

Culinary Classroom Sizzles

By JACQUELINE PRIMO
Reporter

“After all these years I still get really excited about teaching even the basics like how to hold a knife,” Chef Eric Jacques Crowley of Chef Eric’s Culinary Classroom told the Palisadian-Post. “I give my students a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of encouragement. It’s really fun. I enjoy it a lot.”

Chef Eric has been teaching at his West L.A. culinary school since August 2003 and students have been spicing up their palatable perspectives for just as long. The school offers weeknight and weekend classes that cater to working students who want to learn their way around the kitchen, whether they are fresh out of high school, heading off to college or just curious about cooking. Even children can take part in summer camps and learn how to make everything from pizza to grilled halibut.

“I really just try to offer as much as possible,” Chef Eric said. “I cap classes off at 12 students to keep the student/instructor ratio really low so I can focus on those students asking for help.”

Chef Eric also offers couples-only classes and Saturday morning classes in addition to his often sold-out 10-week Baking Program, 4-week Basic Series and Master Chef Certificate Program. Students can participate in individual classes that specialize in cuisine of a certain culture (French, Indian or Thai, for example).

Whether budding chefs are curious about beer and wine pairing cooking classes, how to make a gourmet appetizer, entrée or dessert or want to learn how to perfect this year’s Thanksgiving dinner, Chef Eric is ready to rescue confused cooks.

“It’s a labor of love,” he said. “And residents from the Palisades take pretty much every class.”

While students are whisking and straining, chopping and dicing, they can be confident that their teacher is passionate about what he does. After all, it takes guts to leave one career for another.

“It’s not very easy but I’m definitely proof that it can be done,” Chef



Chef Eric Jacques Crowley

Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

Eric said of his decision to leave his career as a paralegal in the mid-’90s and trade his briefcase for a chef’s hat.

Chef Eric left the law firm when he was accepted at the Culinary Institute of America in New York. After graduating with honors in 1996 he spent time working in restaurants in Barcelona and Munich, including Spain’s oldest family-owned restaurant.

He returned to LA and worked at a catering company before identifying the need for a new

kind of culinary school.

“There was a distinct void in services available to people in L.A. who wanted to learn how to cook like a chef or for people thinking about getting into the business outside of going to a place like Le Cordon Bleu in Pasadena full-time,” he said.

He opened Chef Eric’s Culinary Classroom to fill that niche and will soon launch his own spice blend – secret mixes of spices he dries, grounds and mixes himself. His Sizzle Spice Blend will be good for meats while his Smooth Spice Blend is great for vegetables, pastas and salad dressings.

For more information, visit culinaryclassroom.com or call (310) 470-2640.

