

# WHAT'S NEWS.

**FULL PLATES**  
From left: Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and Roman and Williams co-founders Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch at the new Tin Building by Jean-Georges.



## FARE GAME

Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and design firm Roman and Williams have turned New York's old fish market into a culinary cornucopia.

BY JAY CHESHES PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS MOTTALINI



**I**T'S THE BIGGEST kitchen I've ever opened," says Jean-Georges Vongerichten, touring the commissary nearing completion above the new 53,000-square-foot Tin Building by Jean-Georges culinary marketplace at New York's South Street Seaport. When it launches later this spring, the entire operation will employ more than 700 people at its 17 restaurants, bars and food counters.

The complex, with its tiled walls and display cases full of fish, meat and produce, will be reminiscent of the famous Food Halls at Harrods in London, an early inspiration for the project, with its gourmet provisions and dining on-site. "The food hall there is four or five rooms," says Vongerichten, of Harrods. "We decided to do our market in one area, so you can turn around and buy everything, and [with] much more restaurants."

Vongerichten has been working on the Tin Building since 2016, when he was brought on by the developer, the Howard Hughes Corporation. He and the design firm Roman and Williams collaborated on the concepts and interiors. Together they focused on bringing some of the energy of a working market back to the original home of the Fulton Fish Market, the city's main seafood supplier, which decamped for the Bronx in 2005. "We took direction from a design perspective of a sort of heyday of the market, the 1920s and '30s," says Robin Standefer, principal and co-founder at Roman and Williams, "American deco spaces that were often about a sort of sanitary, beautiful, utilitarian interior."

The new central market on the ground floor, with its brass fixtures and handmade tiles in maritime blues and greens, channels Vongerichten's nostalgia for the original Tin Building, built in 1907, where he began buying fish for his first New York restaurant, Lafayette, shortly after arriving in the city in 1986. Back then there were great pyres of burning crates outside, and you might return from shopping, as Vongerichten once did, to find the car you were driving on four blocks, with no wheels. "You'd see the sun coming up over the Brooklyn Bridge. Fantastic!" he recalls. "I was so sad when they moved."

The original building, damaged by fire, flood and neglect, was rebuilt by the Howard Hughes Corp., the new structure designed by SHoP Architects with a mix of old and new materials and moved 7 feet higher and 32 feet east toward the river. The fresh ingredients sold at its market counters—live scallops in the shell, day-boat fish and peekytoe crab from up and down the East Coast; greenmarket produce from Eckerton Hill and Norwich Meadows farms outside the city—will supply its restaurants, too. "We can use everything up the same day," says Vongerichten, "no waste, everything's going to go."

The retail plans also include cheese and pasta counters and a dry-goods shop, Mercantile, featuring a new range of Jean-Georges-branded products, from mushroom Bolognese to cherry mustard. An Asian food boutique, Mercantile East, will sell his chili oil and XO sauce.

Some of the head chefs at Vongerichten's 12 New York restaurants will play a role here. "We have to use our resources," he says. At his flagship Columbus



Circle restaurant Jean-Georges, they've been testing recipes for the Belle Epoque-styled T. Brasserie, which will serve limited quantities of the choucroute that Vongerichten grew up with in his native Alsace, France. "My mom hates reheated choucroute," he says. "We'll do what we do for the day and that's it."

On the second floor, Neal Harden of restaurant abcV will oversee the plant-based Seeds & Weeds, where the plywood décor has a DIY vibe, says Roman and Williams principal and co-founder Stephen Alesch, as if "built by some '70s New Agers." The pizzas next door at the Frenchman's Dough will include the signature abc Kitchen three-cheese and black truffle pie.

Shikku, a 19-seat sushi bar with black walls and a black counter, will be the domain of Hiroyuki Sato, a rising star in Tokyo who'll come in from Japan to consult. Alesch and Standefer, former Hollywood production designers, have crafted a number of other breakout spaces with cues taken from literature, film and fine art. The House of the Red Pearl, a Chinese restaurant hidden behind Mercantile East, features murals inspired by the avian imagery in James McNeill Whistler's Peacock Room at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. A sweetshop will display its treats under a light fixture that Standefer describes as "a giant sculptural piece of candy."

Vongerichten and his landlord hope to revive the rhythms of a vanished New York here, starting with breakfast at the Double Yolk egg bar and ending in the wee hours with dim sum at the House of the Red Pearl. "I have this dream that hopefully we can get New York to come back to life late at night," says Saul Scherl, Howard Hughes's president for the New York tristate region, "and that this can be the place."

#### BELLA CHOW

Clockwise from top: Deco-inspired tilework in maritime hues; a pink Lacanche stove; the Tin Building viewed from across the FDR Drive; a sketch of the T. Brasserie.



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## **BUILD NOTES**

Extras.