

# Michelin star chef unleashes wild rant on 'ugly butt end' Dem-run San Francisco as he's forced to shut restaurant in crime-ridden downtown

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By JAMES GORDON

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A Michelin starred chef is to close his lauded seafood restaurant in San Francisco's crime-ridden downtown area just two years after opening.

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Aside from crime, chef Peter Hemsley who runs Aphotic cites the location of the venue as being part of the problem, while also depressingly noting how he does not see things getting better in the short term.

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Hemsley cites being at the 'ugly butt end of a desolate convention center suck hole in the post-panny apocalypse' as also being a key factor in the restaurant's demise.

Aphotic, which offers a seafood-focused tasting menu and specializes in dishes such as 10 day dry-aged blue fin tuna steak, won a Michelin star in its first year of operation. It will serve its final diners on December 21.



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- **Chef Peter Hemsley who runs Aphotic is to close his lauded seafood restaurant in San Francisco's crime-ridden downtown area just two years after opening**
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Aphotic

a day ago · 🌐



A note from Chef Peter Hemsley –

As all residents of SF know, these are tough times for fine dining operators. There are few left in SF that aspire to provide services like we do at Aphotic, and the smart and lucky ones in that pack are located in the right storefront, on the right block, and in the right part of this town.

In less than two years of Aphotic's existence, we have developed 4 comprehensive and completely original tasting menus, earned a Michelin Star, a Michelin Green star and a Michelin distinction for accomplishments of the bar program. Even in the right part of town, those would be huge accomplishments in that timeframe for any operation. The fact that we all did this at the ugly butt end of a desolate convention center suck hole in the post-panny apocalypse, is nothing short of a small miracle. And I believe in miracles - I have to as a chef and restaurant owner in these times. But I also know that miracles do not last forever.

Our last service as Aphotic at 816 Folsom Street will be on Saturday, December 21. I invite you all to help make this small miracle's last weeks a bustling and happy window before the closure, celebrating our team's accomplishments, while indulging in what we do best - seafood, cocktails, wine and impeccable service.

Splash.

Photo: @kellypuleio



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- **Aside from crime, Chef Peter Hemsley cites the location of the venue as being part of the problem, while depressingly noting how he does not see things getting better in the short term**
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In a wild rant posted to social media Hemsley noted how 'these are tough times for fine dining operators.

'There are few left in SF that aspire to provide services like we do at Aphotic, and the smart and lucky ones in that pack are located in the right storefront, on the right block, and in the right part of this town.'

Writing to his supporters in an email he told how he 'stayed put where I am because I was always charmed by the architecture of my restaurant, and the potential it had as an exceptional dining venue from within.'

Hemsley said he believes the city has fallen short when it comes to addressing challenges post-pandemic citing 'fear of parking on the street due to broken windows,' construction and other issues.



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- **Hemsley said customers 'fear parking on the street due to broken windows'**

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- **Black Cod with leeks, asparagus, and morels is one of the bar menu dishes at Aphotic**

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- **The exposed wood ceiling is designed to look like the inner ribs of a ship**

In his Facebook post Hemsley noted the tremendous progress and accolades the restaurant had received in a relatively short timespan, while praising the staff he had worked alongside.

'In less than two years of Aphotic's existence, we have earned a Michelin Star, a Michelin Green star and a Michelin distinction for accomplishments of the bar program. Even in the right part of town, those would be huge accomplishments in that timeframe for any operation,' Hemsley began.

'The fact that we all did this at the ugly butt end of a desolate convention center suck hole in the post-panny apocalypse, is nothing short of a small miracle. And I believe in miracles - I have to as a chef and restaurant owner in these times. But I also know that miracles do not last forever.'

Speaking to the **San Francisco Chronicle** Hemsley said he believes the city by the bay will eventually recover - but it will be too long a wait for his restaurant.

'The energy may come back to that part of town in the years to come, but it will be a long and painful battle. Longer, much longer than anyone expected.'

Local restaurant critic Cesar Hernandez **described** Aphotic's seafood menu as 'groundbreaking'.



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- **Chef Peter Hemsley together with his wife Marie of Aphotic restaurant in San Francisco**



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**This year, Michelin honored Aphotoc bar director Trevin Hutchins with an exceptional cocktails award**



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Aphotic offers a seafood-focused tasting menu and specializes in dishes such as 10 day dry-aged blue fin tuna steak. Tight, Mt. Lassen trout prosciutto, caper berries, cucumber and rye

Aphotic is the latest in a long line of recent or pending closures in the city.

This week, the gigantic Macy's has long been a fixture in Union Square since 1947, **revealed that 16 percent of its stock was stolen.**

It was announced in February that it would be shuttering its doors in 2025, alongside 150 other 'unproductive' stores.

Last month, a San Francisco business that had served the community for 35 years closed its doors for the final time after **enduring shoplifting on a daily basis alongside a spate of break-ins.**

The owners of Bayside Market, situated in the city's South Beach area, said the constant thefts alongside a lack of action by local law enforcement has **made the situation 'unbearable' and shutting up shop was the only option.**

Co-owner David Pesusic has said costs

and **crime** were the driving factors behind the decision to close. He lays the blame squarely at inaction by local politicians.

'Our family business is going down the tubes because the idiots in City Hall can't protect us,' he told the **San Francisco Chronicle.**



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**Bayside Market, situated in the city's South Beach area, say the constant thefts alongside a lack of action by local law enforcement means the place will close this week after 35 years**

In a letter to loyal customers posted to the door, David Pesusic expanded on his comments and explained his reasons for closing down after more than three decades in business.

'All city hall cares about is the **homeless** and the fentanyl crisis, not the everyday law-abiding citizens trying to make a living,' Pesusic wrote in a letter taped to Bayside Market's front door.

Pesusic said that city officials were doing nothing to stop open drug use nearby nor helping to prevent daily thefts from the store.

'To that effect, having to deal with shoplifters every day and multiple break-ins has just become unbearable, especially when law enforcement doesn't arrest and city hall doesn't prosecute,' he wrote.

The desolate reality of San Francisco's **hollowed out** downtown was laid bare earlier this year by footage showing every store in an entire retail block shuttered and empty. The prime real estate was once home to outlets including Uniqlo, H&M, Rasputin Records, and Lush, but all have disappeared in a city center plagued by **crime**, drugs, and homelessness.



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San Francisco is reeling from soaring crime, an emptying downtown, and residents moving away to safer, cheaper areas



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**The tech worker from Austin was left stunned by his visit to the Bay Area, which is in the grip of a drugs crisis. Pictured: Homeless people using drugs in the city in 2022**

Crime in the city actually went down in the first quarter of 2024 with decreases in every major crime category tracked including homicide, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, arson, larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft.

But part of the reason may be due to the fact fewer people are bothering to report it.

'We don't even call 911 anymore because they don't respond,' Pesusic said to the [Chronicle](#). 'This isn't fun, playing security-slash-police officer, trying to hold on to my inventory.'

'These guys think our store is a pantry where they can take whatever they want. We've been spit at, we've had knives pulled on us, we've been called names,' Pesusic said.

Lax bail reform policies see anyone caught stealing or facing drug possession charges simply released back onto the street, sometimes later that same day.

It gives little disincentive to prevent repeat offender from carrying out their crimes.



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• **The Mayor of San Francisco, London Breed, has said the time for compassion is over when it comes to dealing with the city's homeless crisis which has left streets caked in excrement**

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has left locals fearing for their safety.

Mayor **London** Breed revealed the city is set to take a 'very aggressive' approach to remove encampments from the streets which have blighted the City by the Bay for the past four years.

Certain parts of the city, including the troubled Tenderloin district have become known for their squalor and misery, becoming so bad that local businesses unable to recruit staff and residents have felt forced to flee.

The crime-ridden downtown area has seen the closure of many shops and restaurants since its drastic downfall, despite Breed attempting to hype statistics claiming offenses went down in 2023. Last October, it was reported that seven Starbucks stores had been

planning to close as the city continues to **deal with crime, drug use, and homelessness**.

By the end of August 2023, video was released showing **San Francisco's newly shut-down flagship Nordstrom store** that was almost barren after nearly three decades in business.

Homeless people were seen congregating downtown, pushing their possessions in shopping carts or sitting on duffle bags, awaiting city services such as referrals for shelter, food or clothing, or mental health and substance abuse treatment.