

## HOW THE BAR BECAME A HOT TABLE

In San Francisco, incubator of many a food trend, sitting at a table is so passé.

Here's why barside dining is the next big thing in foodie-land

*Words by Ms Jenna Scatena, editor-at-large, San Francisco magazine*

Or you can sit up at the bar." How many times have you heard those words from an apologetic member of restaurant staff just after they've informed you how long the wait is for a table? (Especially if the unit of measurement is hours or even weeks rather than minutes.) Eating at the counter has traditionally been considered an after-thought, a lesser experience. But – like the rise of food trucks and communal tables in recent years – this is changing and restaurant bar dining is becoming “a thing” in San Francisco, the city where food trends are born.

It makes perfect sense as a solution (one might even say disruption) to an OpenTable obsession gone mad that's led to over-packed reservation systems and spin-offs auctioning coveted tables at a premium. Many of the city's top restaurants have stepped in to help out more spontaneous diners, quietly allowing quick-thinking walk-ins to taste the most talked-about food in town without waiting forever for the privilege.

Here's our insiders' pick of the best bar stools with food adjacent.

### QUINCE, FINANCIAL DISTRICT



**Bar vibe:** San Francisco's vibe is famously dressed down and casual, but if there's one place the suits congregate to seal the deal, it's at the bar of this Italian/ French-inspired fi-di heavyweight.

**Cuisine:** At the bar you can taste the creations of James Beard Award-winning chef Mr Michael Tusk without committing to the marathon (not to say expensive) nine-course degustation served in the restaurant. Order à la carte to sample highlights such as handmade tortelli with smoked sturgeon, and German osetra caviar.

**Inside intel:** If you really fancy a splurge, the bar has a caviar menu not offered in the dining room, with more than half a dozen caviars from Uruguay to Israel.