



*food*  
Revolution

*Famed chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten discusses new food trends and how he's transforming plant-based dishes into a fine-dining experience.*

*BY: PAIGE MASTRANDREA*

**D**uring the highly anticipated SOBEWFF week, *Haute Living* had the chance to catch up with James Beard Award-winning chef **Jean-Georges Vongerichten** at his Miami home base—**The Miami Beach EDITION**. While the chef was busy soaking up the sun and catching up with close friends at the festival, he also was in the midst of hosting some of SOBEWFF's most coveted events, such as the abcV Vegan Brunch, as well as Española Way's Midnight Eats with Action Bronson. Here, the acclaimed chef discusses how the Miami culinary market compares to other cities, how vegan food is transforming the dining scene, his favorite aspects of SOBEWFF week and what he has coming for us in 2018.

**HL: As a veteran to the SOBEWFF, how do you feel that the festival is evolving as a whole over the years?**

JGV: I think every year Lee [Schrager, SOBEWFF founder] adds some new, exciting things to keep it fresh. He always reinvents the whole festival. This is our third year here, and we have done a lunch each year, but each time it has been different. This year, we decided to keep it vegan. Who knows what we'll do for next year?

**HL: Tell us about SOBEWFF for you this year. What are you looking forward to?**

JGV: I always love coming to Miami and catching up with old friends—sometimes, it's the one time of year we get to see each other. For this year's lineup, we have the Ping Pong, Pizzas & Peroni event tonight at Market, tomorrow we have our Vegan Lunch featuring Chef Neil from abcV and then we have a totally new event with Action Bronson called Midnight Eats. We're bringing about a dozen new dishes here at Market. People are very interested in our vegan dishes from abcV, so we're introducing them at the lunch. I think these dishes will do very well at Market—I see them going there because we have breakfast lunch and dinner served. We will introduce dishes like homemade coconut yogurt with a citrus and olive oil on a pistachio cannoli; lettuce cups with avocado, sweet potato and

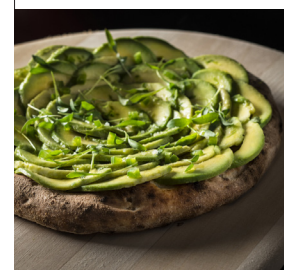
a spicy dressing for lunch; a couple of new pizzas—we keep what people come back for, but we add some new things. The dishes are a little different here than in New York because we use different seafood—we don't have grouper, mahi-mahi, stone crabs [which I'm very jealous of], etc. So, we're introducing a lot of new dishes that we are excited about. Some will be offered here [at Matador Room], as well.

**HL: How is the Miami culinary market unique compared to other cities you are stationed in?**

JGV: It is definitely unique, especially compared to New York. In New York, people eat much more proper—they like to eat individually and with utensils. Here, everyone loves communal plates and the tapas-style dining. They love sharing with each other. The dining experience is more casual and relaxed in Miami, while New York is a bit more formal.

**HL: Following your new restaurant opening in Beverly Hills and the inception of abcV, it seems you're focusing more on using plant-based ingredients. Is this something you'd like to translate into your other restaurants or other new openings?**

JGV: Absolutely. We've always been using a lot of fresh vegetables in our plates, but we're trying to do even more of that. I have always been a big



**AVOCADO PIZZA**

one of Jean-George's signature dishes is the vegan Avocado Pizza, which can be found at the Miami Beach EDITION's Matador Room and Market.



# Haute Q&A



proponent of sustainability and try to steer away from food waste. There's always so much excess in fine dining, and there doesn't have to be—for example, it takes two weeks to grow a radish, while it takes two years to grow a steak. So, we're incorporating a lot of energy and sustainable ingredients into the food, and I think people are really responding well to this.

At first, abcV was an offshoot of ABC Kitchen, which we had opened a few years prior. And then a lot of people came to us at ABC Kitchen and said that they loved what we were doing and that we should open up a vegetarian restaurant. When the space opened up next to ABC Cocina, we thought, "Let's try it." We only did breakfast first because I was unsure if we could catch the audience throughout the day. For breakfast, people like to eat healthily, so that was easy. Then, we did lunch and realized that we were still capturing a huge crowd. With all the office people around the area, it was a great opportunity to be there. And then, it took me two months to decide to open at nighttime. I wondered if people would still be willing to come at night for dinner, having to give up their steak and fish. But they did! So it has been fantastic. I think it's because we give flavor to it—it's not just steamed vegetables. I like the new word "plant-based." It gives you so much opportunity to enhance the flavors and make the food decadent and the dining experience upscale. I definitely would like to continue this type of dining. abcV is now 95-percent vegan—we still have eggs and yogurt incorporated for breakfast, but lunch and dinner is 100-percent vegan.

**HL: Are you finding that abcV is drawing in a different crowd than your other restaurants?**

JGV: We definitely have a super-young crowd of millennials that are into this type of sustainable eating, but we also have a good crowd of older people who are trying to eat healthier to live longer. So, it's a nice mix. I think today people are balancing their diets better in New York. Plant-based dining is definitely a part of today's eating, as is feeling good about yourself and what you're consuming.

**HL: With the rise of social media and people photographing food constantly, do you think that is changing things up for you in the restaurant scene?**

JGV: Yes, Instagram has had a huge impact. It definitely puts more pressure on us to make sure everything looks nice when it comes out because people will be photographing it and putting it online much more than they used to. It's about the food tasting good, but also having it look nice. A lot of times, people come in because they saw a picture that someone else took and they want to try it themselves. So you have to deliver—it can't just look good in the picture, it has to live up to that expectation. It's a new world, and it's amazing!

**HL: Favorite dish at abcV?**

JGV: I like them all, but we do a beet dish with four different colors—we bake them and then smash them on the plate and season it like a beef tartare, so it's like a multicolored version of that, and it's delicious.

**HL: What is next for you in 2018?**

JGV: Last year was so busy—we opened seven restaurants! So this year will be a bit slower, but we still have a lot going on. We're creating a fish market in New York at the South Street Seaport. There's a building called the Tin Building where all the original fish markets were. So right now we're rebuilding the space. It's a big transformation but very cool concept. We dismantled the entire building and cut all the floor and tile on the mud line, and we're rebuilding the space to push it back 50 feet and lift it up six feet. By the end of the year, we'll have created the Fulton Fish Market. It will be a bit like Harrods in London meeting Eataly. It's very much like a food hall—40,000 square feet all based on seafood and vegetables. However, it will be less retail and more dining counters. There's a sushi counter, Italian, vegetarian, dumpling/noodle counter—something for everyone—seven different stations/restaurants. These food-hall concepts are definitely growing and shifting the food scene. Outside of New York, we're working on something in Abu Dhabi, and also in Miami—with ABC Kitchen coming to the Miami Design District by the end of the year.



**abcV**  
the vegetarian and  
vegan restaurant  
in NYC has quickly  
become one of the  
city's hottest dining  
destinations.

