

WHAT'S NEWS.

TWIST OF PLATE
Frog legs with spring garlic, parsley and Meyer lemon, part of the menu at soon-to-open wine bar Verjus.



WINE AND SPIRIT

This summer Lindsay and Michael Tusk, founders of acclaimed San Francisco restaurant Quince, are bringing the city a lively Parisian-style *cave à manger*.

BY JAY CHESHES PHOTOGRAPHY BY KYLE JOHNSON

ON A TRIP TO Paris in January, San Francisco restaurateurs Lindsay and Michael Tusk enjoyed an evening at L'Avant Comptoir, chef Yves Camdeborde's perpetually packed Left Bank wine bar, fighting their way to the counter for charcuterie, croquettes and glasses of great, funky wine. "We love that kind of eating, the conviviality, a little disorganized by design," says Lindsay, 47.

When the Tusks' new place, Verjus, opens in San Francisco's Jackson Square this summer, they're hoping it will take on a similar freewheeling spirit. The project, which they describe as their midlife-crisis restaurant, takes its cues from the *caves à manger* (or eat-in wine cellars) proliferating in the French capital, specializing in easy snacks and reasonably priced wine served in an unpretentious setting.

The Tusks' California interpretation will occupy a pair of gutted storefronts two blocks from their three-Michelin-star flagship, Quince, and its boisterous sibling, Cotogna. Their third venue will be their most casual and, they hope, their most fun. "We're looking for a bit more anarchy, a chance to let our hair down," says Lindsay. "We're thinking yé-yé girls style, [Serge] Gainsbourg playing, French and '70s, quite spirited."

Half of Verjus will be filled with wooden tables and chairs by the late Parisian designer Pierre Chapo, a laid-back layout for enjoying the rotating menu of gutsy French food overseen by chef de cuisine David Meyer: crispy frog legs, say, or stewed escargots. The bar's mostly French soundtrack will match its mostly French selection of offbeat wines, sold at retail prices to pop open on-site or take home with a house-cured *saucisson*. The bar's other half will be a shop offering items the Tusks have discovered on their travels—antique truffle slicers, bespoke knives, Japanese glassware, French ceramics and other items long coveted (and sometimes pocketed) by diners at their other restaurants.

In Paris, the couple picked up vintage plates, wine carafes and lighting fixtures at the Marché Paul Bert Serpette and found new culinary inspiration in charcuterie star Arnaud Nicolas's "haute couture" *pâtés en croûte*, sold at his seventh-arrondissement dine-in shop. "That was probably the best place we went the whole time," says Michael, 49, who is developing a foie gras *tourte* based on one served there.

Nearly 15 years after launching Quince, the Tusks are returning to their roots with Verjus, channeling the French *joie de vivre* they first encountered when they both worked at Chez Panisse in the early '90s—though not at the same time. They met and fell in love a few years later working at Paul Bertolli's Oakland restaurant, Oliveto, where the food drew on the traditions of northern Italy. The region also informed the debut menu at Quince, which very quickly won



SAN FRANCISCO TREAT Above: Michael and Lindsay Tusk outside of their restaurant Quince. Below left: Roasted sea bream and octopus with fava beans, bacon and sorrel, another dish planned for the Verjus menu.

a devoted following. "We opened the restaurant one night, and it was off to the races," Michael says. Bertolli calls him the "hardest-working chef I know," crediting him with the culinary equivalent of perfect pitch.

Nine years ago the Tusks moved Quince to a much larger space in an 18,000-square-foot building they bought with the backing of loyal patrons. They opened Cotogna next door a year later, serving rustic Italian dishes from a wood-fired hearth. Over time, Michael's cooking at Quince, which got its third Michelin star in 2016, has become more eclectic, influenced not just by Italy but also by France, California and Japan.

Quince will get an overhaul from designer Steven Volpe next year. For now, it's covered in fine-art photography, on loan from restaurant regulars—both collectors and the artists themselves, including Hiroshi Sugimoto and Richard Learoyd. Apple design guru Jony Ive, another Quince acolyte and friend of the Tusks, is designing them a bar cart. "While the whole ecosystem of restaurants in San Francisco went in another direction in terms of casual, approachable, Michael has paved his own path," says Dan Barber, chef and co-owner of New York's Blue Hill.

Though the Tusks say they will always have an affinity for Italy—Michael is working with a company in the Marche on a line of dried pasta—recent travels in France have rekindled their interest in the country's food and culture. Last year, they hired a pastry chef from L'Ambroisie in Paris to work at both Quince and Verjus, and Michael is cooking up his own versions of throw-back French dishes. "We were kind of Italophiles for a bit," he says, "and then the love of France came back."



FACTS & STATS

SPACE NEEDLE

Built for the 1962 World's Fair, Seattle's Space Needle is what the future used to look like. Now the aging landmark has been shored up for years to come by design firm Olson Kundig. The renovated structure, upgraded with the latest technology, debuts May 25.

—Ted Loos

LAYERS of glass form the restaurant's new 37-ton rotating floor, making the mechanics that power the rotation visible for the first time.

10

100 MILLION DOLLARS is the cost of the rehab, privately funded by the structure's owners, the family of the original developer, Howard S. Wright.

60,000,000

VISITORS have come through the attraction since it was built, including 1.3 million last year.

400 DAYS was about the time it took to build the tower, a schedule that was then remarkably fast.

TONS of glass have been added to the observation areas, bringing the project in line with the creator's original plan, which was not possible with 1960s technology.

176

.75 INCHES in every direction is the amount of leeway the seismic upgrades allow the structure. All buildings move, and now the Needle can really sway.