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Chadner Navarro

Bird Dog, Palo Alto, USA



Palo Alto's cache as a culture and food destination continues to grow with the opening of chef Robbie Wilson's latest culinary outing, a two-floor restaurant that seamlessly and deliciously marries classic California flavours with bold Japanese flourishes. A modern concept in the kitchen requires complementary decor, which was done in collaboration with residential designer Jamie Bush.

The space's natural foundation (open framed ceiling, poured concrete walls) was largely left alone to provide balance to more whimsical decorative elements that added both texture and colour. There are a lot of influences at play on both floors of the restaurant, but they do relate back to each other to create a coherent visual narrative. The heathered tweed upholstery was a cheeky nod to hunting culture, which pair perfectly with the custom-made, hand-carved duck decoys (covered in graffiti tags) that float around the bar. And the strong Japanese influences in the menu are mirrored in the glowing lanterns over the dining room and the blond wood screens that resemble discrete ryokans.

While the aforementioned are easier to spot, there are quieter design moments all over, from the graphic blue cork flooring, leather-wrapped door handles and indigo mohair banquettes to the blackened steel and fir entry, ash and un-lacquered bread tables and white marble plinth reception desk. Bird Dog is as much a visual feast as it is a culinary one.

