



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: February 26, 2024

GREENS RESTAURANT

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-023
Business Name: Greens Restaurant
Business Address: 2 Marina Blvd., Building A
District: District 2
Applicant: Katie Reicher, Executive Chef
Nomination Date: January 16, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Since July 1979, Greens Restaurant has offered distinct and ever-changing vegetarian menus dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch, just 14 miles away in Marin County. Greens Restaurant is the country's first and most honored restaurant for gourmet vegetarian dining. With a panorama view of the Golden Gate Bridge, Marin Headlands, and local sea life, the Greens Restaurant dining room features grand windows stretching floor to ceiling in a spacious warehouse at Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. Many customers come not only for the cuisine and the unique views, but as a pilgrimage to a pioneering restaurant in California cuisine and the farm-to-table movement.

In August 1979, *San Francisco Chronicle* food critic Patricia Unterman gave Greens its first review: "...there isn't a restaurant in San Francisco that serves such fresh, unique food at such an amazingly low prices in so striking an atmosphere. San Francisco is lucky to have Green's."

In her forward for *The Greens Cookbook*, Deborah Madison, Greens' founding chef sketched out the restaurant's intentions and inspirations: "We set out to create a cuisine whose complexity and interest left the diner feeling that nothing was missing. We drew upon a wide variety of traditions—the Mediterranean cooking of southern France and Italy, dishes from Mexico and the American Southwest, a few adaptations from the cuisines of Asia, and others—but what pulled it all together was our reliance on the freshest vegetables, herbs, and spices. Anyone who knows the fragrance of tomatoes ripening in the sun, the sweetness of berries so ripe they practically fall into the hand, or the flavor of asparagus and corn when picked and cooked right away knows food at its pleasurable best. This quality is what we wanted to be able to offer in our restaurant."

Since its founding in 1979, Greens has been patronized by some of the most influential chefs of the world, notable actors, poets, writers, and leaders, including Nancy Pelosi, first elected female Speaker of the House of Representatives. Famous gourmets and cooks who patronized Greens in its first years included James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Julia Child, and Elizabeth David. Greens is consistently listed as a top vegetarian restaurant by Eater San Francisco and both top vegetarian and overall restaurant by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The James Beard Foundation listed Greens as a semifinalist both for America's Outstanding Restaurant and Chef award in 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Greens Restaurant is in Fort Mason and has greatly benefited the Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. The restaurant draws the public and raises the visibility and mission of the center to engage and connect people with arts and culture.

Legacy Business Program

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CRITERION 1

Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, Greens Restaurant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason, Building A from 1979 to Present (45 years)

CRITERION 2

Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, Greens Restaurant has contributed to the history and identity of the Marina District, Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture, and San Francisco

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- Greens Restaurant is the country's first and most honored restaurant for gourmet vegetarian dining. Many customers come not only for the cuisine and the unique views, but as a pilgrimage to a pioneering restaurant in California cuisine and the farm-to-table movement.
- Since its founding in 1979, Greens has been patronized by some of the most influential chefs of the world, notable actors, poets, writers, and leaders, including Nancy Pelosi, first elected female Speaker of the House of Representatives. Famous gourmets and cooks who patronized Greens in its first years included James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Julia Child, and Elizabeth David.

Greens Restaurant is notable for its legacy of important women chefs. Founding chef of Greens, Deborah Madison, a Zen student of 18 years, is "one of the country's most influential cookbook authors and food writers." She opened Greens Restaurant with a commitment to ensure that every guest in the dining room would not miss eating meat. Her first menu was created in partnership with Alice Waters, named one of the top ten chefs in the world by *Cuisine et Vins de France* in 1986 and whose Chez Panisse won the James Beard Foundation Award as best restaurant in America in 1992. Madison creatively introduced in her menu varieties of vegetables practically unknown in American cuisine at the time, including fingerling potatoes, golden beets, and arugula.

Annie Somerville joined Greens in 1981, trained with Madison, and became the Executive Chef three years later. Revered for her relationships with organic farmers and local purveyors, and her commitment to sustainable practices, Somerville was at the forefront of the farm-to-table movement and an advocate for the local farmers markets. Under her guidance, Greens Restaurant became a culinary landmark and one of the most celebrated restaurants in the world.

Denise St. Onge was hired as Chef de Cuisine in 2018 and later promoted to Executive Chef, leading the kitchen through its 40th anniversary in 2019. Upon St. Onge's departure in 2020, Katie Reicher, who joined Greens in 2015, became Executive Chef and today leads the kitchen following the daily practices of her mentors.

In addition, artists and writers associated with the San Francisco Zen Center also contributed to the creation, decoration, and even the staffing of Greens. This group includes writers Ed Brown and David Chadwick, poet Jane Hirschfield, and artists J. B. Blunk and Willard (Mike) Dixon.

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Representing the City and County of San Francisco, Mayor Gavin Newsom proclaimed April 10, 2010, as Greens Restaurant Day.

- The subject property is located within the California Register-listed and National Register-listed Fort Mason Historic District, as well as the California Register-listed San Francisco Port of Embarkation U.S. Army Historic District.
- Greens Restaurant has earned its stars as a Bay area culinary landmark. In fact, no other vegetarian restaurant in the United States has received comparable attention from publications like Esquire, Food and Wine, Newsweek and Gourmet.” — United Press International, April 14, 1987.

From its start, Greens received widespread positive attention and was patronized by renowned chefs and food critics. Greens has received innumerable positive reviews and listings in periodicals, books, and online media, including the International Herald Tribune, Gourmet Magazine (“fresh, inventive fare” and listed in its “Best American Restaurants” issue of 2003), Private Guide to Restaurants (which called Greens “the most innovative purveyor of vegetarian inspired Western cuisine”), Unique Eats and Eateries of San Francisco (“elevated vegetarian cuisine to its gourmet and mainstream status”), and the New York Times (“the restaurant that brought vegetarian cuisine out from sprout-infested health food stores and established it as a cuisine in America.”)

“There are some restaurants out there that just seem to get everything right. Greens is one of them.” — Soleil Ho, “Greens is brighter than ever as it Soars through its Midlife Crisis,” San Francisco Chronicle, October 2019.

In addition, Greens unique origins, relationship to the San Francisco Zen Center, and role in vegetable-focused cuisine has been referenced in op-eds, culinary histories, and scholarly articles such as Dan McKanan’s “Salad, Lard, and Everything Between Food and Freedom in the Anthroposophical Movement” in Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions (Vol. 23, No.1).

- With regard to racial and social equity, Greens Restaurant has hosted numerous community-serving benefits over its existence, including for Project Open Hand, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Sprouts Foundation, Foodwise (formerly CUESA), SF Marin Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, KQED, and many more, while directly supporting many non-profit organizations and local schools with auction and donation items.

CRITERION 3

Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Greens Restaurant is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Greens Restaurant qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Distinctive culinary style of celebrating vegetables.
- Ever-changing menus dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch.
- Maintenance and celebration of the historic integrity of the former Army Warehouse, preserving the large volume, tall windows, west-facing views, and high open ceilings.

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- Finishes and furnishings incorporated within the dining room made from 12 varieties of wood, including massive black walnut doors, hickory stairs at the entrance, the curved bar featuring Port-Orford cedar, and the dining tables of maple, walnut, and cherry.
- Paintings by renowned Bay Area artist Willard Dixon and Buddhist teacher Mayumi Oda.
- A magnificent redwood sculpture centerpiece by Inverness artist J. B. Blunk.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Restaurant featuring vegetarian cuisine.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Greens Restaurant currently located at 2 Marina Blvd., Building A, in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

February 26, 2024

GREENS RESTAURANT

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Business Name: Greens Restaurant
Business Address: 2 Marina Blvd., Building A
District: District 2
Applicant: Katie Reicher, Executive Chef
Nomination Date: January 16, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Greens Restaurant, currently located at 2 Marina Blvd., Building A.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on February 26, 2024, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Greens Restaurant in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Greens Restaurant.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Distinctive culinary style of celebrating vegetables.
- Ever-changing menus dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch.
- Maintenance and celebration of the historic integrity of the former Army Warehouse, preserving the large volume, tall windows, west-facing views, and high open ceilings.
- Finishes and furnishings incorporated within the dining room made from 12 varieties of wood, including massive black walnut doors, hickory stairs at the entrance, the curved bar featuring Port-Orford cedar, and the dining tables of maple, walnut, and cherry.
- Paintings by renowned Bay Area artist Willard Dixon and Buddhist teacher Mayumi Oda.
- A magnificent redwood sculpture centerpiece by Inverness artist J. B. Blunk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Greens Restaurant on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant featuring vegetarian cuisine.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on February 26, 2024.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-023
Business Name: Greens Restaurant
Business Address: 2 Marina Blvd., Building A
District: District 2
Applicant: Katie Reicher, Executive Chef
Nomination Date: January 16, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes No

2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason, Building A from 1979 to Present (45 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes No

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: January 24, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 2



City and County of San Francisco

CATHERINE STEFANI

January 16, 2024

Katy Tang
Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: Legacy Business Nomination for Greens Restaurant

Dear Director Tang,

I am pleased to nominate Greens Restaurant, doing business as Everyday Inc. and operated by its Executive Chef Katie Reicher, for the Legacy Business Registry. Greens Restaurant, a distinguished small business in Fort Mason, is best known for featuring vegetarian cuisine.

The nominee has operated in San Francisco for 44 years and has maintained a strong presence in the community. Greens Restaurant is renowned for its consistently unique and evolving selections that celebrate the seasonal yields from neighboring farmers and its own organic Green Gulch farm, located 14 miles away in Marin County. Greens Restaurant also has the distinction of being a pioneer in California cuisine and the farm-to-table movement. Over the years, Greens Restaurant has had a lineage of distinguished Executive Chefs, including Deborah Madison, Annie Somerville, Denise St. Onge, and Katie Reicher.

As a historic small business, Greens Restaurant is an essential contributor to the vibrancy of Fort Mason and the surrounding neighborhood. It is my absolute pleasure to put Greens Restaurant as a deserving candidate for the Legacy Business Registry.

The nominee can be contacted here: Katie Reicher; 2 Marina Boulevard, Building A, San Francisco, CA 94123; (415) 771-6222; info@greensrestaurant.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catherine Stefani".

Catherine Stefani
Supervisor, District 2
City and County of San Francisco

City Hall • 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place • Room 244

San Francisco, California 94102-4689 • (415) 554-7452 Fax (415) 554-7843 • TDD/TTY (415) 554-5227



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Greens Restaurant

Business owner name(s): Everyday Corporation

Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business

Current business address: 2 Marina Blvd., Building A, San Francisco, CA 94123

Telephone: (415) 771 - 6222 **Email:** info@greensrestaurant.com

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: https://greensrestaurant.com/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/greensrestaurant **Twitter:** https://twitter.com/greens_sf

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 1 8 6 0 8 7

Do any of these describe your business? (select all that apply)

Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman-Owned Business |

**Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Katie Reicher

Contact person title: Executive Chef

Contact telephone: () - **Contact email:**

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason, Building A **Zip Code:** 94123

Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N): Y

Dates at this location: From: 1979 **To:** present

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: From: **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: From: **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: From: **To:**

Other Address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: From: **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: From: **To:**

Applicant Disclosures

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: Katie Reicher

Signature:



Date: 10/10/23

GREENS RESTAURANT

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

Since 1979, Greens Restaurant has offered distinct and ever-changing vegetarian menus dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch, just 14 miles away in Marin County.

With a panorama view of the Golden Gate Bridge, Marin Headlands, and local sea life, the Greens Restaurant dining room features grand windows stretching floor to ceiling in a spacious warehouse at Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture.

b. Describe who the business serves.

Greens Restaurant is a destination for Bay Area locals as well as tourists and notable visitors to San Francisco.

c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

A distinctive culinary style of celebrating vegetables.

CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

In July 1979, Greens Restaurant was opened at 2 Marina Boulevard, Building A, in Fort Mason by the San Francisco Zen Center.

Incorporated in 1962 under the guidance of Shunryu Suzuki, the Zen Center established the Tassaraja Zen Mountain Center retreat center in 1967. Located in the Carmel Valley of California, Tassajara was the first Zen training temple outside of Asia. In 1970, two best-selling books associated with the Zen Center were published: Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and Ed Brown's *The Tassajara Bread Book*.

Under the entrepreneurial leadership of Suzuki's successor, Richard Baker, the Zen Center purchased a ranch in Marin County and created the Green Gulch organic farm and practice

place in 1972. The Zen Center then went on to launch a number of businesses in the mid 1970s, including Green Gulch Grocery (1975), Tassajara Bakery (1976), and Greens Restaurant (1979).

Zen Center business enterprises were intended to extend Zen practice by providing “right livelihood values” for monastery students in a workplace setting. The businesses also were meant to be a way to introduce contemporary Zen practice to the public and provide financial support for the Zen Center.¹

The success of the Zen Center’s Tassajara Bakery on Cole Street and its Green Gulch Grocery on Page Street inspired the idea of opening the nation’s first vegetarian fine-dining restaurant using the produce of the Green Gulch organic farm. Richard Baker, the abbot of the Zen Center, and Ed Sattizahn, then the center’s Vice President of Businesses, toured several potential sites in the city before meeting with Ann Howell, executive director of the Fort Mason Foundation, to consider possibilities at the recently decommissioned military installation.

Baker and Sattizahn were most impressed with a space in Building 308, a former garage and sign shop facing Gas House Cove with the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin Headlands in the distance. “We both remarked how stunning it was, but it was a big space,” Sattizahn recalled. “We had to convince the rest of the leadership of the Zen Center we could take on such a project and how we would do it.”²

The open 4,000 square foot warehouse was cavernous and industrial, with a 26-foot-high ceiling and 10-by-18-foot wire-paned windows high above an oil-stained concrete floor. Transforming it into a fine-dining restaurant required a challenging build-out of the interior respectful to the fabric of the historic building. Architect Ellis Kaplan mocked up about a dozen different floor designs in consultation with abbot Richard Baker. Sim Van der Ryn, who had previously assisted the Zen Center and had served as California State Architect, took over the project and completed the final plans at no cost.

A 28-inch raised floor was installed to elevate the dining room and capture the panoramic views past the marina. Zen Center carpenters, led by Japanese-joinery expert Paul Discoe, designed and built out the interior furnishings, including the Shaker-inspired tables still in use. The plumbing, electrical work, and lighting were also all done by Zen Center students and volunteers. The cost of the build-out exceeded \$350,000, but represented a third of what the work would have cost without the donated Zen student labor. Artist J. B. Blunk conceived and created the massive redwood root sculpture, 20 feet in diameter, which doubles as seating. Paintings by Edward Avedisian and later three large cloud paintings by Willard Dixon hung on

¹ Michael Downing, *Shoes Outside the Door: Desire, Devotion, and Excess at San Francisco Zen Center* (Washington, D.C: Counterpoint, 2001), 202; David Weinberg, “Zen Center’s Businesses—Continuity and Change,” *Wind Bell*, Vol. 21, No.1 (Spring 1987), 14; interview with William Russell-Shapiro, March 16, 2023.

² Interview with Ed Sattizahn, February 22, 2023.

the south wall. The end result was a unique and influential dining experience of unsurpassed views complimented by naturalistic craftsmanship.

Deborah Madison began practicing at the Zen Center in 1967 and cooked at its community kitchens before becoming Greens' founding chef.³ She consulted with Alice Waters from the heralded Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley to design the original menu. Waters also contributed advice on restaurant standards and operations. Thanks in large part to Waters and Chez Panisse, a new cuisine was emerging on the West Coast of the United States focused on the use of fresh locally sourced ingredients and which incorporated elements of European, Asian, and American traditions. Greens' concept of an all-vegetarian fine-dining experience contributed to this emerging movement.⁴

In her forward for *The Greens Cookbook*, Madison sketched out the restaurant's intentions and inspirations:

"We set out to create a cuisine whose complexity and interest left the diner feeling that nothing was missing. We drew upon a wide variety of traditions—the Mediterranean cooking of southern France and Italy, dishes from Mexico and the American Southwest, a few adaptations from the cuisines of Asia, and others—but what pulled it all together was our reliance on the freshest vegetables, herbs, and spices. Anyone who knows the fragrance of tomatoes ripening in the sun, the sweetness of berries so ripe they practically fall into the hand, or the flavor of asparagus and corn when picked and cooked right away knows food at its pleasurable best. This quality is what we wanted to be able to offer in our restaurant."⁵

In July 1979, Greens opened under the management of Karin Gjording with seating for 100, a lunch service from Tuesday to Saturday, and pastries from Tassajara Bakery.⁶ Single-seating dinners were soon added on Friday and Saturday nights. In August 1979, *San Francisco Chronicle* food critic Patricia Unterman gave Greens its first review: "...there isn't a restaurant in San Francisco that serves such fresh, unique food at such an amazingly low prices in so striking an atmosphere. San Francisco is lucky to have Green's."⁷

³ Downing, *Shoes Outside the Door: Desire, Devotion, and Excess at San Francisco Zen Center*, 186.

⁴ Sattizahn interview, February 22, 2023; "Greens," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 17, No.1 (Summer 1983), 26.

⁵ Deborah Madison with Edward Espe Brown, *The Greens Cookbook*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), xvii.

⁶ Margot Patterson Doss, "Open house at a Changing Fort," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, June 3, 1979, Sunday Punch Section, 6; R. B. Read, "Underground Gourmet," *San Francisco Examiner*, July 18, 1979, 27.

⁷ Patricia Unterman, "Green's: Unique Food, Low Prices and Striking Atmosphere," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 12, 1979, Datebook section, 19.

With the review, demand for reservations exploded. By 1983, Greens was serving 85,000 meals a year and tables were booked months in advance.⁸ In 1985, Greens extended hours to Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights for a la carte meals.⁹

Despite the popularity, Greens struggled to reach profitability in its early years. Prices were kept moderate in respect to Zen tenets and the meditation community. Greens Restaurant was meant to provide an opportunity for Zen students to extend their Buddhist practice into a workplace setting and support them before and after entering Tassajara Center, but the grinding schedule of a popular restaurant with a labor-intensive cuisine soon stretched the limit of students' resources.¹⁰

With controversy over his conduct and leadership, Richard Baker resigned from the Zen Center in 1983. In 1985, the Zen Center board of directors adopted new policies for all of its businesses, defining purposes and standards of quality which were summed up to be: produce high quality goods and services, provide satisfactory compensation, afford safe working conditions, and yield satisfactory income.¹¹

A new nonprofit corporation (Everyday, Inc.) was formed to oversee Zen Center businesses and operations were professionalized. By 1987, active practitioners became a minority of staff at Zen Center businesses, of which Greens had become the most successful.¹² In the early 2000s, revenue from Greens made up more than 80% of the contributions to the Zen Center by Everyday, Inc.¹³

Annie Somerville, a Zen student who began working at Greens in 1981, took over as executive chef and general manager in 1985. With chef Jay Kenyon and longtime general manager Rick Jones, Somerville cemented the restaurant's legacy "celebrating vegetables." She was the author of a second best-selling Greens cookbook, *Fields of Greens*. Published in 1993, it contained 300 recipes emphasizing Greens' garden-to-table practice.¹⁴ In 2003, Somerville followed up with *Everyday Greens*, featuring full-color woodcuts by artist Mayumi Oda.¹⁵ Somerville described the atmosphere Greens offered to the public in her more than 20 years as its lead:

⁸ Letter from Steven Weintraub, San Francisco Zen Center president, to Marc Kasky, director of Fort Mason Center, April 8, 1983.

⁹ Michael Wenger, "Interview with Annie Somerville, Executive Chef of Greens," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002), 11.

¹⁰ "Greens," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 17, No.1 (Summer 1983), 26.

¹¹ David Weinberg, "Zen Center's Businesses—Continuity and Change," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 21, No.1 (Spring 1987), 14.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kokai Roberts, "Treasurer's Report on Fiscal Year 2002," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 36, No.1 (Spring/Summer 2002), 45.

¹⁴ "New Greens Cookbook," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring 1993), 31.

¹⁵ "Everyday Greens," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003), 21.

“Greens is an egalitarian place with an attention to detail. [...] Anybody can walk in the door of the restaurant and feel comfortable. We don’t just cater to people who are glued to cell phones and wear only black.”¹⁶

In Somerville’s heralded tenure at Greens, a number of prominent chefs were influenced and advanced their education working at Greens. Chandra Gilbert of Gracias Madre credited Somerville with teaching her to “have integrity in the workplace—with food and people. [...] I fell in love with vegetables in her kitchen.”¹⁷

Current executive chef Katie Reicher started at Greens in 2015, first working for Annie Somerville as an intern for the Culinary Institute of America. Upon her graduation, Reicher returned as a full-time line cook and eventually became Somerville’s sous chef just before her retirement in 2018. Reicher continued to run operations in the kitchen up until a kitchen fire shuttered the restaurant in 2018. It was at this point that Denise St. Onge was hired to assist in reopening the restaurant and help the restaurant transition from Somerville’s long tenure. St. Onge worked with Greens as the executive chef until the restaurant closed again in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.

Reicher, who had been instrumental in both protecting Annie’s legacy as well as transitioning the restaurant into a new era, was promoted to executive chef in May 2020. She was charged with reopening Greens and continues to honor the great legacy left by her predecessors. Since 2020, Chef Katie has exerted her influence over the menu from sharing dishes significant to her life experience to showcasing new and innovative combinations while maintaining the legacy of Greens’ esteemed women-led lineage.

The Greens connection to its Zen Center origins can still be seen on a spice shelf in the kitchen where a small altar to Chenrezig, the Buddha of compassion, has remained lit since opening day.

b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.

1979 to 1986: San Francisco Zen Center
1986 to present: Everyday Inc.

c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.

Greens has never ceased operations for any significant length of time since its opening in 1979. Temporary closures for maintenance and small makeovers have occurred, including in 2010, when the interior was given new paint, carpeting, and 140 new sustainably harvested wood

¹⁶ Michael Wenger, “Interview with Annie Somerville, Executive Chef of Greens,” *Wind Bell*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002), 11.

¹⁷ “Forget carne asada—try guava,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2014, E2.

chairs for dining.¹⁸ A kitchen fire and subsequent water damage temporarily closed Greens for repairs from June 15 to October 15, 2018. Greens did have a short pandemic-driven closure from March 16 to June 10, 2020.

CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community

a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.

Greens Restaurant is the country's first and most honored restaurant for gourmet vegetarian dining. Many customers come not only for the cuisine and the unique views, but as a pilgrimage to a pioneering restaurant in California cuisine and the farm-to-table movement.

Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture has benefited from the popularity of Greens since 1979: the restaurant draws the public and raises the visibility and mission of the center to engage and connect people with arts and culture.

b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?

Greens Restaurant is notable for its legacy of important women chefs. Founding chef of Greens, **Deborah Madison**, a Zen student of 18 years, is "one of the country's most influential cookbook authors and food writers."¹⁹ She opened Greens Restaurant with a commitment to ensure that every guest in the dining room would not miss eating meat. Her first menu was created in partnership with **Alice Waters**, named one of the top ten chefs in the world by *Cuisine et Vins de France* in 1986 and whose Chez Panisse won the James Beard Foundation Award as best restaurant in America in 1992. Madison creatively introduced in her menu varieties of vegetables practically unknown in American cuisine at the time, including fingerling potatoes, golden beets, and arugula.

After working in the kitchen as the head cook at Tassajara, **Annie Somerville** joined Greens in 1981, trained with Madison, and became the Executive Chef three years later. Revered for her relationships with organic farmers and local purveyors, and her commitment to sustainable practices, Somerville was at the forefront of the farm-to-table movement and an advocate for the local farmers markets. Under her guidance, Greens Restaurant became a culinary landmark and one of the most celebrated restaurants in the world.

¹⁸ "Greens Restaurant," *Wall Street Journal*, April 28, 2010.

¹⁹ Michael Downing, *Shoes Outside the Door: Desire, Devotion, and Excess at San Francisco Zen Center*, 198.

Denise St. Onge was hired as Chef de Cuisine in 2018 and later promoted to Executive Chef, leading the kitchen through its 40th anniversary in 2019.

Upon St. Onge's departure in 2020, **Katie Reicher**, who joined Greens in 2015, became Executive Chef and today leads the kitchen following the daily practices of her mentors.

In addition, artists and writers associated with the San Francisco Zen Center also contributed to the creation, decoration, and even the staffing of Greens. This group includes writers Ed Brown and David Chadwick, poet Jane Hirschfield, and artists J. B. Blunk and Willard (Mike) Dixon.

Since its founding in 1979, Greens has been patronized by some of the most influential chefs of the world, notable actors, poets, writers, and leaders, including Nancy Pelosi, first elected female Speaker of the House of Representatives. Famous gourmets and cooks who patronized Greens in its first years included James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Julia Child, and Elizabeth David.²⁰

c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Greens has hosted numerous community-serving benefits over its existence, including for Project Open Hand, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Sprouts Foundation, Foodwise (formerly CUESA), SF Marin Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, KQED, and many more, while directly supporting many non-profit organizations and local schools with auction and donation items.

d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?

"Greens Restaurant has earned its stars as a Bay area culinary landmark. In fact, no other vegetarian restaurant in the United States has received comparable attention from publications likes Esquire, Food and Wine, Newsweek and Gourmet." — United Press International, April 14, 1987.

From its start, Greens received widespread positive attention and was patronized by renowned chefs and food critics. Greens has received innumerable positive reviews and listings in periodicals, books, and online media, including the *International Herald Tribune*, *Gourmet Magazine* ("fresh, inventive fare" and listed in its "Best American Restaurants" issue of 2003), *Private Guide to Restaurants* (which called Greens "the most innovative purveyor of vegetarian-inspired Western cuisine"), *Unique Eats and Eateries of San Francisco* ("elevated vegetarian cuisine to its gourmet and mainstream status"), and the *New York Times* ("the restaurant that brought vegetarian cuisine out from sprout-infested health food stores and established it as a cuisine in America.")

²⁰ "Greens," *Wind Bell*, Vol. 17, No.1 (Summer 1983), 26.

“There are some restaurants out there that just seem to get everything right. Greens is one of them.” — Soleil Ho, “Greens is brighter than ever as it Soars through its Midlife Crisis,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2019.

In addition, Greens unique origins, relationship to the San Francisco Zen Center, and role in vegetable-focused cuisine has been referenced in op-eds, culinary histories, and scholarly articles such as Dan McKanan’s “Salad, Lard, and Everything Between Food and Freedom in the Anthroposophical Movement” in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* (Vol. 23, No.1).

e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?

Greens is consistently listed as a top vegetarian restaurant by Eater San Francisco and both top vegetarian and overall restaurant by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

The James Beard Foundation listed Greens as a semifinalist both for America’s Outstanding Restaurant and Chef award in 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Representing the City and County of San Francisco, Mayor Gavin Newsom proclaimed April 10, 2010, as Greens Restaurant Day.

f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

If Greens were to close, San Francisco would lose its first formal vegetarian restaurant in the United States. Fort Mason Center would lose one of its first residents, and more than 90 people would lose employment in a landmark restaurant. Support to a network of over 40 local farmers would be greatly diminished. Additionally, San Francisco would lose a vegetarian restaurant that is deeply engrained in the fabric of the community that has served as home to countless proposals, weddings, and community events since 1979.

CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business

a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?

Greens’ design under the direction of architect Sim Van der Ryn maintained and celebrated the historic integrity of the former Army post warehouse, preserving the large volume, the tall windows and west-facing views, and the high open ceilings.

Under the auspices of the San Francisco Zen Center, the Greens Restaurant finishes and furnishings were created by Zen Center carpenters under the direction of Paul Discoe. Twelve

varieties of wood were incorporated and are maintained within the dining room, from the massive black walnut doors, hickory stairs at the entrance, the curved bar featuring Port-Orford-cedar, and the dining tables of maple, walnut, and cherry. Much of the wood was recycled or reclaimed.

Many of the paintings lining the walls of the dining room are by renowned Bay Area artist Willard Dixon and Buddhist teacher Mayumi Oda, while a magnificent redwood sculpture by Inverness artist J. B. Blunk acts as a stunning centerpiece.

b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.

Known for a distinctive culinary style of *celebrating vegetables*, Greens ever-changing menus are dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch.

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

The restaurant industry as a whole is struggling with navigating a post-COVID-pandemic world, including high labor costs, increased cost of goods, labor shortages, and aging infrastructure. Greens has been reluctant to raise prices to reflect these higher costs. Hiring has been a challenge, and the training needed to teach new staff about the legacy of Greens is a long process. Greens' building is nearly 100 years old. As a historic resource, repairs and maintenance to the space are a bit more challenging and expensive.

Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:

a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.

Restaurant featuring vegetarian cuisine.

b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building that houses Greens Restaurant is "A - Historic Resource Present." The building is listed on the California Register and the National Register, and it is a contributing structure to the Fort Mason Historic District.













<https://www.sfchronicle.com/restaurants/article/Greens-is-brighter-than-ever-as-it-soars-through-14490165.php>

SF Chronicle

[FOOD//RESTAURANTS](#)

Greens is brighter than ever as it soars through its midlife crisis

[Soleil Ho](#)

Oct. 3, 2019



View of Greens restaurant seen on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, in San Francisco, Calif. Greens, a longstanding vegetarian restaurant is commemorating its 40-year anniversary this year. Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle

There are some restaurants out there that just seem to get everything right. Greens is one of them. Even if you're having a bad day, the view of the sun descending behind the Marin headlands, which the staff quietly reveals every evening by pulling up the massive window blinds in unison, is humbling enough to quiet any troubled thoughts. Sure, there are lots of restaurants and bars where the sheer fortune of their location is enough to keep the crowds coming: the Pacifica Taco Bell, Mission Rock Resort and Everdene come to mind. But Greens, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, carries with it so much personality and history that the view functions mostly as a bonus.



Prep cook Edgar Tolico (right) who has worked for 26 years at Greens walks into the refrigerator with herbs on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, in San Francisco, Calif. Greens, a longstanding vegetarian restaurant is commemorating its 40-year anniversary this year. Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle

After dining here just once, I began to crave it; not just what was on the menu, but the space, which is at once quiet and vibrant. Three huge canvases near the entrance of the dining room, each painted with cool pastels, have the calming effect of ambient music. A giant redwood sculpture inhabits the middle of the space, writhing about like a river otter frozen midswim. Dining at the few seats within the sculpture makes one feel absolutely Lilliputian.

Under the 37-year-long guidance of former executive chef Annie Somerville, the San Francisco Zen Center-affiliated restaurant became one of the stalwarts of California cuisine, known for its embrace of seasonal produce and its wide-ranging vegetarian menu. Many of the staff have been at the restaurant for almost as long as she has; a feat in turnover-heavy San Francisco.

Accordingly, the service is comfortable: You can tell they feel a sense of ownership by the way they handily seat regulars at favorite tables and gush over their all-time favorite dishes when you can't choose between tofu brochettes or broccoli pizza. Their movements between tables are practiced on the level of muscle memory — all calm. Overall, the service style here would befit a restaurant of a much higher price point, but you're more than welcome to wear shorts here.



Summer cherry julep served at Greens on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, in San Francisco, Calif. Greens, a longstanding vegetarian restaurant is commemorating its 40-year anniversary this year. Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle



People sit at the Redwood Burl tables at Greens in San Francisco, Calif., on Sunday, May 4th, 2014. John Storey / Special to The Chronicle 2014

The menu has shifted over the years to reflect Somerville's own culinary fascinations, but as the restaurant turns 40, it will be experiencing some of its biggest changes yet: Somerville is retiring, and a new chef with big ideas is taking up her mantle.

That new chef is Denise St. Onge, an Oakland native who took over the executive chef position shortly after a fire forced the restaurant to close for several months last year. When her mother was struggling with cancer in the mid-1990s, her entire family went on a vegetarian macrobiotic diet to support her lifestyle changes. More often than not, St. Onge would find herself eating at Greens in those stressful days, looking out at the same view that so entranced me years later.

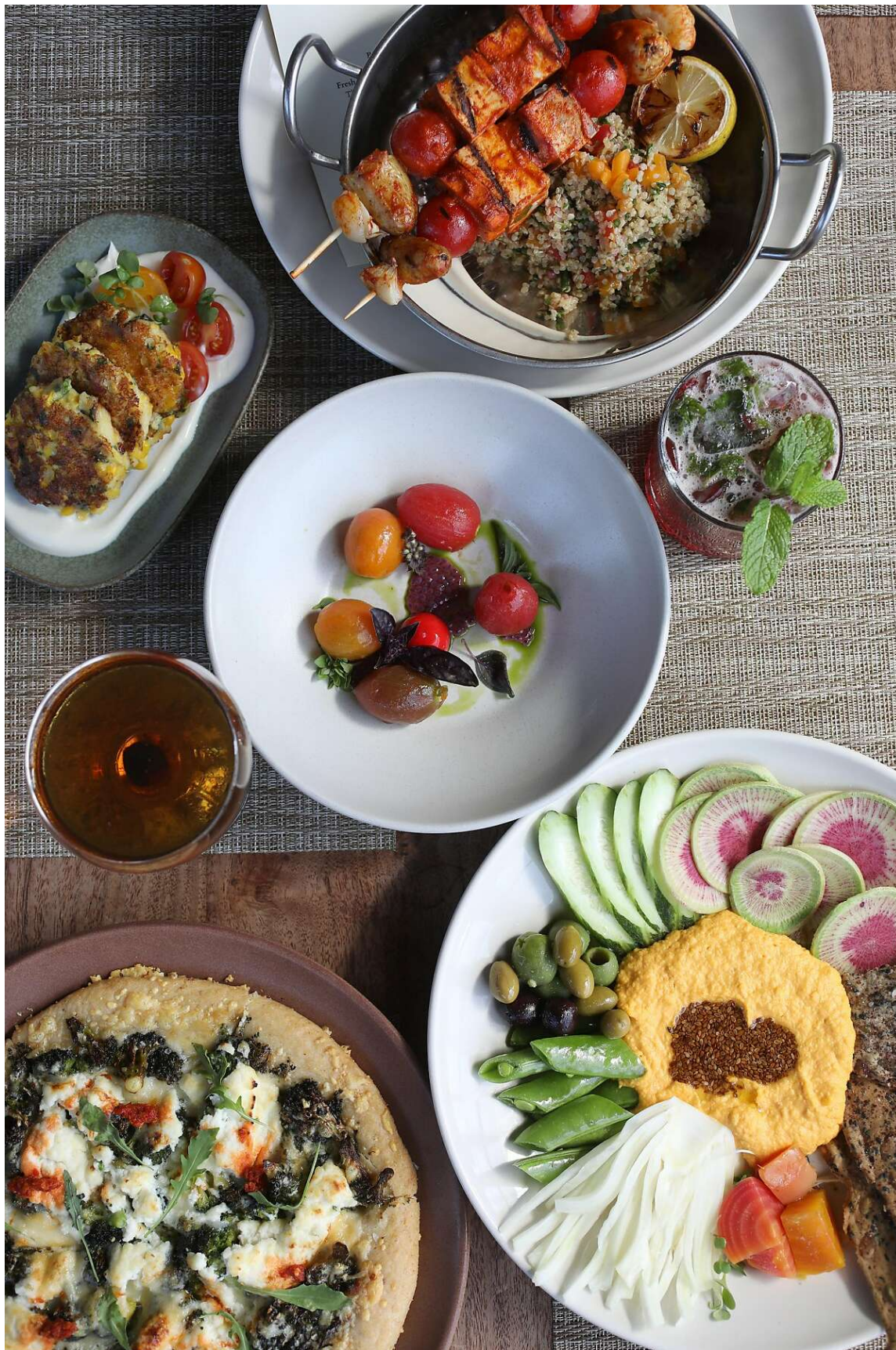
Anyone worried about what the changing of the guard might bring should rest easy. Under St. Onge's leadership, the menu still represents vegetarian comfort food at its best. I was surprised by the delicateness of the trim cornmeal and wheat flour pizza (\$18.50), which is so unlike the fermented, pillowy discs that we see so often around the city right now. Instead, the crust is dense and focaccia-like, its insides veined with olive oil. In midsummer, the pizza was decorated with zucchini and cherry tomato polka dots; as the season has turned to fall, roasted broccoli and garlic confit give the dish a more baritone character.

Brochettes with Hodo tofu, fingerling potatoes, yam, cherry tomatoes and cipollini onions (\$28), served with a quinoa-dominant tabbouleh and roasted garlic cashew tahini sauce, is the only thing on the menu that doesn't feel polished. Tabbouleh seems like a flower without petals when it's as thin on mint and parsley as Greens' version, and it seems strange for that particular element to be lacking in the dish when locally grown herbs are so prominent throughout the rest of the menu. The skewered part of the dish is also susceptible to the eternal struggle of vegetable kabobs: The various elements can be unevenly cooked, giving you both raw potato and mushy yam in the same bite.

Sticking to the more elemental dishes is a good overall strategy here. The sides, which each highlight a single vegetable, are respectable dishes in their own right: blistered padrón peppers with everything bagel spice (\$7) are perfect to snack on with a glass of Sauvignon Blanc, and the sauteed zucchini with chives, crispy oats and smoked cherries (\$9) is a curiosity that works surprisingly well.



Server Sadie Koestel (middle) has worked for Greens for 12 years and is seen talking with lunch guests on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, in San Francisco, Calif. Greens, a longstanding vegetarian restaurant is commemorating its 40-year anniversary this year. Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle



Food served at Greens on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, in San Francisco, Calif. Greens, a longstanding vegetarian restaurant is commemorating its 40-year anniversary this year. Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle

The salad of baby lettuces and chervil (\$9.50) is Greens' argument for the supremacy of vegetables in a nutshell. The tender greens are dressed simply in an acidic French plum vinaigrette that enhances their inherent sweetness, sparking the same pulsating vibrancy that one gets when eating something freshly killed or pulled straight from the vine. It's a dish best served to salad skeptics, one that can single-handedly undo all of the accumulated damage of years of semi-rotten spring mix.

Greens' brief, six-item cocktail menu leans on the classic side, and my favorite of the bunch is the Perfect Manhattan (\$14), a variation on the Manhattan which blends sweet and dry vermouths. Its name begs for some snarky rejoinder about its misleading value proposition. Nothing can actually be perfect, the critic scoffs. OK, but the bar's execution *is* actually perfect: smooth and rich, with the strength of a firm pat on the shoulder. The wine list is also accessible, made up mostly of domestic and European bottles that don't exceed the \$60 mark.



Photo of the interior of Greens restaurant at Fort Mason. Craig Lee / The Chronicle 2003

For restaurants that are firmly in middle age, like Greens, the struggle for relevance amid trend-conscious newcomers can look a lot like a midlife crisis: Is it possible for a place to freshen up, earn new loyalists and adapt to the times without losing its sense of self or alienating its original base? The question feels even more urgent in a place like San Francisco, where it seems that restaurants must adapt or die.

So it's a smart and brave move for Greens to install a chef like St. Onge, who has ambitions to integrate new ideas into the menu; it could easily have found someone who'd just dig into the restaurant's canon of recipes for the next 40 years. Her plan is to roll out new items — like fresh steamed buns or hand-pulled noodles — slowly and thoughtfully, while maintaining the trust of the regulars.

One example of where she wants to take the menu is the heirloom tomato dish. In its current incarnation (\$15), it's a pile of halved cherry tomatoes dressed in olive oil and garnished with basil leaves and a big glob of burrata. Her take on it, which ran on the dinner menu for a brief moment this summer, is a more involved process: The tomatoes are peeled and the burrata masquerades as a tiny red "tomato" through the magic of gel. On the side, hydrated purple basil seeds provide a more Asian-style hit of flavor and pop along with the more conventional leaves. The familiar flavors are there, but she's clearly playing with the sensibilities as much as she can within those bounds.

This sort of evolution is exciting. Usually after a string of the three review visits, I get a little burnt out on a restaurant and I'm eager to move on to the next assignment. But I'm already looking for excuses to go back to Greens, both to follow St. Onge as she gets more comfortable exerting her influence — and to see the sun disappear behind those hills one more time.

Greens

Fort Mason Center, Landmark Building A, 2 Marina Blvd., San Francisco. 415-771-6222 or www.greensrestaurant.com

Hours: Lunch and dinner Tuesday-Sunday; dinner Monday.

Accessibility: Entrance ramp available. Wide spacing between tables and toward restrooms. Gendered, multistall restrooms with one ADA-compliant stall in each.

Noise level: Hushed.

Meal for two, sans drinks: \$55-\$85

What to order: Corn and ricotta griddle cakes (\$13), pizza, hummus, baby lettuces, fruit crisp dessert (\$10)

Meat-free options: The menu is all yours. Most items can be made vegan by request.

Drinks: Full bar. The dessert pairings are exceptional.

Transportation: On the 22-Fillmore, 30-Stockton and 43-Masonic Muni lines. Fort Mason has a public parking lot.

Best practices: Lunch is easy to walk into and largely has the same menu as dinner. But at least once in your life, absolutely time your meal to match up with sunset.

Written By
[Soleil Ho](#)

Soleil Ho is an opinion columnist and cultural critic, focusing on gender, race, food policy and life in San Francisco. They were previously The Chronicle's Restaurant Critic, spearheading Bay Area restaurant recommendations through the flagship Top Restaurants series. In 2022, they won a Craig Claiborne Distinguished Restaurant Review Award from the James Beard Foundation.

Previously, Ho worked as a freelance food and pop culture writer, as a podcast producer on the Racist Sandwich, and as a restaurant chef. Illustration courtesy of Wendy Xu.



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2024

Filing Date: January 24, 2024
Case No.: 2024-000777LBR
Business Name: Greens Restaurant
Business Address: 2 MARINA BLVD, Fort Mason, Building A
Zoning: P (PUBLIC) Zoning District
40-X,OS Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0409/002
Applicant: Katie Reicher
2 MARINA BLVD, Building A
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Located In: District 2
Staff Contact: edgar oropeza - 628-652-7368
edgar.oropeza@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Since 1979, Greens Restaurant has offered distinct and ever-changing vegetarian menus dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch, just 14 miles away in Marin County.

With a panorama view of the Golden Gate Bridge, Marin Headlands, and local sea life, the Greens Restaurant dining room features grand windows stretching floor to ceiling in a spacious warehouse at Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture.

Greens Restaurant is the country's first and most honored restaurant for gourmet vegetarian dining. Many customers come not only for the cuisine and the unique views, but as a pilgrimage to a pioneering restaurant in California cuisine and the farm-to-table movement.

In July 1979, Greens opened under the management of Karin Gjording with seating for 100, a lunch service from Tuesday to Saturday, and pastries from Tassajara Bakery. Single-seating dinners were soon added on Friday and Saturday nights. In August 1979, *San Francisco Chronicle* food critic Patricia Unterman gave Greens its first review: "...there isn't a restaurant in San Francisco that serves such fresh, unique food at such an amazingly low prices in so striking an atmosphere. San Francisco is lucky to have Green's."

In her forward for *The Greens Cookbook*, Deborah Madison, Greens' founding chef sketched out the restaurant's intentions and inspirations:

"We set out to create a cuisine whose complexity and interest left the diner feeling that nothing was missing. We drew upon a wide variety of traditions—the Mediterranean cooking of southern France and Italy, dishes from Mexico and the American Southwest, a few adaptations from the cuisines of Asia, and others—but what pulled it all together was our reliance on the freshest vegetables, herbs, and spices. Anyone who knows the fragrance of tomatoes ripening in the sun, the sweetness of berries so ripe they practically fall into the hand, or the flavor of asparagus and corn when picked and cooked right away knows food at its pleasurable best. This quality is what we wanted to be able to offer in our restaurant."

Since its founding in 1979, Greens has been patronized by some of the most influential chefs of the world, notable actors, poets, writers, and leaders, including Nancy Pelosi, first elected female Speaker of the House of Representatives. Famous gourmets and cooks who patronized Greens in its first years included James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Julia Child, and Elizabeth David.

Greens is consistently listed as a top vegetarian restaurant by Eater San Francisco and both top vegetarian and overall restaurant by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The James Beard Foundation listed Greens as a semifinalist both for America's Outstanding Restaurant and Chef award in 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Greens Restaurant is in Fort Mason and has greatly benefited the Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture since 1979. The restaurant draws the public and raises the visibility and mission of the center to engage and connect people with arts and culture.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. **When was business founded?**

The business was founded in 1979.

2. **Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?**

Yes. Greens Restaurant qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Greens Restaurant has operated continuously in San Francisco for 45 years.

- b. Greens Restaurant has contributed to the history and identity of the Marina District, Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture and San Francisco.
- c. Greens Restaurant is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. Is the business associated with a culturally significant art / craft / cuisine / tradition?

Yes. Greens Restaurant is the country's first and most honored restaurant for gourmet vegetarian dining. Many customers come not only for the cuisine and the unique views, but as a pilgrimage to a pioneering restaurant in California cuisine and the farm-to-table movement.

4. Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and / or architecture?

Yes. Since its founding in 1979, Greens has been patronized by some of the most influential chefs of the world, notable actors, poets, writers, and leaders, including Nancy Pelosi, first elected female Speaker of the House of Representatives. Famous gourmets and cooks who patronized Greens in its first years included James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Julia Child, and Elizabeth David.

Greens Restaurant is notable for its legacy of important women chefs. Founding chef of Greens, **Deborah Madison**, a Zen student of 18 years, is "one of the country's most influential cookbook authors and food writers." She opened Greens Restaurant with a commitment to ensure that every guest in the dining room would not miss eating meat. Her first menu was created in partnership with **Alice Waters**, named one of the top ten chefs in the world by *Cuisine et Vins de France* in 1986 and whose Chez Panisse won the James Beard Foundation Award as best restaurant in America in 1992. Madison creatively introduced in her menu varieties of vegetables practically unknown in American cuisine at the time, including fingerling potatoes, golden beets, and arugula.

Annie Somerville joined Greens in 1981, trained with Madison, and became the Executive Chef three years later. Revered for her relationships with organic farmers and local purveyors, and her commitment to sustainable practices, Somerville was at the forefront of the farm-to-table movement and an advocate for the local farmers markets. Under her guidance, Greens Restaurant became a culinary landmark and one of the most celebrated restaurants in the world.

Denise St. Onge was hired as Chef de Cuisine in 2018 and later promoted to Executive Chef, leading the kitchen through its 40th anniversary in 2019. Upon St. Onge's departure in 2020, **Katie Reicher**, who joined Greens in 2015, became Executive Chef and today leads the kitchen following the daily practices of her mentors.

In addition, artists and writers associated with the San Francisco Zen Center also contributed to the creation, decoration, and even the staffing of Greens. This group includes writers Ed Brown and David Chadwick, poet Jane Hirschfield, and artists J. B. Blunk and Willard (Mike) Dixon.

Representing the City and County of San Francisco, Mayor Gavin Newsom proclaimed April 10, 2010, as Greens Restaurant Day.

5. Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?

Yes. The subject property is within the California Register-listed and National Register-listed Fort Mason Historic District, as well as the California Register-listed San Francisco Port of Embarkation U.S. Army Historic District.

6. Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?

Yes. “Greens Restaurant has earned its stars as a Bay area culinary landmark. In fact, no other vegetarian restaurant in the United States has received comparable attention from publications likes Esquire, Food and Wine, Newsweek and Gourmet.” — United Press International, April 14, 1987.

From its start, Greens received widespread positive attention and was patronized by renowned chefs and food critics. Greens has received innumerable positive reviews and listings in periodicals, books, and online media, including the *International Herald Tribune*, *Gourmet Magazine* (“fresh, inventive fare” and listed in its “Best American Restaurants” issue of 2003), *Private Guide to Restaurants* (which called Greens “the most innovative purveyor of vegetarian inspired Western cuisine”), *Unique Eats and Eateries of San Francisco* (“elevated vegetarian cuisine to its gourmet and mainstream status”), and the *New York Times* (“the restaurant that brought vegetarian cuisine out from sprout-infested health food stores and established it as a cuisine in America.”)

“There are some restaurants out there that just seem to get everything right. Greens is one of them.” — Soleil Ho, “Greens is brighter than ever as it Soars through its Midlife Crisis,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2019.

In addition, Greens unique origins, relationship to the San Francisco Zen Center, and role in vegetable-focused cuisine has been referenced in op-eds, culinary histories, and scholarly articles such as Dan McKanan’s “Salad, Lard, and Everything Between Food and Freedom in the Anthroposophical Movement” in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* (Vol. 23, No.1).

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

On July 15th, 2020 the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution No. 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. Understanding the benefits, burdens, and opportunities to advance racial and social equity that proposed Preservation Planning documents provide is part of the Department’s Racial and Social Equity Initiative. This is also consistent with the Mayor’s Citywide Strategic Initiatives for equity and accountability and with the Office of Racial Equity, which required all Departments to conduct this analysis.

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco’s cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining

the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Greens Restaurant has hosted numerous community-serving benefits over its existence, including for Project Open Hand, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Sprouts Foundation, Foodwise (formerly CUESA), SF Marin Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, KQED, and many more, while directly supporting many non-profit organizations and local schools with auction and donation items.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Location:

- 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason, Building A (1979 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Known for a distinctive culinary style of celebrating vegetables, Greens ever-changing menus are dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch.
- Maintain and celebrate the historic integrity of the former Army Warehouse, preserving the large volume, tall windows and west-facing views, and high open ceilings.
- The Greens Restaurant finishes and furnishings were created by Zen Center carpenters under the direction of Paul Discoe. Twelve varieties of wood were incorporated and are maintained within the dining room, from the massive black walnut doors, hickory stairs at the entrance, the curved bar featuring Port-Orford-cedar, and the dining tables of maple, walnut, and cherry. Much of the wood was recycled or reclaimed.
- Many of the paintings lining the walls of the dining room are by renowned Bay Area artist Willard Dixon and Buddhist teacher Mayumi Oda, while a magnificent redwood sculpture by Inverness artist J. B. Blunk acts as a stunning centerpiece.

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet

- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1377

HEARING DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2024

Case No.: 2024-000777LBR
Business Name: Greens Restaurant
Business Address: 2 Marina Boulevard, Building A
Zoning: P (PUBLIC) Zoning District
40-X, OS Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0409/002
Applicant: Katie Reicher
2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason, Building A
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Located In: District 2
Staff Contact: Edgar Oropeza - 628-652-7368
edgar.oropeza@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR GREENS RESTAURANT CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2 MARINA BLVD, FORT MASON, BUILDING A, BLOCK 0409 /LOT 002.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on February 21, 2024, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Greens Restaurant, qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Greens Restaurant.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

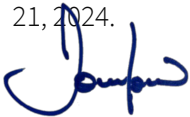
- 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason, Building A (1979 – Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Known for a distinctive culinary style of celebrating vegetables, Greens ever-changing menus are dedicated to the seasonal harvests of local farmers and the organic gardens of its farm, Green Gulch.
- Maintain and celebrate the historic integrity of the former Army Warehouse, preserving the large volume, tall windows and west-facing views, and high open ceilings.
- The Greens Restaurant finishes and furnishings were created by Zen Center carpenters under the direction of Paul Discoe. Twelve varieties of wood were incorporated and are maintained within the dining room, from the massive black walnut doors, hickory stairs at the entrance, the curved bar featuring Port-Orford-cedar, and the dining tables of maple, walnut, and cherry. Much of the wood was recycled or reclaimed.
- Many of the paintings lining the walls of the dining room are by renowned Bay Area artist Willard Dixon and Buddhist teacher Mayumi Oda, while a magnificent redwood sculpture by Inverness artist J. B. Blunk acts as a stunning centerpiece.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission’s findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business on February 21, 2024.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Vergara, Wright, Foley, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: Baldauf, Campbell

RECUSED: Nageswaran

ADOPTED: February 21, 2024