
Getting the Most Out of a Short Culinary Program

Watching the afternoon cooking shows on PBS, sometimes being a chef seems like an ideal job. But turn the TV to Hell's Kitchen, or even better, talk to a real chef, and you see it's a profession like others — with some joys and some drudgeries alike. But more and more people are sharpening their cuisine skills without necessarily changing career — by enrolling in a short culinary program.

Close to Home

This is a great option for people who live close to a city or town with a deluxe kitchen supply shop. Many shops, to promote fine cooking in general, install a gourmet kitchen on site and give cooking lessons.

It is no mere product demonstration, though. The best places bring in local chefs and fresh ingredients to create a special meal. A culinary program at a shop like this may be as short as one afternoon, or as long as a series of dates over weeks or months. They are best for people who have other jobs and responsibilities but would like to spend some serious time to improve their cooking.

A short culinary program at a shop is also the least expensive way to get training from a professional chef. Attending one lesson costs about \$50 and up per hour. But savvy home chefs know that this is usually negotiable. Offer to volunteer as the dish washer or vegetable chopper for one session, and not only will you get that lesson free, but also most places will give you credit towards another culinary lesson. Check the phone book or the internet for cooking supply stores, and stop by to check out their facilities and get on their culinary program mailing list.

More Intense

So you're already a great entertainer and home chef, but maybe it is time to learn new techniques, study all those French words used in haute cuisine, and see how professionals plan things from start to finish. Go to school where the chefs do — at a professional culinary arts training school. Many schools offer two to five week intensive courses for amateurs on their campuses.

A culinary program like this requires some foreknowledge of kitchen technique. Teachers from the school will guide you through setting up your menu, planning your cooking time, and making all the dishes five-star. It is a good way for you to get experience and for students of the academy to practice teaching what they know to newbies.