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DAILY AD

RESTAURANT JUNIPER & IVY BRINGS GLAMOROUS DECOR TO AN INDUSTRIAL SPACE

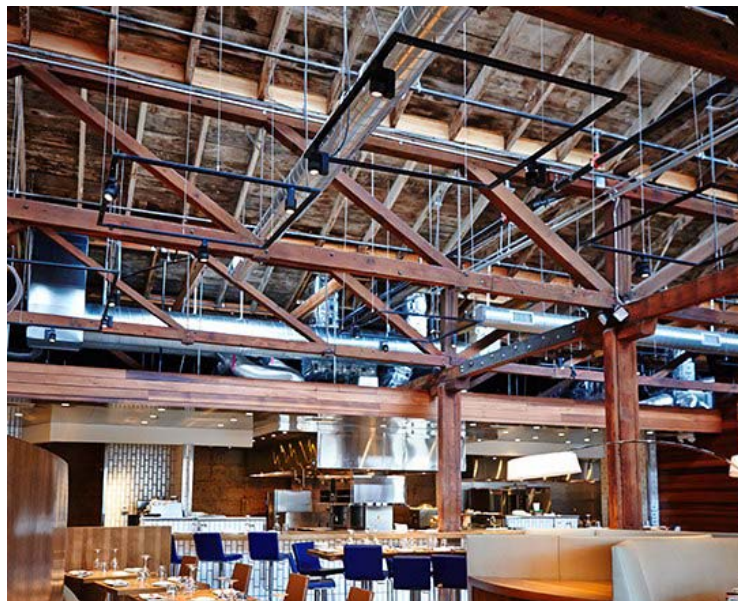
Text by Rebecca Santiago | Photography by CeCe Canton | June 4, 2014



A stylish central seating area at Juniper and Ivy, a new restaurant in San Diego.

A venue that captures cosmopolitan elegance and urban grit all at once is rare, but at Juniper and Ivy—Richard Blais's new San Diego restaurant—the balance between sophistication and edge is spot-on. Since opening in March, the *Top Chef All-Stars* winner's spirited eatery has wowed critics and patrons alike with inventive cuisine and an inspiring interior.

The chef and his business partner, Mike Rosen, combed San Diego's up-and-coming Little Italy neighborhood for "a space with an urban vibe," says Blais. They discovered a 90-year-old warehouse replete with downtown vitality—and in serious need of a face-lift. Blais and Rosen enlisted the Johnson Studio, a design firm in Atlanta (where Blais lived before moving to California), to fly west and breathe life into the dilapidated building.





The original redwood ceiling and a new curvaceous banquette, installed by the Johnson Studio design firm.

The design team was immediately impressed by what project designer Brittany Lavier calls the “tremendous character” of the space. “It’s rare that we have the opportunity to polish a rough gem into such a thing of beauty,” says Bill Johnson, senior principal at the firm. During the renovation, they cleared out decades of clunky additions to reveal the building’s original concrete structure, as well as its star architectural feature: a soaring ceiling, crisscrossed with antique redwood beams.

Lavier devised a network of distinct seating areas at varying heights. A lively bar near the main entrance leads to a sunken dining room, where ivory banquettes hug high-gloss hickory tables; on a far wall, windowpane-check curtains shelter private parties. And a glazed-brick open kitchen showcases Blais’s molecular gastronomy, complete with dabs of liquid nitrogen and the occasional blowtorch flame. (The locally sourced menu changes daily, but recurring favorites include a kimchi-ketchuped strip steak and, for dessert, the chef’s high-end riff on the humble Yodel.)



At the back of the restaurant, windowpane-check curtains can be drawn to form a private dining area.

Three months after opening, Blais is setting his sights on the establishment’s future. In the same way that urban attitude has informed his restaurant, he hopes that his restaurant will influence San Diego and its restaurant scene. “I think the local market is celebrating our values,” he says. “Hopefully a year from now, we’re not just talking about Juniper and Ivy, but also other restaurants that have come about, maybe because of us pushing things a little bit.”

Juniper and Ivy, 2228 Kettner Boulevard, San Diego; 619-269-9036; juniperandivy.com

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