Olle Lundberg. Phan and his team had been storing away rare and old bottles and what better place to share some of that special mash than this new whiskey bar? Should the 150-plus varieties of American whiskey not appeal to your palette, a cocktail list inspired by the old-fashioned concoctions of New Orleans readily awaits. Origin and research always play a large part in everything Phan does. And Hard Water is no exception.

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