



# A TASTE OF LOCAL CULTURE

A WINDSWEPT DAY AT THE SEASIDE AROUSES A CRAVING FOR CHOWDER. THE ARID MESAS OF THE SOUTHWEST PIQUE AN URGE FOR THE SOFT BURN OF CHILES. THE COMPLEX HERITAGE OF NEW ORLEANS IS EXPRESSED PERFECTLY IN A SPICY JAMBALAYA. THESE CULINARY SPECIALTIES ARE ENDURINGLY ENTWINED WITH THE PLACE FROM WHICH THEY COME. LOCAL FARE IS SOMETIMES EVEN THE RAISON D'ÊTRE FOR TRAVEL ITSELF — THINK CALIFORNIA'S WINE COUNTRY, WHERE A SUBTLE HINT OF OAK-DOTTED HILLSIDES ARISES FROM THE GLASS.

by **Annelise Kelly**  
Photos **Christopher Villano**

An intimate understanding of regional foods enhances traveling and dining, cultivating deeper appreciation of the place itself. Terroir, that sense of place revealed in a fine wine by its signature nuances, is writ large in culinary customs of the world and embraced in regional cooking classes.

Meeting fellow students, sampling the food, quizzing the chefs and getting hands-on with the ingredients all contribute insights to the local cuisine and culture. It's also a lot of fun. Bringing friends and family together to share a feast that embodies a trip celebrates the journey while tastefully eclipsing even the best photo album.

These cooking schools are a slim sample of what's available. Search the Internet and contact travel professionals to learn about cooking schools at your destination. For the best experience, inquire about class size; whether it's hands-on or demonstration; quantity of food to be served; and whether alcohol is included.

**THE SANTA FE SCHOOL OF COOKING**

([www.santafeschoolofcooking.com](http://www.santafeschoolofcooking.com))

No cuisine in the United States adheres so closely to a sense of place as that of New Mexico, where Mexican, Native American and European cultures and ingredients merged to form a distinctive culinary lexicon reliant on New World resources like corn and chiles.

Since 1989, The Santa Fe School of Cooking has shared a passion for the memorable foodstuffs of the Southwest with vacationing students from around the globe and a loyal local following. "Our mission has never changed: to support all things New Mexican," says Manager Nicole Curtis Ammerman, "local farmers, artists, wineries, beer. Even before the whole locavore movement was cool, we used local goat cheese, local meat."

The focus on regional fare highlights a surprising diversity. The ancient history of the area is surveyed in Culinary History of the Rio Grande Valley 5,000 B.C. to Present, including such dishes as Posole Nixtamal, Anasazi Beans and Calabacitas, a side dish composed of the "three sisters" — beans, corn and squash — which have been locally cultivated together for centuries. The Native American class spotlights a James Beard-award-winning author and Ph.D. in culinary culture who explores insights into the original people of the Southwest, with interpretations such as Blue Corn Gnocchi Arrowheads with Guajillo Chile Sauce.

Traditional foods of both Mexico and New Mexico are taught for the purist, while the contemporary palate can choose from such classes as New World Tapas. Imagine sharing travel memories over Shrimp Escabeche with Black Olives and Mint. Southwest spins on a lavish brunch, vegetarian food and barbecue are all available. Hands-on classes are limited to 16 participants and demonstration classes may include up to 44 students.

The Santa Fe School of Cooking also arranges walking tours and visits to restaurants, farms and wineries.





## WHERE TO STAY

### ANDAZ 5TH AVENUE, NEW YORK

([www.andaz.com](http://www.andaz.com))

Floor-to-ceiling windows embrace mid-town views in this 1916 former menswear store, where classic pre-war apartment buildings inform the cosmopolitan aesthetic. Suites open onto private balconies or landscaped terraces. Dine at The Shop on menus sourced from the Hudson Valley, or browse neighboring Grand Central Terminal with its tempting food shops and historic Oyster Bar and Restaurant.

### HYATT REGENCY HUNTINGTON BEACH RESORT AND SPA, CALIFORNIA

([www.huntingtonbeach.hyatt.com](http://www.huntingtonbeach.hyatt.com))

This sprawling Mission-style beachside resort pampers every guest. A lavish 17-room spa, surfing lessons, bike rentals, tennis courts, and five bars and restaurants conspire to distract visitors from the many nearby attractions, including Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm. Kids love careening down water slides into the ocean-view pool and joining Camp Hyatt activities.

### HYATT REGENCY TAMAYA RESORT AND SPA, NEW MEXICO

([www.tamaya.hyatt.com](http://www.tamaya.hyatt.com))

Tucked at the base of the dramatic Sandia Mountains, this Pueblo-inspired resort enchants nature lovers. Ride horses, hike, play a round on the nationally ranked golf course and admire the stunning landscape from a hot air balloon. Rejuvenate in the Tamaya Mist Spa and Salon and savor a Southwest sunset poolside.

### HYATT REGENCY VANCOUVER, CANADA

([www.vancouver.hyatt.com](http://www.vancouver.hyatt.com))

Flat-screen televisions and dazzling panoramas of skyline, bay and mountains keep guests cocooning in spacious modern rooms, but the vibrant heart of Vancouver beckons, including charming Victorians in Gastown and great dining in Chinatown, just steps away. Visit hip Granville Island, where artisanal delicacies abound in the Public Market.

### LAGUNA CULINARY ARTS

([www.lagunaculinaryarts.com](http://www.lagunaculinaryarts.com))

After enjoying the crashing waves and upscale galleries of Laguna Beach, visit Laguna Culinary Arts for some California terroir in its many hands-on classes. The Bikini Menu class delivers a California sensibility along with Coconut-Curry Scented Halibut with Charred Corn and Zucchini, or try Light Asian Inspired Fare, including Mandarin Chicken Salad with Toasted Sesame Vinaigrette.

Others classes venture further afield — imagine plying friends with Grilled Pancetta-Wrapped Radicchio Stuffed with Goat Cheese and Crème Catalan after attending the Spanish Paella Party class. Enjoy learning with a sweetheart on weekend "Date Night" classes, where couples create tempting menus like Shrimp Martini followed by Roasted Lamb Chops with Sautéed Fennel and Fresh Raspberry Gratin. When the cooking is done the lights are dimmed for a romantic candlelit dinner, complete with wine pairings. For group entertaining, learn to make pizza on the grill in BBQ Pizza Party. Classes from around the globe tempt hungry travelers, with recipes like Crab and Cheese Empanadas and Moroccan Bricked Chicken.

The shop boasts a carefully curated wine cellar and cheese counter along with equipment. Drop in for daily wine and cheese flights, charcuterie, house-made soups, and handcrafted desserts. Welcome the weekend at the Friday happy hour with wine by the glass and a buffet. Monthly wine tasting and food-oriented tours to classic destinations like Tuscany and Provence round out the temptations of Laguna Culinary Arts.

### THE INSTITUTE OF CULINARY EDUCATION

([www.iceculinary.com](http://www.iceculinary.com))

The Institute of Culinary Education has been teaching Manhattan how to cook since 1975. With 1,500 recreational classes annually plus professional programs in cooking, baking and culinary management, the 14 kitchens hum 355 days a year. The Chelsea institution celebrates its roots with such New York-centric classes as Sunday in Brooklyn: An Italian-American Feast, The Great New York Deli, and New York Style Thin Crust Pizza.

The depth of selection reveals a nuanced appreciation of global cuisine. Consider the popular topic of steakhouse cooking, where five genres are offered: The Great New York Steakhouse, the French, Italian, Texas and South American Steakhouse. Each class focuses on a couple of meaty centerpieces complemented by characteristic side dishes

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like South American Fried Yuca, Texan Jalapeño Cream Corn or Italian Tiramisu.

Classes reflect mainstream American cooking — The Coastal Cooking of Maine and Favorite American Regional Desserts — as well as the glorious melting pot of New York, America’s historic port of arrival for immigrants from all points of the world. The stunning variety ranges from Hong Kong Street Hawker Food to Ancient and Modern Egyptian Delicacies, and far beyond.

Some classes concentrate on a narrow subject for enthusiasts: The Other Side of Beef and The Whole Hog. Others explore cultural themes: Parisian Afternoon Tea, Entertaining from the Brazilian Kitchen, Persian New Year. Even history junkies can delve into Dining in Elizabethan England and Impressive Historic Desserts, in which students produce delicious “towering showpieces.”

“There are a lot of elements that make us unique, like the fact that this is New York City, a food capital for the country,” says Kelly Ann Hargrove, Recreational Program Director. “The amount of talent we have locally really stands out. It’s easy to shine in the area of variety, and to be very current with food trends.”

The Institute of Culinary Education also presents kids’ classes and a fascinating

range of tours, as well as private events starring celebrity chefs.

**COOKSHOP & COOKSCHOOL**

([www.cookshop.ca](http://www.cookshop.ca))

Cookshop & Cookschool in Vancouver, British Columbia, emphasizes a variety of seafood classes echoing its glittering seaside locale. Course titles include West Coast Inspired Seafood, Seafood and Citrus, and Prawn Creations. Ocean Wise, named for a Vancouver Aquarium conservation program, shares recipes such as Oven-Roasted Halibut with Chardonnay and Corn Butter while discussing responsible seafood choices.

Asian classes punctuate the schedule, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of this Pacific Rim metropolis. Wok Around China, The Return of Saigon and Tour Through Asia take students through kitchens of the Far East.

Narrowly focused classes cover subjects like Rhubarb! and Garlic! Classic topics round out the selection, including French dining, Italian food and cake decorating, along with cooking fundamentals such as knife skills and deboning poultry. Classes are divided between demonstration and hands-on.

With an extensive gourmet kitchenware shop and the combined skills of a hundred local experts serving as the teaching staff, Cookshop sends students home with a taste of the vibrant Vancouver culinary scene. **DH**