



Something's Cooking

OUR GROWING AWARENESS OF FOOD AND WHERE IT COMES FROM HAS LED TO A NEW TREND IN TRAVEL—THE CULINARY VACATION

BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER
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Time was, the annual vacation away from home was a blessed respite from kitchen duties for a few days or weeks. But these days when celebrity chefs concoct new delights on TV every night feeding the public's new awareness of food in all its incarnations, there's a growing trend to spend one's precious vacation time inside a gourmet

kitchen. Whether it's to broaden your appreciation for a particular type of cuisine or just to recharge your enthusiasm for facing the stove every night, there's a cooking school or guest chef out there waiting to help put more cordon into your bleu.

From coast to coast and around the world culinary experts are hosting classes at existing resorts or at special culinary destinations where all cuisines can be explored and experimented with, if not mastered, within a few days. Some offer fairly rigorous curricula while others let you dabble a few hours every day and then hit the beach.

Above: Deep in the heart of the Napa wine region, Camp Napa Culinary offers participants visits to exclusive wineries plus wine blending and cooking classes. **Opposite:** Inside The House on Bayou Road, home to the New Orleans Cooking Experience.

"It just depends what your individual goals are," says Debbie Gold, executive chef at the American Restaurant in Kansas City. "Also, you might look up the city you're interested in visiting, find the top chefs and call to see if they or their restaurants have any cooking classes."

THE DOOR TO CULINARY POSSIBILITIES

Kathleen Leighton of Prairie Village visited the Savory Spoon Cooking School, located in the quaint Door County, Wisconsin, town of Ellison Bay. "It's just a super place to learn new techniques and open yourself to new possibilities in the kitchen. I learned a few new recipes and added them to my regular repertoire," she says.

Door County is often described as the most beautiful destination in the Midwest. The Savory Spoon is situated in an 1879 schoolhouse near the spectacular Lake Michigan shoreline. It's a local landmark that's now equipped with state-of-the-art kitchen appliances, tools and fixtures.

"We try to provide opportunities for home cooks to infuse meals with a loving professional touch and a pinch of the exotic," says Janice Thomas, school founder and head chef. While located in the heart of Wisconsin's dairyland, the Savory Spoon is not wedded



to the idea of pushing "Midwestern" cuisine over others but more toward creating food fusions.

"Combining the flavors of many cultures results in an explosion of taste delights," she says. "The Savory Spoon cooking classes have been designed with the home cook/entertainer in mind. If you are interested in learning new techniques and recipes that can be recreated in your own kitchen, please come join us."

Most of the Savory Spoon's classes are one-day events, scheduled each year from June through October. They often feature guest chefs and experts in particular foods, especially cheese. (This is Wisconsin after all!) One of the guest chefs participating in the Savory Spoon's

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programs is Betsy Titterington, founder of the Culinary Center of Kansas City, who now operates her own gourmet kitchen and cooking school in Ellison Bay, Wisconsin, where she moved in 2001.

The majority of classes at the Savory Spoon are "hands-on" classes. Each class is up to three hours with 12-16 students per class. Chef Thomas and her staff create menus to address the interests of all levels of cooks. After the students prepare the meal with the help of the chefs, they'll sit down and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Each table is set with French linens, candles and fresh flowers. A full wine selection from the Savory Spoon's cellars is available for purchase.

The Savory Spoon
12042 Highway 42
Ellison Bay, Wis. 54210
920-854-6600
savoryspoon.com

Chef Debbie Gold's Cooking School Recommendations:

The Essex-Vermont's Culinary Resort,
Burlington, Vt., vtculinaryresort.com

Gourmet Retreats at CasaLana,
Calistoga, Calif., gourmetretreats.com

Culinary School of the Rockies in Boulder,
Colo., culinaryschoolrockies.com

Inn-to-Inn Cooking Vacations in Hudson
Valley, N.Y., vintagehudsonvalley.com

Anna Teresa Callen Italian Cooking
School, New York, N.Y., cookingschoolsofamerica.com

The French Pastry School, Chicago, Ill.
frenchpastryschool.com



Creole with a dash of Cajun grounds the culinary curriculum at the New Orleans Cooking Experience. **Opposite:** The House on Bayou Road.

THE RULES OF ROUX

Watching the new HBO series *Treme* this season has whetted many an appetite for New Orleans Creole and Cajun cooking, as well as the music. So the lessons in classic New Orleans cuisine offered by the New Orleans Cooking Experience are starting to look pretty appealing.

Classes are held in The House on Bayou Road, a bed and breakfast inn located 12 blocks from the French Quarter. It is a restored

antique-filled Creole compound on the site of a plantation that dates from the 1790s. The school offers a range of cooking programs from private one-on-one classes, vacation programs, an immersion series and half-day instruction. Regular classes are limited to ten and include instruction, recipes and wines, and conclude with a multi-course dinner party.

"We teach authentic Creole cuisine with a dash of Cajun. Our highly personalized cooking classes focus on the techniques of creating Louisiana food, as well as the history and culture of our region," says founder Judy Jurisich, who began with a belief that visitors to New Orleans have a growing appetite for authentic experiences as well as great cuisine.

The school draws on several noted New Orleans chefs: Frank Brigtsen, co-owner of Brigsten's Restaurant, created the curriculum for the New Orleans Cooking Experience and teaches on a regular basis. Chiqui Collier, a native New Orleanian, has been a culinary professional for 27 years. Her classes focus on classic Creole and Cajun, and she's always happy to have help making the roux. Michael DeVidts is the resident chef at the House of Bayou Road. Susan Ridgeway comes from a family of acclaimed home cooks. Poppy Tooker is a New Orleans "food diva" and heads the local Slow Food chapter.



The New Orleans Cooking Experience offers two vacation programs: the Long Weekend Getaway is offered Thursday through Saturday with two classes and two dinners at Brigtsen's Restaurant. The Weekend Getaway offers a dinner class on Friday and a lunch class on Saturday.

The Immersion Series offers cooking classes in four-, three- and two-day series. One class is scheduled each day, which don't have to be scheduled sequentially,

but may be spread over a week, a month or even longer.

New Orleans Cooking Experience
2285 Bayou Road
New Orleans, La. 70119
504-945-9104
neworleanscookingexperience.com

GETTING DEEP INTO NAPA

If you're looking for a complete immersion into a culinary vacation, one of the

"camps" run by veteran culinary instructor Hugh Carpenter might satiate your appetite. Carpenter runs a series of culinary camps each year, both in Napa Valley and in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

This will be his 19th year in the Napa wine region with three Camp Napa Culinary weeks remaining this year: Sept. 5-10, Sept. 19-24 and Oct. 3-8. Carpenter offers an insider's experience with visits to some of Napa's elite small wineries, great kitchens and private homes. He only allows 16 "campers" per session, so you might need to plan for next year.

Each class is full participation and utilizes recipes from the most recent of Carpenter's 15 cookbooks.

"This year's theme centers on visits to private estates and to tiny family-run wineries acclaimed for their wines and open only by invitation. The owners will personally welcome us. Then, as we taste their wines

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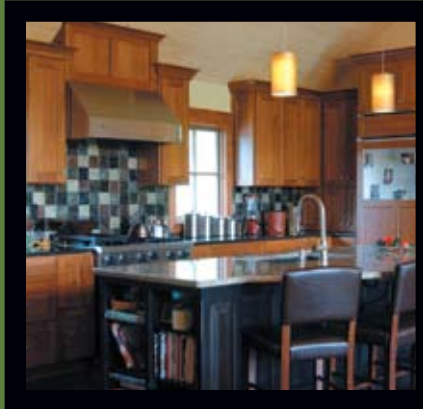
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ENDLESS OPTIONS



A toast to fine food (and great wine!) kicks off a light lunch at Camp Napa Culinary, led by veteran instructor Hugh Carpenter.

matched with appetizers, we'll hear their stories about how they transformed a passion for wine into a way of life," Carpenter says.

On Monday morning, Carpenter teaches the first of three participation classes at Cakebread Cellars. "Virtually every top chef in America has cooked in the Cakebread family's kitchen, and you can have the same opportunity," he says.

Tuesday, the camp returns to Cakebread with assistance from the winery's executive chef, Brian Streeter. Campers will pick vegetables and grill fish for lunch with appetizers and dessert.

Wednesday's cooking class will be held at the estate of Andrea Mugnaini, where campers spend the morning creating an entire menu of appetizer and dessert pizzas cooked in wood-burning ovens.

On Thursday you'll cook and have lunch at Vineyard 29, which produces some of the most sought-after red wines from Napa.

Friday brings a class on wine blending at Palmaz Vineyards, which is never open to the general public.

Some families swear by Carpenter's Camp Napa Culinary and return every year, saying that it's among their most memorable one-week vacation experiences.

Camp Napa Culinary
3960 Hagen Road
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hughcarpenter.com ♦

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