

Cooking School Vacations for Graduates

Does your recent grad love food but not yet know how to even make toast? We've got a list of places around the world that can teach your scholar in no time—or a longer time—how to feel at home in the kitchen.

BY JOANNE CAMAS

FROM OUR FRIENDS

The Best Dessert You've Never Heard Of
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7 Ina Garten Breakfast Recipes You Should Start Making
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Ina Garten's Pasta Alla Vecchia Bettola
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Clockwise from top left:
 Tuscookany; Comfort
 Foods Boot Camp;
 Deborah Krasner's
 Vermont Culinary
 Vacations; Tuscookany.

Study behind a desk? No way! Your graduate has conquered the world of book learnin'; now it's time to focus on kitchen smarts. We've gathered the cream of culinary school graduates from across the United States and around the world, featuring classes set in a converted Vermont barn, at the foot of the Atlas mountains, and in a luxurious Italian villa. Trips range from compact weekend stays to monthlong cooking adventures, and whatever you choose for them will be an unforgettable—and practical—gift that will find its way back to you on the dinner table.

Comfort Foods Boot Camp

The Culinary Institute of America
 San Antonio

Talk about a home away from home... **The Comfort Foods Boot Camp** will give new graduates all the skills they need to cook classics from their past while adding twists of their own. Mac and cheese, chicken noodle soup, and good old meatloaf are a few of the recipes on the docket, and students will learn tips for choosing the best ingredients and also cooking techniques to produce hearty soups, stews, entrées, and sides. A bonus: Each student receives a chef's jacket, pants, and neckerchief.

- Cost:** \$895 (lodging not included)
- Duration:** Two 6.5-hour classes over two days; offered year-round
- Great For:** Cooks at any level with a hankering for home-style skills

Deborah Krasner's Vermont Culinary Vacations

Putney, Vermont

Local meats, fowl, and seasonal vegetables will star in the meals students cook in these weekend

classes at [Vermont Culinary Vacations](#). With only seven students per class, there's plenty of individual instruction from James Beard Award–winning cookbook author Deborah Krasner. Her 18th-century renovated barn in rural Vermont and a stunning outdoor kitchen provide a get-away-from-it-all backdrop.

Cost: \$1,400, including including housing (private room and shared bathroom)

Duration: Four classes over three days; courses offered in the spring, summer, and fall

Great For: Organic-food lovers seeking a peaceful New England retreat

Padstow Seafood School

Padstow, England

Rick Stein's popular [two-day courses](#) explore the techniques and ingredients used for many of the dishes on the menu at his lauded seafood restaurant. The format is a mix of demonstrations and practical, hands-on cooking, and students gather to share a lunch featuring the dishes they've prepared that morning, along with a glass or two of wine. Once a thriving fishing port, scenic Padstow, on the coast of Cornwall, is now a busy tourist town, and Stein's restaurant is a major draw.

Cost: \$1,251, including two nights' bed and breakfast at the Seafood Restaurant or St. Petroc's Hotel

Duration: Four courses over two days; offered year-round

Great For: Cooks at all levels who adore the fruits of the sea

The Bertinet Kitchen

Bath, England

French chef and baker Richard Bertinet offers three-day hands-on [bread-making classes](#) in his kitchen in the center of historic Bath in England. Over the weekend students learn bread-making basics and how to bake French and Italian breads. The course includes lunch with wine every day, all materials and ingredients, and a signed copy of Richard Bertinet's book, *Crust*.

Cost: \$832 (lodging not included, though there are several [accommodation options](#) nearby).

Duration: Various classes over three days; offered year-round

Great For: Beginning bread makers who want to toast to British history

Yucatan One-Week Culinary Workshop

Los Dos Cooking School

Mérida, Mexico

This [weeklong](#) workshop blends tastings and three practical cooking classes for a tasty vacation package. Students visit local markets and Mayan archaeological sites, meeting local Mayan women who demonstrate how to shape tortillas. Participants also sample the finest regional cuisine, such as *dzotobichay y ibewahes*—special Mayan tamales with a variety of stuffings and a warm tomato sauce—as well as local rums and the unusual Yucatan honey and anise liqueur *xtabentun*.

Cost: \$2,745 (lodging and excursions included)

Duration: Three classes over six days; offered year-round

Great For: Cooking fiends with an interest in Mexico's culture, history, and architecture

Basic Cooking Techniques: Five-Day Cooking Vacation

Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts

Boulder, Colorado

The school's signature five-day **Basic Cooking Techniques** course is perfect for students of all skill levels, from the beginner to the more experienced cook. Students learn knife skills and chopping techniques, sauce-making, how to create simple and complex salads and vinaigrettes, and steps for sautéing, roasting, braising, grilling, and poaching. The five-day Basic Pastry Techniques course teaches ways to make puff pastry, caramelize sugar, bake cakes and tortes, and work with chocolate.

Cost: \$645 (lodging not included)

Duration: Five five-hour classes over five days; offered in summer

Great For: Cooks at any level who want to boost their kitchen confidence

Rhode School of Cuisine

Marrakesh, Morocco

Cooking students at **Rhode School of Cuisine** learn firsthand how many cultures have influenced the cuisine of Morocco while they enjoy hands-on cooking lessons with expert local chefs.

Traditional lamb, fish, and chicken tagines are among the dishes taught, as well as *pastilla* and pastries with almond paste filling. All of this is set against the backdrop of the Atlas and Jbel Ette mountains, in a traditional, serene *riad* with a flower-filled interior courtyard and bubbling fountain.

Cost: \$2,815–\$3,052 per person per week (includes lodging in a luxury palazzo)

Duration: Seven 1.5- to 2-hour classes over seven days; offered in the spring and fall

Great For: Travelers seeking souk shopping and camel riding in addition to culinary instruction

Homestay & Study

Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School

Chiang Mai, Thailand

At this five-day program at **Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School**, Thai chef Sompon Nabnian show his students how to prepare yellow curry with chicken, steamed fish in banana leaves, chicken with cashew nuts, and fried big noodles with sweet soy sauce. Grinding custom blends of spices with a mortar and pestle is key to creating authentic Thai flavors, and Chef Nabnian lets students master this and then taste the results in a gourmet meal he cooks for them one night. Guess who won't be ordering takeout from their local Thai place when they get home?

Cost: \$697 (single occupancy)–\$956 (double)

Duration: 10 classes over five days; offered year-round

Great For: Newbies to Thai cooking who want the full cultural experience

Cooking Camp

Tante Marie's Cooking School

San Francisco

This intense one-week course at [Tante Marie's Cooking School](#) will give students the confidence and basic skills to cook. On the first day, experienced chef Malcolm Jessop demonstrates knife skills—learn to fillet fish, cut up chickens, and basic butchery. Day 2 covers grilling, sautéing, and braising; students tackle sauces on day 3, followed by vegetables and grains on day 4. The fifth day may well be the most popular—you enjoy a picnic in wine country with some of the foods prepared during the week. Oh, and a wine tasting, of course!

Cost: \$950 (lodging not included)

Duration: Five five-hour classes over five days; offered in the spring, summer, and fall

Great For: Cooks seeking a condensed version of the culinary-school experience—with wine!

Tuscookany

Poppi or Chiaveretto, Italy

Four half-day cooking classes at [Tuscookany](#), a full-day culinary excursion, plus all meals, Tuscan wines during dinner, and lodging in one of two stunning Tuscan villas. Sounds like the recipe for a wonderful trip! Students learn to make gnocchi, along with pizza dough that will be cooked in the wood-fired oven. Creative dishes on the lesson plan might include wild boar with polenta, tagliata with green pepper sauce and baked vegetables, panna cotta, and warm lemon pie with Italian meringue.

Cost: \$3,100 (double per person)—\$3,400 (single)

Duration: Four classes over seven days; offered in the spring, summer, and fall

Great For: Lovers of Italian cuisine, from kitchen rookies to experienced chefs

Cooking with Giuliano Hazan

Verona, Italy

[Giuliano Hazan](#) leads small hands-on cooking classes where students learn how to make homemade pasta and prepare risotto, meats, local fish, vegetables, and desserts. After class, you can enjoy a dinner based on the style of the class that day, then retire to your room in the luxurious Villa Giona. Vineyard owner Marilisa Allegrini gives a seminar on the major wine-producing regions of Italy—and the wines discussed accompany the meals. Field trips and restaurant meals are also included, providing a delicious taste of local cuisine.

Costs: \$4,695 (double per person)—\$4,795 (single)

Duration: Four five-hour classes over seven days; offered in June and September

Great For: Italian-food fans seeking a luxury vacation experience

Gourmet Program

Gastronomicom International Culinary Academy

Cap d'Agde, France

Students who participate in the [Gourmet Program at the Gastronomicom Institute](#) attend four weeks of cooking and French classes, with weekends off for traveling and sightseeing. You can choose cooking, pastry, or wine as your "major" —and practice what you learned right away: Students stay in four-person apartments with a fully equipped kitchen and a terrace for alfresco dining. All of the Academy's teachers are food and wine professionals who have worked for many years in high-end restaurants, and they share their knowledge with students from beginners all the way up to the chefs who want to master French cooking at a one-Michelin-star level.

Cost: \$3,660 (includes lodging only and lessons)

Duration: 30 hours of classes a week over four weeks; offered in fall, winter, and spring

Great For: Kitchen mavens who want to boost their knowledge of *la langue et la cuisine française*

Mente Argentina's Cooking School

Buenos Aires

At [Mente Argentina](#), students attend both small-scale group and private classes (taught by Argentine chefs) to learn recipes from several regions of Argentina, from empanadas to classic South American barbecue. The private classes are tailored to the interests and skill level of each student—can you think of a better way to get the flavor of Argentine food? Fresh, high-quality ingredients—especially the famed local beef—make all the meals delicious, and students can also take intensive Spanish lessons through the school to enhance the experience. Classes are taught in Spanish/English.

Cost: \$1,590 (including lodging in student residence)

Duration: Three 2.5-hour classes a week over four weeks; offered year-round

Great For: Cooks looking to immerse themselves in Argentinean food and culture

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