



## About Chef Eric



Chef Eric Jacques Crowley is a seasoned, professional chef and the founder, owner and chef instructor at his dynamic cooking school, Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom, where he has shaped the careers of many professional chefs. He graduated with honors from the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. After traveling abroad to master European cooking techniques, Chef Eric returned to the United States and landed a prominent position at Patina Catering, of the renowned Patina Restaurant Group. With his experience and training, and his innate passion for cooking, Chef Eric sought to help others develop their cooking skills and gain confidence through the culinary arts. This led Chef Eric to open the Culinary Classroom in 2003, as a place where people with all levels of culinary experience could hone impressive and valuable culinary skills. Chef Eric and the Culinary Classroom have been featured in, and on, major media outlets that include E! Entertainment, KCAL 9 Los Angeles, KTLA 5 Los Angeles, NBC Channel 4 Los Angeles, Good Day LA, BET, Los Angeles Business Journal and many others.

Additionally, Chef Eric is a judge and scholarship sponsor for the Careers through Culinary Arts Program (C-CAP) in the Los Angeles Unified School District, and he mentors children from high school into their professional careers. He is also a mentor for the Culinary Institute of America (CIA); supporting interns and his professional students, by training and preparing them, and personally guiding them so they can meet the requirements to attend the CIA.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Chef Eric was exposed to an eclectic variety of foods and cultures. His palate and cooking skills were also greatly influenced by his mother, who was a gourmet cook. As he grew older, Chef Eric discovered a true passion for music and became a dedicated member of his high school band, as the lead saxophonist. Interested in furthering his talent, he enrolled in Cal State Northridge working towards a degree in music, continuing to play the saxophone in the junior band. With the dreary prospects of a low-paying future as a musician, Chef Eric left Cal State Northridge and entered the work force, first as a bill collector, and then as a paralegal assistant at a law firm. Despite his stable position at the law firm, Chef Eric felt that he wasn't living his dream.

At the age of 27, he began experimenting in the kitchen with a hand-written cookbook from his mother. As his passion and joy for cooking grew, he attended a cooking class, where his ambition and eagerness led to the development of a mentorship with the teacher and a new part-time job in a restaurant. After researching various programs and connecting with alumni, Chef Eric decided to fully invest in his bright future as a chef and was accepted into the esteemed Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He completed the rigorous and rewarding degree program, graduating with honors. In search of greater technical advancement, Chef Eric traveled abroad to train and work with Chef José Munisa at Via Veneto, Barcelona's longest-running 5-star restaurant, as well as with Chef Joseph Russwurm at Munich's Hotel Kempinski, another 5-star establishment.



Chef Eric returned to the United States and accepted a respected position at Patina Catering, of the distinguished Patina Restaurant Group, where he prepared food for A-list celebrities and for award shows that included the Primetime Emmy Awards Governors Ball. He has supervised corporate and personal events ranging in size from an intimate four-person lunch or dinner, to a boisterous crowd of 2,000 for lunch, dinner or appetizers. He has cooked meals for presidential candidates, vice presidents, show business executives, celebrities and numerous personal clients. During this time in his career, Chef Eric maintained a busy schedule of catering events and high-profile cooking demonstrations.



Chef Eric cooking crepes with Sandra Mitchell on the KCAL 9 News at Noon.

In addition, Chef Eric began teaching professional chef programs at Los Angeles' first private culinary school, The Epicurean School of Culinary Arts, which has since closed. When he decided to start his own culinary school, his partner and wife Jennie drew upon her extensive background in business administration, marketing and customer service to help him launch and grow Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom.

In 2003, Chef Eric officially opened his Culinary Classroom, as a place where aspiring cooks, chefs, bakers, and pastry chefs of all skill levels could find challenging and rewarding classes to suit their needs and elevate their own love of cooking and baking. Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom offers a wide range of recreational and professional classes, with a calendar that is constantly updated to reflect current gastronomic trends and the needs of its customers. With an emphasis on hands-on learning in an intimate environment, Chef Eric takes great pride in patiently focusing on each of his students to motivate them to reach their goals and develop superb culinary skills. His humble attitude and ability to intently listen and provide encouraging feedback, promotes a cohesive and productive learning environment. Chef Eric's students include successful restaurant owners, professional chefs, caterers, personal chefs, home chefs, beginning cooks and children.

In an effort to give back to the community and further promote the culinary arts, Chef Eric is highly involved with several charities and programs, donating thousands of dollars of cooking classes and scholarships to children in need. Over the years, Chef Eric has become devoted to CoachArt, a program that does incredible work helping children with life-threatening illnesses, to improve their lives through art. "We host some of the children at the Culinary Classroom to get them out of the doldrums of going through treatment and having to stay in the hospital, and have them come cook and dine with us. The children inspire us every day with their courage," says Chef Eric, who teaches Children's Culinary Academies at his school in the summer.

Chef Eric continues to reside in Southern California, with his wife and business partner Jennie Crowley. In his spare time, he enjoys do-it-yourself home projects, the thrill of attending Grand Prix motor races, listening to jazz, and cooking, using the herbs he grows in his garden.



“People can derive a great deal from the art of cooking. The ultimate reward for me is seeing the sense of confidence and pure joy that my students experience when they master the life skill of cooking through my instruction, and to help other chefs follow in my footsteps and create their own businesses and careers,” exclaims Chef Eric.

For more information, visit [www.culinaryclassroom.com](http://www.culinaryclassroom.com)

**In media interviews, Chef Eric can demonstrate and discuss:**

- How to make a romantic date night dinner with oven-roasted salmon with herb vinaigrette, brown rice pilaf with stir-fried asparagus and mushrooms, molten chocolate cake;
- One simple recipe that every child will love: deep-dish French toast;
- A healthy recipe, good for any level of cooking, seared scallops with garlic and citrus zest;
- A vegan dish that vegetable haters will love: grilled Portobello mushroom with pesto and roasted red bell pepper;
- Five items every cook should own;
- Five ingredients every cook should have in their kitchen;
- One common herb to include in your shopping basket;
- One sauce everyone should know how to make, romesco sauce;
- Delicious seasonal dishes;
- And more!



# KTLA 5



Pictured: Chef Eric on the KTLA 5 Morning News, demonstrating techniques for cooking delicious Super Bowl snacks with News Anchors Jessica Holmes, Sam Rubin, and Frank Buckley.





Pictured: Chef Eric on the KCAL 9 News at Noon in December 2013, demonstrating how to make banana and rum crepes with chocolate drizzle with News Anchor Sandra Mitchell.



## // SEASONAL HOLIDAY MENU STRATEGIES

WITH CHEF ERIC CROWLEY

### New York Holiday Menu Items

There's a winter chill in the air and, for some, snowflakes are beginning to fall, indicating that time of year where you begin to wonder about, and decide, what to serve your guests this holiday season. Chef Eric Jacques Crowley, a professional chef who owns his very own Culinary Classroom in West Los Angeles, has recipes fit for your Holiday dinner and New Year's Day brunch. You're sure to delight your guests with these delicious dishes.

#### Rosemary and Oregano-Spiced Lamb Loin Chops with Herb-Roasted Cherry Tomatoes



##### Ingredients

- Lamb Loin Chops or Rib Chops - 8 each
- Vegetable Oil - 2 Tablespoons
- Cherry tomatoes, halved - 16 each
- Garlic Cloves, crushed - 3-4
- Juniper Berries, crushed - 4 each
- Oregano, chopped - 2 teaspoons
- Rosemary, chopped - 2 teaspoons
- Salt and Pepper
- Aluminum foil

##### Method

1. Preheat an oven to 325 degrees. While the oven is getting hot,



*Chef Eric Jacques Crowley is an experienced, professional chef and the founder, owner, and chief instructor at Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom in West Los Angeles.*

2. hot. Season the lamb with salt and pepper. Brown the chops on both sides.
2. Remove the lamb and place two chops each on a large piece of aluminum foil. Add the tomatoes, garlic and herbs. Season with salt and pepper. Fold up the foil to make four tightly sealed

packages. Transfer the packages to a baking sheet.

3. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until the meat is medium rare.
4. Carefully open the packages and serve with juices over fresh pasta.

#### Marjolaine Almond Cake with Espresso Cream Filling



##### Ingredients

- Cake flour - 12 Tablespoons
- Eggs, whole - 4 each
- Eggs, separated - 4 each
- Egg yolks - 2 each
- Sugar - 8 ounces

##### Method

1. Place the almond flour in a sauté pan and heat over low heat, stirring frequently, until the flour be-

comes dry and an almond aroma becomes apparent. Remove the almond flour from the heat and let cool. Add to the cake flour and mix to combine. Set aside.

2. In a Kitchen Aid mixing bowl, whip 4 whole eggs and 6 yolks until they start to thicken. Gradually add 6 ounces of sugar and continue to whip until the mixture triples in volume. Fold in the flour mixture and refrigerate.
3. Preheat an oven to 350 degrees. In a clean bowl, whip four egg whites with the remaining 2 ounces of sugar until soft peaks form. Gently fold the whites into the cake batter.
4. Spread the batter on a parchment lined sheet pan. Bake the cake until golden brown, about 20 minutes.

#### Espresso Cream Frosting

##### Ingredients

- Cream, very cold - 1 pint
- Cocoa, Dutch process - 3 Tablespoons
- Instant espresso - 1 Tablespoon
- Vanilla - 1 teaspoon
- Superfine sugar - 1/4 cup

##### Method

1. Refrigerate a whip and bowl for at least 15 minutes.
2. Add the cream to the bowl, along with the cocoa and espresso, and whip together until it reaches a spreadable consistency.
3. Frost and refrigerate the Marjolaine Cake.

Get the full menu with more in-depth recipes at [www.totalfood.com](http://www.totalfood.com)





Thursday, August 15, 2013

## Culinary Adventures in California

### Learning to Cook with Chef Eric, L.A.'s Top Culinary Educator

Most people who know me know that cooking is not my strong suit. It's probably the reason I love dining out so much, especially at places (think the French Laundry in Yountville, CA) who serve complicated dishes that there is no way I would ever even consider tackling. One look at Thomas Keller's "The French Laundry Cookbook" was enough to send me running – most of those dishes are incredibly complicated and take hours and hours to prepare!

So when I was invited to try out [Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom](#) here in Los Angeles, I entered his Westside school (located just off Pico near Overland, at 2366 Pelham Avenue) with a bit of trepidation. I mean, I can chop up just about anything, making ceviche or salads like a pro (or so I thought), but beyond that, I am a bit shaky. Our evening session was Chef Eric Crowley's Wine and Food Pairing Class (\$90 per person), with the group making this menu:



Chef Eric Crowley

Eggplant Fritters and Zucchini Fritters

Fennel-Dusted Pan-Seared Scallops with Grilled Mushrooms and Balsamic Vinegar Reduction

Homemade Pasta with Tomato and Kalamata Olive Tapenade Sauce

Sauteed Chicken Breast with Sunchoke, Garlic, Capers, Sundried Tomatoes and White Wine

Braised Lamb Stew with Wild Mushrooms, Garlic, Thyme, Parsley and Red Wine Vinegar

Homemade Tiramisu



The seared scallops we made were delicious!

The company also offers a Master Chef 18-week course; a Master Baker 10-week course; a Culinary Basics 4-week course; and numerous single classes that cover all sorts of culinary topics, ranging from Chicken Connoisseur to Sushi Making.



As we strapped on our aprons (which we got to keep), draped a kitchen towel over a shoulder and entered the kitchen, we found a number of food-preparation stations set up. Chef Eric explained all the elements of the menu and what order we would prepare everything, so that we'd learn one of the key things about cooking – how to bring all the dishes to the table at the same time!

And it was here, early on in the 2.5-hour class, that I learned that I am actually *not* a good chopper. My one claim to cooking fame was dashed in an instant, as Chef Eric demonstrated the correct way to use a knife. "Keep the point of the knife on the cutting board," he explained, "then always slice away from your body."

Well, duh! Makes perfect sense, doesn't it? But that's not the way I have spent my whole life chopping things up; it's a miracle that I haven't sliced myself open in the process at least once. It takes a bit of practice to change something you've done your whole life, but that's the key thing I took away from this particular culinary adventure.

Along the way, we also learned how to make a perfectly fried fritter; the art of delicately searing scallops; and how to use a machine to create delicious homemade pasta. Who knew you just mixed up flour, salt and eggs, kneaded it for a while to create a dough, then ran it through a pasta machine? It's easy to feel like an Italian capo when Chef Eric is there to give lessons! It actually made me want to hit a Williams-Sonoma for a machine of my own.

All along, Chef Eric and his partner (and wife) Jennie Crowley kept the class interested and engaged, with each person choosing what level of involvement he/she wanted to experience. Some (like me) stuck with the prepping, while others (like my brother Jeff Peters) stepped right up to the massive industrial gas stove and did the actual cooking. And best of all, the class culminated in all the dishes arriving at the table at exactly the right moment, so we could all enjoy a feast of our own making.

Did Chef Eric make me into a fanatic cook? Not quite. I'm still a restaurant maven, preferring to let others do the serious cooking for me. But ever since, as I chop up all the veggies for my work-at-home regular lunch of a big salad, I know better than to cut toward my body. Worth the price of admission, that.



Look, Mom, I am making pasta!!



The feast we created with the help of Chef Eric (right), all ready for the table at the same time.

Posted by Jet Set Jen at 11:21 AM





# Chef Eric's GULINARY CLASSROOM



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## Valley Scene MAGAZINE

### CULINARY CONNECTION

## Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom An adventure in the fun side of food

By Mel and Ronnie Greenberg

Throw in the tastes, aromas and beauty of delicious dishes and you have a fantastic experience waiting just for you at Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom.

Charismatic and personable, seasoned professional chef Eric Jacques Crowley, stars as the founder, owner and chef instructor in his dynamic cooking school.

After graduating with honors from the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, Chef Eric traveled abroad to master European cooking techniques. Here he worked under Chef Jose Munisa at Via Veneto, Barcelona's longest running 5 star restaurant, as well as under Chef Joseph Russwurm at Munich's Hotel Kempinski, another 5 star establishment. On his return to the United States, he landed a prominent position at Patina Catering of the renowned Patina Restaurant Group.

With his experience, training and innate passion for cooking Chef Eric sought to help others develop their cooking skills and gain confidence through the culinary arts. This led him to open the Culinary Classroom in 2003, as a place where people of all levels of culinary experience could hone impressive and valuable culinary skills. "People can derive a great deal from the art of cooking. The ultimate reward for me is seeing the sense of confidence and pure joy that my students

experience when they master the life skill of cooking through my instructions, and to help other chefs following my footsteps and create their own businesses and careers," exclaims Chef Eric.

Choose your gastronomic journey along with Chef Eric in a professionally designed kitchen furnished with the latest in upscale equipment.

#### Culinary Programs Master Chef Certification Program

Where classical French techniques are used with variations for today's culinary trends. Knife skills/intro to the kitchen, stocks, grand sauces, soups, breakfast and egg cookery, vegetable cookery and much more including wine and food instructor menus and paring and presentation that are key components of this series (18 weeks).

#### Master Baking/Pastry Certification Program

This course centers on fundamental baking skills necessary for any pastry chef in a comprehensive program. Breads, yeast breads, pies and tarts, cakes and tortes, soufflés, puff pastry, dessert sauces, custards, ice cream and sorbet and plated desserts (10 weeks).

#### Culinary Basics

Beginner's Series is designed for the novice cook with little or no culinary experience. Recipes focus on easy to prepare meals and basic

cooking (4 weeks).

#### Healthy Cooking series -

Has an emphasis placed on whole grains and the use of healthy cooking oils (4 weeks). Vegan/Vegetarian Series aims at taking the mystery and fear out of vegan and vegetarian meals. Learn the easy ways to roast, sauté, grill and bake delicious recipes (4 weeks). There is also a variety of 2.5 hour classes, all with a limit of 12 students per class with all hands-on participation. Classes are constantly updated to reflect current gastronomic trends.

In addition for Kids' summer fun there are summer cooking and baking camps for ages 7-15 with a variety of chef students of all ages in these classes and paired with chef students in their own age group. There will be baking and pastry camp; culinary academy with different kitchen activities each day; culinary academy 2- for children a little older; and culinary 4 with some new delicious dishes, fantastic grilling recipes and International cuisine exploration, as well as incorporating baking and desserts. Call or check the website for days and times.

There are Private Parties for a hands-on Cooking Celebration at the Culinary Classroom for groups from 10 to 16 people. Book a date and bring your friends. Eric and his lovely wife and partner Jennie and his staff design the menu, shop and most importantly, clean up. Be a guest at your own party and give everyone a night to remember.

Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom is located at 2366 Pelham Avenue in Los Angeles. Phone (310) 470-2640.

Register on-line 24 hours a day at [www.culinaryclassroom.com/register](http://www.culinaryclassroom.com/register)

Sign up for their newsletter and you'll receive class listings and seasonal recipes; Gift Certificates perfect for all occasions are also available at [www.culinaryclassroom.com](http://www.culinaryclassroom.com)

Parking: Metered street parking is available for 2 hours, near the Culinary Classroom. There are also 2 public parking lots located at the

intersections of Overland Boulevard and Pico Boulevard, and Pamell Avenue and Pico Boulevard. These lots are open to the public \$4.00/hr

**NEW!!**

**Low-Sodium, Oil-Free  
No Sugar Added  
Lifestyle Menu**

\*Sodium and sugar occur naturally in vegetables

**Pasta**  
Low-Carb, Low-Calorie Shirataki Tofu Spaghetti or Fettuccine Noodles with our low-sodium marinara sauce..... 9.95  
Per serving: Sodium 65mg, Sugar 5g  
Choice of Spaghetti, Fettuccine, Rotelli, Penne or Gluten-Free Penne with our low-sodium marinara sauce..... 9.95  
Per serving: Sodium 45mg, Sugar 7g  
Baked eggPlant UnParmigiana  
Slices of eggplant baked with a savory gluten-free crust and smothered with our low-sodium marinara sauce..... 10.95  
Per serving: Sodium 40mg, Sugar 10g

**Pizza**  
8" delicious gluten-free herb crust, low-sodium pizza sauce and your choice of no cheese, 1oz. of vegan cheese (Follow Your Heart or Daiya), or 1oz. of mozzarella cheese..... 8.95  
Additional toppings available @ .50 each  
Per pizza: Sodium 336mg, Sugar 8g  
Vegetable/Marinara Platter  
Generous platter of steamed broccoli, carrots and cauliflower smothered with our low-sodium marinara sauce..... 7.95  
Per serving: Sodium 109mg, Sugar 10g

**salads**  
Choice of romaine lettuce, spinach, spring mix or baby kale with shredded carrots, garbanzo beans (salt-free), onions, tomatoes and mushrooms. Served with your choice of our homemade salt-free, sugar-free and oil-free dressings. (Balsamic Vinaigrette, Italian, or Tahina Dill)..... 8.95

**Side Orders**  
Grilled chicken breast with Benson's Table Tasty..... 4.95  
Marinated baked tofu (salt-free)..... 4.95

**desserts**  
Ask your server about our low-sodium, sugar-free, and oil-free options..... 4.75  
Complete nutritional info available upon request.  
We also have a full vegan and gluten-free menu

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July 12 - 25, 2013



## 5 Things I Learned at a One-Night Cooking Class: Wine & Food Pairing with Chef Eric



Chef Eric and an apprentice with all the food we cooked: scallops, homemade pasta, lamb stew and sauteed chicken.

Ever thought of trying to take your sketchy home cooking skills to a new level? I've been looking into cooking schools lately, particularly those with semi-pro courses. It turns out that at the moment there are really only two places that offer a semi-pro course: the New School of Cooking in Culver City and [Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom](#) in West L.A.

Several years ago, I took **Thai Street Food** with Jet Tila at the **New School**, but when I was offered a trial class at **Chef Eric's**, I thought it would be a great way to get a taste of what the school has to offer. In fact, not just a taste, but a full meal. Chef Eric invited some food writers to try his **Wine and Food Pairing** class, which includes quite a few dishes: zucchini eggplant fritters to start, seared scallops with wild mushrooms, homemade pasta with tomato and kalamata olive tapenade sauce; sauteed chicken breasts with sunchoke and sundried tomatoes; lamb stew with wild mushrooms and tiramisu for dessert. In addition we tasted several nice wines when we were done cooking everything.

It's been several years since I've taken a cooking class, and I'm a decent home cook, but even at a one-night class you always learn a handy tip or two. For example, Chef Tila taught me a quick way to peel ginger (with the back of the knife) that I still remember. Here's a few things I learned from the class:

1. Lots of restaurant/travel writers don't actually cook much, they're too busy travelling. So like in other classes, the ability levels of your classmates will vary greatly. Take advantage of the teacher and assistants





to make sure your technique is correct even if you think you know how to chop vegetables, for example. It turns out I didn't really know how to do it right (hint: it's a rocking motion).

2. Need to peel a bunch of cloves of garlic quickly? Put the separated cloves in two bowls and shake vigorously. Voila, most of the peels will fall away, leaving naked cloves to be chopped.

3. In most one-night cooking classes, the entire class will end up with at least five dishes, but you will likely be assigned to a team that will only make one dish from start to finish. This seems to be the main complaint about cooking classes on Yelp -- people think it's actually possible to teach a dozen or so people how to make five dishes, have everyone make them all from scratch and eat them in three hours. That's not possible, thus the team method. I

was assigned to sauteed chicken breasts, but wandering around, I also got a turn cranking the pasta machine and chopping the wild mushrooms.



Chef Eric demonstrates a garlic peeling method

4. Cooking classes are also a chance to taste something you wouldn't normally order. Lamb is not my favorite, but the lamb stew was delicious. Chef Eric uses excellent ingredients like scallops from Santa Monica Seafood and wild chanterelles, which makes a big difference in flavor.

5. Pay attention to when the class is when deciding what to take. I'm glad I took the sample class on a weeknight after work, because I realize now there's no way I would have the energy to do the 18-week Master Chef program on weeknights. Fortunately, if I ever decide to do it, it's also available on weekends.

Which program to choose? Both schools are a bit far for me, and both semi-pro series are around \$2500, so it will probably have to wait for a while. I liked the spacious facilities at **New School of Cooking**, though I'm not familiar with the teachers.

**Chef Eric Crowley** is a Patina Catering vet who graduated from the CIA, and he had an easy, friendly manner with students. But the kitchen is quite compact although it's very efficiently set up. Try **Chef Eric's** Culinary Classroom for an evening or weekend class to learn anything from knife skills to sushi making or healthy cooking. There's also a four week culinary basics series, for the true beginners, and kid's classes, so you can make those little buggers learn to make *you* dinner.

#### [Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom](#)

2366 Pelham Ave.  
L.A. 90064  
323-470-2640





**california**  
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## Mingling Amid the Garlic Cloves

By: Shelley Levitt



Last week, along with other members of the press, I took part in a cooking and wine-pairing class at [Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom](#) in west L.A. Eric Jacques Crowley is a graduate of the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, who apprenticed at some of the most acclaimed restaurants in Europe before going on to supervising event catering for the Patina Restaurant Group. He's been teaching both professional and recreational cooking since 1999 and he's a gifted and very patient teacher. With constant encouragement of "great job" and "that looks terrific," he makes his students feel they're ready to apply for the job of sous chef at Spago, even if all they've done is chop a few mushrooms or sear a couple of scallops.

Those are pretty much the chores I took on during the three-hour class and dinner. The menu included eggplant and zucchini fritters, fennel-dusted pan-seared scallops with grilled wild mushrooms, homemade pasta with tomato and olive tapenade sauce, a braised lamb stew and sautéed chicken breasts with sunchokes.



There were ten of us amateurs sharing kitchen duties, along with Chef Eric's very talented staff. By the time we sat down to enjoy our repast, we had all gotten to know each other a bit and learned a few tricks along the way. My favorite: to peel a large quantity of garlic (for, say, chicken with 40 cloves of garlic), simply remove the outer tissue from a head or two (you can do this by smashing the clove against a work surface). Grab two metal bowls. Place the garlic heads in one, invert the other to form a lid, and shake the bowls up and down like crazy for 15 seconds or so. (You can also use a sealed Tupperware container in place of the bowls.) Uncover the bowl and-voila-perfectly peeled garlic cloves.



Chef Eric teaches dozens of team-building cooking classes every year for clients like American Express, Honda, IBM, MTV and Merrill Lynch. The classes can be completely customized, with gluten-free or vegan menus, Iron Chef type competitions or lessons in preparing hors d'oeuvres with an emphasis on pouring wine. I can attest it's a delicious way to mingle with colleagues old and new.



# LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL®

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 28, 2005

## SMALL BUSINESS



Partners: Eric Crowley was so busy teaching that fiancée Jennie Shields joined the business to be near him.

### Chef's Choice

Eric Crowley, founder of Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom, is building a business catering to a growing interest in food preparation

By DAVID GREENBERG

Staff Reporter

**C**OOKING is hot, and the competition to teach everyone from would-be pros to stay-at-home chefs is getting intense.

The region's biggest cooking school, Pasadena's California School of Culinary Arts, is branching out to open a Kitchen Academy in Hollywood, and national kitchenware retailer Sur La Table offers classes at its L.A. and Santa Monica stores.

Into this fire has jumped Eric Crowley, a 41-year-old former bill collector whose love of food led him to the stove. A two-year stint as a prep cook at well-regarded Reed's Restaurant in Manhattan Beach got him into the prestigious Culinary Institute of America, and having paid his dues in others' kitchens upon graduating, he has shifted to teaching by opening **Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom**.

Classroom cooking, he said, "is instant gratification. You take a raw product and transform it into something that appeals to the eye and (can) satiate you too."

The question is whether it also pencils out. Since Crowley teaches "hands on" courses, in which students actually prepare dishes rather than just watch an instructor demonstrate technique, classes are capped at about a dozen students. Tuition runs anywhere from \$75 for limited three-hour workshops on

how to prepare a specific ingredient, meal or cooking technique – workshops cover, for example, Italian and Spanish cuisine, brunches and knife skills – to a 10-week advanced course at \$1,000. He doesn't offer a degree, which can cost as much as \$40,000 at an accredited two-year school.

The business has reached the point where Crowley, who works seven days a week, is considering another instructor. He currently does all the teaching and uses his part-time help to buy the food, help students locate the correct utensils and clean up after classes are over.

Crowley's costs run about \$100,000, including rent, food and equipment, some of which needs to be replaced periodically (food processors and blenders tend to break). Crowley gets his produce from distributors serving the restaurant and hotel trade.

Housed in a 1,000-square-foot building off Pico Boulevard just west of Century City, Chef Eric's took space formerly occupied by a vegan bakery. He estimates that about a third of his students are on a culinary career path, but wants that number to more than double within a couple of years.

"This was a complete life-changing, career-changing step," said Stephanie Goldfarb, a Chef Eric's graduate who has gone from working for a health club chain to becoming a private chef. "It was all about discovery. Cooking is one of those skills where you are always learning."

For now, the clientele is made up largely of amateur enthu-

### PROFILE

#### Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom

**Year Founded:** 2003

**Core Business:** Cooking classes

**Revenues in 2003:** \$36,000

**Revenues in 2004:** \$140,000

**Employees in 2003:** 4 part-time

**Employees in 2004:** 7 part-time

**Goal:** To increase the ratio of career-minded students to 70 percent, from the current 33 percent, within two years

**Driving Force:** Students who want inexpensive courses before deciding to pursue a career in the hospitality industry

siasts merely wanting to perfect their techniques for making a béchamel sauce or de-boning a chicken. Students range in age from 17 to 60.

#### TV exposure

The culinary teaching industry has exploded in the last decade, due in part to the exposure of cooking on the Food Network, as well as the focus on food preparation on popular shows such as Bravo's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy."

ShawGuides, a trade publication to the hospitality industry, lists 56 career cooking schools and 85 recreational cooking schools in California. That's up from 27 career schools and 45 recreational schools in 1995.

"Chefs have become celebrities," said Dorlene Kaplan, editor of ShawGuides. "It used to be just the person in the kitchen making the food, but now people go to the restaurant to see the chef making food. A lot of people see this as a prestigious career that isn't academic."

Sur La Table's 22 schools nationwide specialize in single-day classes, many of which are the demonstration variety hosted by traveling chefs and cookbook authors.

The chain's classes are not targeted to aspiring professionals, one of Chef Eric's aims, and serve as a way to bring in traffic for the core business of selling kitchenwares. "These cooking schools are not just a place of education," said Robert Danhi, chef and instructor at Sur La Table's L.A. school and Crowley's mentor at Reed's Restaurant. "It's a social activity."

Crowley has been joined by his fiancée, Jennie Shields, who left her job as an office administrator at an investment banking firm to oversee marketing and on-site cooking parties for corporate clients.

She doesn't know how to cook. "I had to quit my job so I could see him," said Shields. "If I want to see him, I have to work 15 hours a day with him."

Crowley got his first taste of teaching in 1999 when he landed a part-time gig at the Epicurean School of Culinary Arts in West Hollywood. To supplement his income, he also worked as a chef for the Patina Group, catering parties.

He figures his chances of success with a small cooking school are somewhat better than that of opening a restaurant, which is considered one of the riskiest small business ventures. "The only way I could fantasize about (a restaurant) is if I won the lottery," he said. "And now that I've opened this place, even if I won the lottery, I still wouldn't open a restaurant."

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## Valley Scene Magazine

### **Cooking Camps for Kids**

By Barbara Layman

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Whether your child craves to be the next Emeril or is searching to make friends and gain fun new skills, a cooking camp can definitely meet those needs. Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom, a hands-on series of cooking classes, is just one of many offered. Though Chef Eric teaches adults as well, his Children's Culinary Academies are specifically designed for kids ages 7-10 and 11-15.

If the word "academy" sounds intimidating, it need not be. There are absolutely no prerequisites, just a willingness to learn and most importantly, a fun attitude. And though some students might feel shy about learning from a culinary master, Chef Eric's welcoming personality is as inviting as his kitchen credentials are impressive.

Having graduated with honors at the Culinary Institute of America before going on to study with some of the most esteemed chefs in Europe, Chef Eric's exemplary experience has led him to create meals for everyone from celebrities to political figures.

But in his classroom, Chef Eric comes across as just a regular guy who knows how to cook which quickly puts his students at ease. In fact, an important aspect of his class is to help kids discover the adventure of cooking and how fun and rewarding it can be. Chef Eric admits the best parts about teaching kids is, "their honesty and also their innocence." For clarification during the lecture portion of class, Chef Eric will demonstrate the technique he's describing, ending with, "like so." He smiles recalling being teased by some former young students in which they, "gave the course back to me," complete with "like so." He laughs adding, "It's a very informal setting."

Each academy session is three hours a day over five consecutive days and the academies start in June and run through August to complement the school year. The \$250 tuition covers food shopping (which Chef Eric does ahead of time), equipment (including plates and utensils), a chef's hat for kids to color and wear during class, recipes to keep, and a specially designed Certificate of Completion. Plus, a class picture is taken with Chef Eric and emailed to participants for easy sharing with family and friends. When it's time to eat their creations, students sit down together and are encouraged to continue their creative expression with crayons and butcher paper supplied on the table. The classes are small, only twelve to fourteen kids, which allows for a lot of hands-on practice and attention.

In the Children's Culinary Academy I, for 7-10 year-olds, Chef Eric begins with a short lecture on the recipe and preparation and then it's time to pair off and cook. Students work together to make simple meals that range from pizza to stuffed French toast to healthy snacks. They even learn how to "plate" or present the food in the most appealing ways. As Chef Eric says, "you eat it with your eyes before you eat it with your mouth." Throughout class, Chef Eric and his assistants carefully watch over each child, ready to answer questions and help as much or as little as needed. In the Children's Culinary Academy II classes, for kids 11-15, the recipes are more complex and require additional ingredients to challenge older kids' levels of understanding.

Along with the lifelong culinary skills they acquire, Chef Eric has observed that his students also, "Make new friends, subconsciously learn politeness, being able to work with others and adhering to rules...and have fun!"

The Culinary Classroom also hosts birthday parties where the guest of honor and friends prepare and eat a unique and memorable meal together. The setting is a cheery, casual and fun environment perfect for kids wanting to learn the tasty trade of cooking, to "test the waters" and see if cooking is their thing, or to simply enjoy a new activity and make some friends. Students can expect a very supportive and friendly atmosphere from the second they walk in the door to the time they leave. In fact, his demeanor is so warm and accepting, children might wish to become the next Eric instead of Emeril. Like so!

Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom is located at 2366 Pelham Avenue. For more information call 310-470-2640 or visit [www.culinaryclassroom.com](http://www.culinaryclassroom.com).





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## Chef Sizzles With His Culinary Classroom

■ Eric Crowley Focuses on the Fun of Food

BY ROBERT L. GARD

Chef Eric Crowley studied at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America, trained under European Master Chefs in Barcelona and Munich, and has taught culinary arts in Los Angeles since 1996. That impressive background is enough to intimidate any student who walks into his recently opened Culinary Classroom, but unlike the stereotypical image of the ranting mad chef demanding adulation for his creations, Crowley quickly lets people know he is all too human in the kitchen.

"I was recently making a product, tomato confit, in the kitchen, when I walked away for a few minutes and had a brain lock. When I went back to the oven, I'd carbonized the tomatoes," he laughs.

That quick humor and easy-going nature makes an excursion to Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom enjoyable for experienced chefs as well as the kitchen novice.

"One of the things that separates me from others is I don't go around acting like I'm a know-it-all in front of students," he says.

"If I can show students I'm not infallible and I make mistakes, it creates an even playing field [in the kitchen]. But when I tell them how to fix those mistakes, it makes them look up to me."

Crowley's journey to opening his own cooking school is a lesson in taking the long road home. Born and raised in the San Fernando Valley (his parents have had the same house for 40 years), Crowley was exposed to the creativity of his artist father and the cooking skills of his mother. He dropped out of his college music program

because he wasn't passionate about the saxophone, and worked as a glorified bill collector to pay his own. It wasn't until a friend suggested he turn his love of cooking into a profession that the lightbulb appeared and he found his course in life.

Working in restaurant kitchens for free, he gained enough experience to be accepted into the Culinary Institute of America in New York. From there it was off to Europe for two years for training under fire.

"I went to Europe to get experience not only culturally, but



Chef Eric Crowley, owner of the new Culinary Classroom, demonstrates cutting techniques for students at a recent class.

food-wise. That's really where the basics, the roots of all culinary arts are. That's where it started," he says.

After nearly four years away, he finally returned to Los Angeles, and hasn't looked back since. He's taught everyone from well known chefs to people who didn't know a cucumber from a zucchini. Through it all, he's gained a reputation of being a knowledgeable instructor that encourages questions ("There are no dumb questions" Crowley repeatedly tells his students) and whose constant enthusiasm makes cooking fun for everyone.

"People say they really like the atmosphere and my style. A lot of people said I have the patience of Job," he says.

The classes range from month-long culinary chef's classes, to a specialty class focusing on anything from basic knife skills, to garnishing, to easy "date night" dinners. Crowley is especially excited about his private classes, where birthday parties, families and friends come to the Culinary Classroom for three hours and learn the culinary arts together.

In the specialty classes, students are given a brief introduction to the recipes and ingredients

from the evening and are then assigned certain dishes to prepare. Crowley and his assistants are as available for help or removed from interfering, as they need to be during the process. At the end of the class, everyone joins together for a sit-down sampling of the evening's cuisine while imbibing a variety of wine.

Though it is only five months old, Culinary Classroom has received significant interest from law firms, movie studios and other businesses that are using specialty classes as team-building experiences. No matter whom he teaches, Crowley says his goals are always the same.

"I most enjoy getting to share my experience with students that have that desire, that 'burn' as it's called," he says. "I like [motivating] students to learn as much as they can, to learn a new technique.

"To see a student's eyes light up when they understand why you have to use a certain technique, that's what I love about it."

Chef Eric's Culinary Classroom is located at 2366 Pelham Ave., just off of Pico Boulevard.

For information, call (310)470-2640 or visit [www.culinaryclassroom.com](http://www.culinaryclassroom.com).



Chef Eric Crowley demonstrates for students at the Culinary Classroom.