

The Best ^{2011}

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San Francisco

THE TREND 48 **Cold-blooded kicks.** Summer's platform sandals help you scale new heights.
BY ELIZABETH VARNELL



CRITIC'S TABLE 54 **Local to Japan.** Izakaya comes to Hayes Valley from a San Francisco chef who trained in its mother country. BY JOSH SENS

THE DRINKER 58 **Red wine, cooler.** An influential wine director agrees that some reds belong in the fridge. BY JORDAN MACKAY

EAT THIS 60 **The Chinese cure.** The Cantonese-style meats in this 155-year-old shop are as good as gold. BY JAN NEWBERRY

Cold-blooded kicks

Summer's towering wedges are attracting attention—even from some unlikely sources at the California Academy of Sciences.

BY ELIZABETH VARNELL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BELANGER

Snakes on a plain

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **Givenchy** brown leather Fisherman platform wedge, \$1,190, AT BARNEYS NEW YORK, 77 O'FARRELL ST., S.F., 415-268-3500. **Loeffler Randall** nude suede Vivan sandal, \$495, AT ENDLESS.COM. **Céline** black leather platform sandal, \$690, AT BARNEYS NEW YORK.



Slither shock

FROM LEFT: **Alexander Wang** sepia patent leather Kasia wedge, \$550, AT BARNEYS NEW YORK, 77 O'FARRELL ST., S.F., 415-268-3500. **Jeffrey Campbell for Convert** black and tan jute Virgo-E platform, \$108, AT CONVERT, 1809B FOURTH ST., BERKELEY, 510-649-9759.

SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, WHERE "SNAKES & LIZARDS: THE SUMMER OF SLITHER" RUNS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 5.





Don't tread on me
FROM LEFT: **Prada** gray canapa wedge heel, \$695, AT PRADA, 201 POST ST., S.F., 415-848-1900.
Belle by Sigerson Morrison gold leather platform sandal, \$295, AT ENDLESS.COM.



BACK STORY

Wiggle room

Geoff Willard is a trained handler, but he's no snake charmer, and the five constrictors he handled during our shoot of this season's wedge sandals—see **The Trend**, on page 48—aren't circus animals. They certainly aren't accustomed to the flash of the cameras and being coaxed into artful poses. So Willard, a staffer at the California Academy of Sciences, whose snakes are among the stars of the ongoing exhibition "Snakes & Lizards: The Summer of Slither" proceeded gently as a python took a detour through the open toe of an Alexander Wang sandal and Balthazar, a 5½-foot-long red-tailed boa, wrapped around everything but the shoes. The black pine snake in this photo didn't bother to wait for a bathroom break as Willard carefully angled him above the Prada and Sigerson Morrison designs. Describing the scene, photographer Peter Belanger said, "It's like shooting real people instead of professional models. Both don't like the bright lights." When a snake balked at the flash, Willard limited the number of "takes." And these are among the most approachable serpents inside the Academy. Of the Academy's 50 snakes, only 17 are accustomed enough to human touch to be brought out in public, even with a handler. "We consider them the ambassadors for their species," Willard said. It must be hard work. When the shoot concluded, the diplomats coiled into dark pillowcases to rest. ■

BY NIKKI IOAKIMEDES

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL TIMBANG