



## GO FISH

Howard Backen designs a modern fish restaurant for the Wine Country lifestyle — Kristine M. Carber

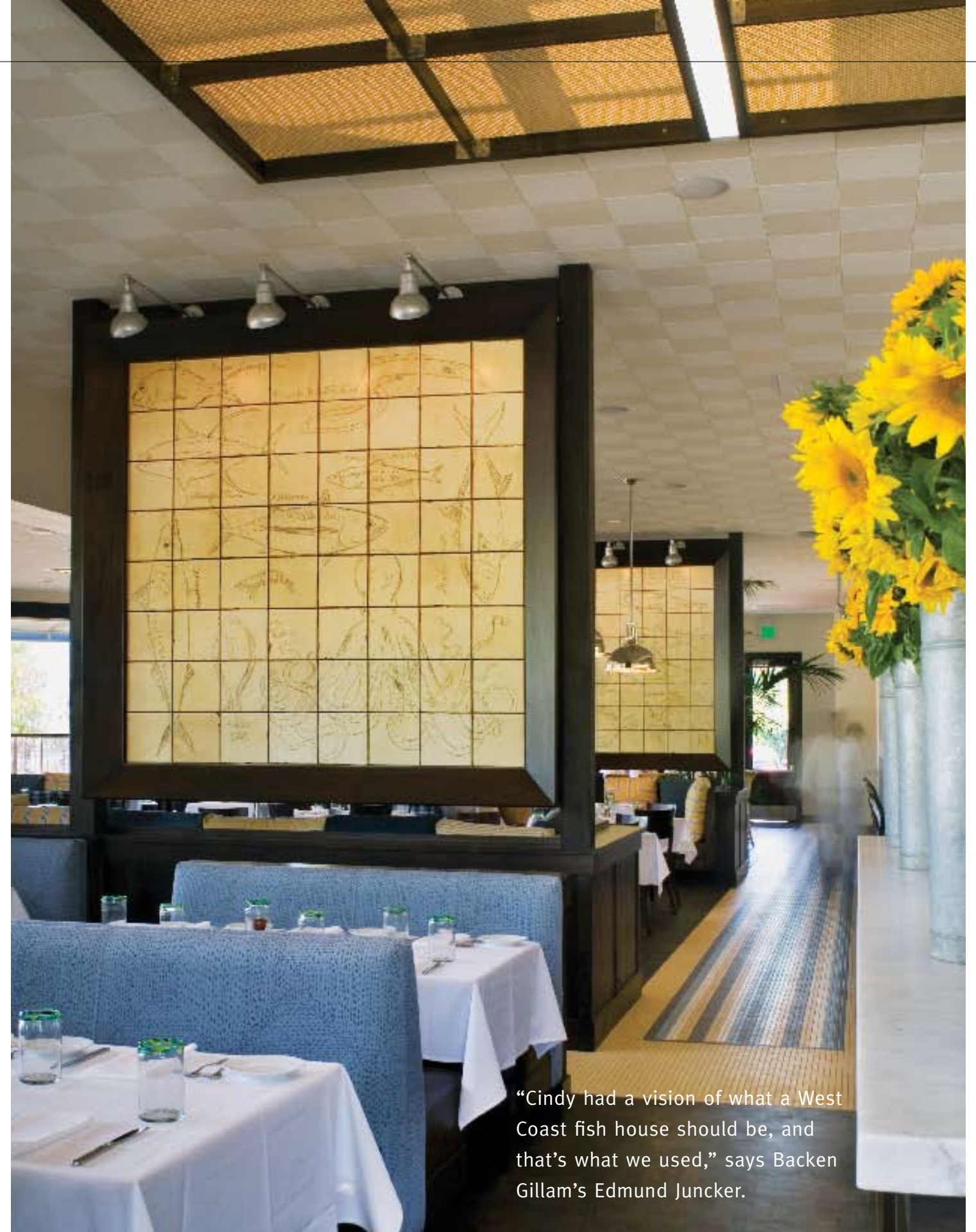
SEARCH FOR A RESTAURANT IN WINE COUNTRY AND YOU'LL EASILY FIND 100 DIFFERENT OPTIONS. SEARCH FOR A SEAFOOD RESTAURANT AND YOU'D BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND ANY. UNTIL NOW. SUPERCHEF CINDY PAWLACYN (MUSTARDS, CINDY'S BACKSTREET KITCHEN) HAS OPENED GO FISH GRILL IN ST. HELENA, A WEST COAST FISH HOUSE CATERING TO THE WINE COUNTRY STYLE.

"There are very few West Coast fish houses, so we improvised as we went along," says project manager Edmund Juncker, of St. Helena architects Backen Gillam, which handled the design. "Cindy had a vision of what a West Coast fish house should be, and that's what we used."

Pawlacyn pictured an open, airy space with lots of booths and banquettes that would ensure

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comfort without being pretentious. She wanted the setting to be modern yet casual enough to fit the Wine Country lifestyle.

The 160-seat restaurant is located in the former Pinot Blanc building, which has been reworked into one large room with two walls of windows. The design is simple, with many rich finishes, like mahogany trim. A long marble-top bar serves as a raw bar, sushi bar, and place to sit and have a drink. Stainless steel backing and ceiling pendants play up the clean, contemporary feel. Barstools are upholstered in a blue Donghia print.

One ingenious touch was to use one-by-one-inch patterned tiles in the fieldstone floor to evoke a throw rug effect. The

designers also added mesh-net canvas to the skylights to diffuse the abundance of light, and they salvaged the existing wine room as a place to decant and cork wine. “It’s exhibition style and a showpiece of the setting,” says Juncker.

Outdoors, a patio was reconfigured with banquette seating and its own bar and bar menu. The original French-style landscape was replaced by an apple orchard and herb and vegetable gardens. “You look out the windows to green mixed with flowers from the flower boxes,” says Juncker.

“It’s been a whirlwind project because we started in March and the opening was September,” he adds. “But Cindy is a dream client, so despite the tight timing it’s been a joy.”