

FOOD

August 2004 *and* £3.50 US\$6.95

TRAVEL



Auberge at Château de Berne

Lorgues, France
(020 7396 5550;
gourmetour.com)

Wine Country Cooking

Ontario, Canada
(+1 905 468 8304;
winecountrycooking.com)

India on the Menu

Goa, India
(020 7371 1113;
onthegovans.com)

Walnut Grove School of Cooking

Loire, France
(+33 243 98 50 02;
walnutgrovecookery.com)

What's on the menu?

Provençal cooking, traditional and modern, at classes run by esteemed chef Jean-Louis Vosgien of Château de Berne. This wine estate with boutique hotel and restaurant is near Lorgues, about an hour's drive from Nice.

Picturesque Niagara on the Lake is a thriving young wine region and Toronto businesswoman Jane Langdon runs the school at her husband's vineyard. She majors on dinner-party dishes and cooking with wine.

From the pilafs of Kashmir to the curries of Kerala, the classes offer a high-stacked tiffin of dishes from all over India. Bombay-raised chef Priya Gogte and Goan cook Judy Cardozo teach on a roof terrace looking out over palm trees.

Fresh crab and ginger ravioli with lemongrass dressing, and passion fruit bavares with caramel cage, anyone? This course is run by professional British chefs who work in contemporary, formal style and love meticulous presentation.

Specials board

Jean-Louis uses organic vegetables, wild herbs and olive oil from the Château's gardens and olive grove to encapsulate Provence on a plate. And his Spices, Chillies and Curries course shows how to bring new flair to French food.

Your new-found knowledge of the rare and luscious ice wines of Ontario will impress dinner guests as much as your portfolio of perfectly balanced menus. The school's spacious facilities and equipment are first-rate, too.

There's plenty of time to chill out in the hot sun or drink in the local culture. The week-long holiday includes just three (or four) half-day classes, plus a visit to crazy Mapusa market, the largest in Northern Goa.

You'll challenge and extend your skills while enjoying the lush scenery of the Loire Valley and nearby Brittany. Visits to local food producers, such as a farmhouse dairy making cheese and crème fraîche, are included.

Boil an egg or béarnaise sauce?

Aioli and rouille beat béarnaise in Provence, and, as you'll discover, are easier to produce. A maximum of ten guests work in groups to prepare dishes alongside Jean-Louis, so lunch never rides entirely on your shoulders.

Most customers are already keen home cooks, or visiting with one. Dishes are gratifyingly achievable and Jane and her assistants keep a close eye on everybody, seamlessly saving any potential embarrassment.

You don't need to be an accomplished cook, and the best thing you'll take away is knowing that making Indian food is much easier than you think. Producing a full thali for lunch during each lesson builds confidence quickly.

Beyond béarnaise – this is pro-am cooking for perfectionists and show-offs. Demonstration sessions include 'chocolate work' and 'sugar work', and there's hands-on preparation of a gourmet least every day.

The bill

Three days and two nights cost from £545pp, including accommodation at the Auberge, two cooking classes, all meals and producer visits. Prices for six days and five nights start at £1,270.

Five-day culinary vacations cost from £970pp, including breakfast and lunch at the school, producer visits, accommodation at the boutique Harbour House hotel, plus one dinner at the winery's restaurant.

Seven day holiday including three or four classes with lunch, transfers and accommodation at the four-star Taj Village on Sinquerim Beach, from £995pp (October-April). Additional week costs £350.

The cost is £895pp for the course and five nights' full board gîte accommodation. Wine and other alcoholic beverages are not included in the price, but can be purchased from the well-stocked bar.



Rosemary Barron's Greece

Santorini, Greece
(020 7460 0077;
tastingplaces.com)

Fava dip and olives, certainly, but it isn't all mezze. You'll enjoy bay-scented chicken with figs, fish soups, creamy rice pudding and sticky yoghurt cakes. The course is run on stylish Santorini by author Rosemary Barron.

Food was medicine to the ancient Greeks and the link is fascinating. You'll need no coercing to eat your greens when they include knorta and wild oregano picked fresh from the hillside. And there's plenty of culture and sightseeing.

How well you can chop onions is not the issue. The format is a summery cocktail of demonstrations, tasting workshops and restaurant and taverna visits. You'll become an authority on Greek cuisine, while getting a tan.

The course costs £1,420pp, including six nights' pension-style accommodation, all meals, drinks, tours and airport transfers. Accommodation upgrades are available on request.

Rhode School of Cuisine

Tuscany, Italy
(01252 790222;
rhodeschoolofcuisine.com)

In week-long courses in the autumn and spring, The Connaught's Angela Hartnett will demonstrate the signature dishes that won her that Michelin star. Charming resident chef Giancarlo Talerico adds a Tuscan touch.

The Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio food emporium in Florence will be a highlight. Enjoy balsamic-tasting as well as watching nimble pasta makers at work, and the vast displays of meat and cheese are a real treat.

The feeling is very relaxed here and despite Angela cooking what seem to be very complicated dishes, everything is in the ingredients and their simple preparation. Wine is poured often enough to warrant sitting back lazily.

Prices start at £1,420pp, which includes seven nights' accommodation at the gorgeous Villa Lucia, lessons, food and wine at the school, all scheduled excursions and airport transfers. ☐

The feeling is very relaxed at the Rhode School of Cuisine; wine is poured often enough to warrant sitting back lazily

Jenni Amor is A Place To Cook Inspiring Cookery Courses From Around the World (October, £16.99) is published in September 2011.

departures

Second helpings

France

Le Baou d'Infer, St Tropez
(07770 267648; lebaou.com)

Set in a working vineyard, the classes led by Alex Mackay emphasise cooking with the finest ingredients from the area.

Sicily

Villa Ravidà, Menfi
(020 7460; tastingplaces.com)

Learn about southern Sicily's food in a frescoed 18th-century villa.

Spain

Culinary Adventures
Barcelona, Madrid, and more
(+34 932 103 504; fax:
atasteofspain.com)

Customised food and wine tours throughout Spain, including cooking classes, market visits and tapas trips.

Morocco

Tastes of Morocco at Dar Liqam, Marrakech
(020 7396 5550; gourmetontour.com)

Learn about the techniques and ingredients of Moroccan cuisine, and trek the snow-capped Atlas mountains.

Australia

Howqua Dale Gourmet Retreat, Northern Victoria
(020 7396 5550; gourmetontour.com)
Luxury two-day courses in a river valley northeast of Melbourne. The classes are taught by leading Australian chefs.

New Zealand

Kimberley Lodge, Bay of Islands
(+64 9 403 7090; lodges.co.nz)
On this two-day cooking retreat, chef Virginia Holloway takes guests to the ocean to gather mussels, kina (sea eggs), crayfish and flounder and to a farm to harvest oysters.

Mexico

Seasons of My Heart, Oaxaca
(+52 951 5187726;
seasonsofmyheart.com)

Head in Rancho Aurora, classes and tours focus on pre-Hispanic foods, traditional culinary, medicinal and spiritual herb usage, and the Spanish influence on the contemporary Oaxacan kitchen.