MISSION STATEMENT

The Napa Valley Cooking School offers high quality, fast paced, intensive training for aspiring chefs. The goal of the program is to provide each student with hands-on, technique driven, culinary and pastry skills required for a career in a fine-dining establishment. The disciplined and professional learning environment, availability of global externships, low student-teacher ratio and focus on sustainability make the Napa Valley Cooking School unique. Located in one of the country’s top tourist destinations, the program provides students with access to the Napa Valley’s well-known chefs, winemakers, and artisan producers through community involvement.
This fast-track to a culinary career, rooted in classic technique and driven by industry trends, provides students with the unique opportunity to work with the highest quality ingredients available. We are proud to supplement the bounty of our garden with local and sustainable products from the finest purveyors available. Students are introduced to ingredients such as fresh black truffles, artisan cheeses, grass-fed and pasture raised beef, lamb and pork as well as organic, free range poultry and eggs.
All of the courses at Napa Valley Cooking School are designed to promote a well-rounded culinary professional. With a focus on sustainability, dedication to creating a foundation in traditional culinary techniques and an eye on the future of modern culinary world, our program is unique in the rapidly growing field of culinary education. This fast-paced curriculum is designed to build on itself and the techniques learned in each course are repeated to enforce the mastery required to be a successful chef.

SERVSAFE®

ServSafe® is a nationally recognized certificate program designed to train culinarians in all aspects of food safety and sanitation. Upon completion of the course students will receive a certificate from the National Restaurant Association.

PRODUCT IDENTIFICATION

This is an introductory course in identification of key ingredients used in culinary applications. Using exceptional quality ingredients and sensory evaluation, students will gain a broad knowledge of “foundation ingredients” such as salt, sugar, herbs, spices, artisan cheeses, and greens. Field trips to local biodiverse farms and the farmer’s market help create a true appreciation of the importance of how and where culinary ingredients are produced. What makes us a unique cooking school is an introduction to sustainable practices on a global scale and on our campus. Students witness first hand how our every day efforts in the culinary industry affect and impact the land.
ESSENTIAL SKILLS

This course is designed to introduce the students to all aspects of the professional kitchen, including equipment identification, basic culinary math, US standard and metric measuring systems, knife identification, handling and sharpening, all culinary knife cuts, potato, egg, vegetable and grain cookery, as well as wet, dry and combination cooking methods. Recipe writing and the production of order sheets and prep-sheets are also covered in detail.

FUNDAMENTALS OF BAKING AND PASTRY

This course is designed to introduce students to the skills and techniques required in the production of yeast breads, short pastry doughs, custards, pâte à choux and cake batters. The NVCS believes that all qualified chefs should be proficient in all aspects of the kitchen, including bread making and pastry work.

GARDE MANGER

During this course students learn proper terminology and technique for cold emulsification, salads and dressings, canapé and hors d’oeuvres preparation. The continuation of mastering Garde Manger technical skills takes place in Semester II during the Charcuterie segment.

CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS

This course is designed with a focus on menu development and an introduction to volume cooking. Students work together to prepare a luncheon for 100 guests. Principals and techniques of dining room service, including various table settings, fine dining service standards and staff management are introduced.
STOCKS, SOUPS, SAUCES

This course is an introduction to classic and modern preparations including white and brown stock, vegetable and fruit stock, all classic soups including: cream, puree, clear cut and consommé as well as specialty cold soups. Classic and modern interpretations of emulsified, reduction, puree, sabayon, infusion, juice, butter, foam, and nage sauces are also covered.

FINE DINING RESTAURANT PRACTICAL

This student-run restaurant provides a real-time, hands-on experience of all operations in a fine dining food service establishment. Duties include kitchen station planning and set-up, creating prep and order lists, line cooking for savory and dessert stations, sous chef responsibilities, dining room décor and set-up, performing maitre d’ and server functions, wine service, and procuring donated wines for the lunch service of up to 80 guests.
BUTCHERY

This segment of the culinary program is an in-depth study of techniques for butchering shellfish, fish, poultry, pork, beef, and lamb. Safe handling, anatomy, purchasing, butcher and primal cuts are covered during hands-on labs. In a rare learning opportunity, our students participate in breaking down a hind of grass fed beef, organic whole lamb and a whole hog. Each student fabricates their own chicken, rabbit, quail, round fish, flat fish, crab and lobster.

CHARCUTERIE

The long-honored art of charcuterie and its application in a modern kitchen will be explored as students are introduced to the techniques required for the fabrication of pâté, terrine, sausage, mousseline, smoked meat, smoked fish and accoutrements. Garnishing techniques and proper buffet set-up are covered as the class culminates in a lunch buffet for colleagues, friends and family featuring the week's preparations.

WINE APPRECIATION

Beginning with the proper way to taste wine, this course is designed to introduce the students to basic wine knowledge and appreciation through sensory evaluation of varietals from around the world. Viniculture, viticulture and the effects of food on wine are covered.

NUTRITION

Students are introduced to vegetarian and health-related diets to gain an understanding of the fundamentals of nutrition. Daily assignments with strict dietary criteria are given as a base to create a fine dining “black box” dish using specialized cooking techniques.
FRANCE

In this 3-week intensive course, students gain a thorough understanding of the fundamental culinary techniques and ingredients of classic French cuisine, including the use of foie gras and truffles. French pastry work is included. In-depth lectures include social history, geography, and specialized regional ingredients all pertaining to the production of “cuisine classique.” Advanced sauce work, knife skills and gueridon service are all included in this comprehensive course.

FOOD & BEVERAGE COST CONTROL

F&B cost control is the application of practical knowledge and skills used to understand restaurant volumes and pricing strategy. Key components of this course are: menu planning, inventory, purchasing and receiving, food costing including yield, waste and family meal, beverage costing, bar control, and profit and loss statements in a fine dining food service establishment.
ASIAN CUISINE

During this course each student gains a thorough understanding and knowledge of the fundamental culinary techniques and ingredients of classic Asian cuisine, spanning from Japan to India. Advanced techniques include pastry work, spice and curry pastes, wok cooking and the interpretation of classic dishes into modern plate presentations. In-depth lectures include social history, geography, and specialized ingredients pertaining to the individual regions.

MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

This course offers students a thorough understanding and knowledge of the fundamental culinary techniques and ingredients of classic Mediterranean cuisines, ranging from Spain and Portugal, Italy to the Middle East and North Africa. While preparing tapas, mezze, ragu, hand-made pasta, tagines and flatbreads, students learn to translate classic techniques into modern plate presentations. In-depth lectures reveal the importance of how foods have been introduced throughout the Mediterranean via historical wars, religion, conquer and exploration.
ARTISAN BAKING

This artisan baking course focuses on the 12 steps of bread making, the role of key ingredients, bakers’ formula percentage, shaping and scoring. Using bigas, sponges and starters, the students produce a variety of quality artisan bread loaves and pastries.

ADVANCED PASTRY

This course is designed to teach students the skills and techniques required for the production of laminated doughs, cakes, plated and frozen desserts. Tempering chocolate, dipping, coating and preparation of candies and confections are included. The elements of composition and design are employed in the practice of artistic presentations for buffets and individual plating.

MARKETPLACE

Utilizing products from our kitchen garden and flock of hens, students work together to prepare canned, preserved and baked goods, sauces, candies and confections, and organic starter plants for sale at our campus market. Cooking demonstrations and tastings provided by students give potential employers and community members an opportunity to meet and greet our future chefs.

MODERN CULINARY TECHNIQUES

This course offers students an opportunity to explore and experience modern culinary techniques such as sous-vide, molecular gastronomy: spherification, hydrocolloids, foams, thickening and clarification.
REGIONAL CUISINES OF THE AMERICAS

In this course we explore the indigenous foods of North, Central, and South America. The understanding of climate, cultural heritage and migration will lead to an appreciation of the important and diverse ingredients used.

RESTAURANT THESIS AND FINAL PRACTICAL

As a culmination of 9 months of intensive culinary training, students are required to design a seven course chef’s tasting menu including recipes, plate presentations, food costing, prep-sheets and order sheets. Dishes are presented to the chefs for critique. Final menus are chosen featuring local, sustainable products prepared exclusively by the students. A rotating schedule is created giving each student an opportunity to experience real-time line cooking, serving, maitre d’ and sous-chef responsibilities for a 60 guest daily lunch service.

EXTERNSHIP

Once a student has successfully completed on-campus training, an externship is arranged at a qualified fine dining food service establishment of the student’s choice. This is an opportunity for the students to acquire on-the-job training that will help with job placement and create important industry connections. Students may choose to stay in Wine Country, extern in another state or travel abroad to further enhance their skills and experience. Our staff works closely with students to secure their position and complete their externship requirements. We have an unparalleled success rate in job placement for students who successfully complete their externship and graduate from the program.
SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

We are dedicated to providing our future culinarians with an education rooted in classic technique while maintaining a focus on the potential environmental impact of our industry. In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint and lower the overall impact of the culinary industry on the global climate we have created our own biodynamic system.

From the first day on campus our students begin to learn how to reduce daily waste with composting and recycling, care for our flock of rare and heritage breed hens, and nurture our rare-seed, organic garden. Throughout our curriculum we emphasize the responsibility of a chef to provide food that is safe to the consumer and respectful of the environment. We promote making knowledgeable and conscious choices when purchasing for any food service establishment.

Throughout our program we educate our students about the difference between commodity versus organic meat, eggs, dairy and produce. We lead by example, purchasing local, organic and sustainable foods and providing our students with only the best possible ingredients with which to train. Students study the practices of aqua-culture, feed lots, battery cages, pasture raising, and the effects of harmful pesticides, fertilizers and growth hormones in order to fully understand the impact each practice has on our health and the environment.