

AISH Career Program: Culinary Arts

Program Structure

Level I – Beginning (Fall or Spring)

Mission

The aim of the Beginning level is to provide students with a basic comprehension of Italian cuisine, with reference to our culture and taste. Topics studied include: regional cooking, history of Italian gastronomy and the selection of fresh ingredients. Students will be introduced to basic food preparation techniques, nutrition concepts and wine tasting. Students will be taught to study the role food plays in Italian culture and society and have the opportunity to gauge their abilities and interests, in order to understand whether they are inclined towards the professional or amateur culinary arts.

Optional Course

Italian Language is offered as an optional program components offered when regular core courses are not in session. Italian language is offered during the January or September intersessions.

Mandatory Seminar

Food Safety and Sanitation Seminar

The Food Safety and Sanitation Seminar is mandatory for all Baking & Pastry, Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management and Wine Studies & Enology students. Unless the student has an equivalent certification that is valid in the Region of Tuscany.

Core Courses

Introduction to Professional Cooking Experiential Learning

This course will introduce students to the tools, techniques and essential food preparation of this industry. Special attention will be given to sanitation and hygiene. Students will also learn how to pair ingredients in the creation of various dishes. This course includes 150 hours of Experiential Learning with our Community Engagement Member Institutions (CEMI). CEMI are dynamic learning environments created to foster learning through a structured interaction with the community. In addition to regular lecture hours, students will be involved in learning by doing through real projects and integration with the local population and territory in order to remove cultural and learning barriers as well as to develop a strong likelihood for success in life. The Experiential Learning hours are fully supervised by instructors who track students step by step during their learning experience, monitor and advise according to student needs, and support student initiative. This unique learning model allows students to benefit from an all-encompassing educational experience based on theory and practice in real enterprises, learning of comprehensive operational processes, problem solving, leadership, and management.

Tradition of Italian Food I

This course focuses on the preparation of dishes that distinguish traditional Italian cuisine. Students will learn how to use different ingredients to prepare representative Italian dishes. The fundamentals of cooking methods, techniques, and preparations utilized in Italian cuisine will be thoroughly covered; these concepts will prepare students continuing on to the intermediate and advanced sections of this course (II + III). Notions of the history of these dishes will also be discussed as students prepare the various recipes.

Italian Regional Cuisine

This course focuses on the different aspects of regional food in Italy. Emphasis will be placed on how food relates to the local lifestyle and culture. Regional economy and local resources will be analyzed and compared. Students will be introduced to the various local products through class demonstrations and tastings.

Breads of Italy Specialty Breads

Building on previous knowledge, students learn to mix, shape, bake, store, and distribute breads and rolls. Emphasis will be placed on increased use of traditional fermentation methods, equipment, and methods that emphasize flavor, texture, and appearance as well as techniques that increase shelf life. This course offers the opportunity to learn the principles and techniques of preparing multi-grain breads, sourdoughs, holiday or seasonal breads, and flat breads. Special emphasis will be placed on Italian regional breads; handling grains (such as soakers) for specialty breads; mixing, shaping, and finishing specialty breads; and learning innovative baking methods.

Wine Appreciation I

This course provides the fundamental skills and a technical introduction to wine tasting beginning with the visual, olfactory, and gustatory examination. Students will learn to analyze the organoleptic components of wines, the importance and influences attributed by to territory, and finally how to distinguish as well as create excellent food and wine pairings. Lectures will be supplemented by wine tasting workshops. The objective of this class is for students to be able to recognize quality in wines from around the world and obtain a working knowledge of international wine regions and as well as the wine industry.

Level II – Intermediate (Fall or Spring)

Mission

The aim of the Intermediate level is to deepen students' knowledge of Italian food, with special reference to high quality labeled/protected products (DOP & IGP). Special focus will be given to the use of seasonal products, herbs and spices. Students will start studying basic Italian pastry, as well as decoration techniques, and will study Italian wines by region. Restaurant planning and organization are included in the program, together with a brief study of room service. Continuing students who have successfully passed the first session will have the possibility to put into practice what they have learned in class through an Internship session.

Optional Course

Italian Language is offered as an optional program components offered when regular core courses are not in session. Italian language is offered during the January or September intersessions.

Core Courses

Tradition of Italian Food II

This course continues to explore the tradition of Italian food through representative recipes. Emphasis will be given to more elaborate dishes, including the cleaning and preparation of shellfish, fresh pasta, food combinations, feast foods and banquets.

Professional Cooking II: Italian Creative Cuisine and Decoration Experiential Learning

The new Italian cuisine: Traditional recipes will be examined to discover how new ingredients can be used to transform these dishes into the new, creative Italian cuisine. Attention will be given to food combinations, fusion of Italian cuisine with other types of cuisine, and the creative process in menu planning. Emphasis will also be placed on food presentation, decoration and plating. This course includes 150 hours of Experiential Learning with our Community Engagement Member Institutions (CEMI). CEMI are dynamic learning environments created to foster learning through a structured interaction with the community. In addition to regular lecture hours, students will be involved in learning by doing through real projects and integration with the local population and territory in order to remove cultural and learning barriers as well as to develop a strong likelihood for success in life. The Experiential Learning hours are fully supervised by instructors who track students step by step during their learning experience, monitor and advise according to student needs, and support student initiative. This unique learning model allows students to benefit from an all-encompassing educational experience based on theory and practice in real enterprises, learning of comprehensive operational processes, problem solving, leadership, and management.

Baking, Pastry and Confectionery I

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of baking, including the production of cakes and cookies, pastries, plated desserts and cake decorating. Also included is an introduction to the creation of confectionery items.

Wine Appreciation II

This course has been designed to provide students with an advanced working knowledge of wine appreciation. Emphasis is placed on studying the most important Italian grape varieties through out the Italian territory and to learn how to assess and to evaluate the wine typologies deriving from different grapes and soils. Particular importance is given to comparative wine tasting, focusing on the different characteristics of wines coming from different regions. The course gives a complete overview of the most important Italian wine areas.

Restaurant Management

This course will examine the problems of the financial structures of restaurant management, in parallel with the objectives and techniques of the individual owner. The planning and decision-making tools available to managers in an organization and comparison between single or partnership managements will be discussed. Personnel organization and food preparation plans will be covered. The course is based on a double approach, combining theory and practice: students will be introduced to the basics of restaurant management and will be given the opportunity to discuss their ideas and questions with selected professionals who are successfully running their restaurant businesses in Florence. Extensive site visits to local restaurants be organized.

Level III – Advanced 1 (Fall)

Optional Course

Italian Language is offered as an optional program components offered when regular core courses are not in session. Italian language is offered during the January or September intersessions.

Core Courses

Baking, Pastry & Confectionery II

The course introduces advanced students to the high quality products that characterize Italian pastry and baking including the production of special breads, mignardises, chocolate confections and meringue. After a survey of the use of basic doughs used in bakeries such as pan di spagna, dacquoise and short crust pastry, the course will introduce students to special breads baking, sugar working and confection preparations. Through the preparation of marzapane, pasticceria mignon, savarin and baba', the students will explore and interpret creatively the most important examples of the traditional Italian pastry and confectionery, including the use of typical liquors. The preparation of special breads, meringues, semifreddi, bavaresi, and confections with hard, soft and liquid centers will challenge students to develop and master professional skills in pastry, bakery, confectionery and cake decoration.

Tradition Of Italian Food III: The Evolution of Italian

A survey of the major contemporary Italian chefs and their cooking philosophy. Students will learn how to read and compose a menu, and the major elements that distinguish high-level Italian cooking through the original recipes of Gianfranco Vissani, Gualtiero Marchesi, Nadia Santini and many others. This course is meant to help students understand the current Italian culinary trends as a continuous evolution of the different regional cooking traditions, while keeping in mind the importance of a healthy diet combined with the individual chef's creativity.

Professional Cooking III: Italian Creative Cuisine and Decoration Experiential Learning

This course is intended for advanced students with a sound knowledge of Italian traditional ingredients and regional cooking. The course will further develop advanced students skills in recipe elaboration, plate presentation and decoration. The course will show students how to build and develop innovative combinations of ingredients on the legacy of Italian tradition. Each class, introduced by a short lecture, will focus on planning creative menus and on creating decorative dishes, from starters to fresh pasta, from vegetable soups to cakes, including shellfish and typical cheeses. Restaurant simulations are scheduled as integral part of the course. Piping skills are practiced. This course includes 150 hours of Experiential Learning with our Community Engagement Member Institutions (CEMI). CEMI are dynamic learning environments created to foster learning through a structured interaction with the community. In addition to regular lecture hours, students will be involved in learning by doing through real projects and integration with the local population and territory in order to remove cultural and learning barriers as well as to develop a strong likelihood for success in life. The Experiential Learning hours are fully supervised by instructors who track students step by step during their learning experience, monitor and advise according to student needs, and support student initiative. This unique learning model allows students to benefit from an all-encompassing educational experience based on theory and practice in real enterprises, learning of comprehensive operational processes, problem solving, leadership, and management.

The Science of Cooking: An Introduction to Molecular Cuisine

This science of cooking course is aimed at non-scientific students who wish to gain knowledge of the basic science behind cooking to both improve methods of cooking and avoid common pitfalls. The student will understand the ideas behind basic techniques, which will aid innovation and creative impulse in the field of gastronomy. The course will combine both theory and practice of scientific cooking.

Cooking Light

In the old days when rich sauces ruled and vegetables were but a garnish; chefs were not experts on low fat food. But times have changed. Over the past 20 years, in response to customer demands, many top chefs have become masters at cooking with less fat. The course will first examine contemporary perspectives on the traditional diets of the Mediterranean region, as well as the basic nutrition concepts and the role of basic nutrients (protein, carbohydrates, lipids, vitamins and minerals). The concept of food pyramid will be extensively analyzed and different food pyramids and their backgrounds compared. Low fat gourmet recipes and menus will be extensively discussed and experienced.

Level IV – Advanced 2 (Spring)

Optional Course

Italian Language is offered as an optional program components offered when regular core courses are not in session. Italian language is offered during the January or September intersessions.

Core Courses

Worldwide Cuisine

This course is meant to teach students the role of cultural heritage in food preparation techniques and regional dishes. Students will experience gourmet food preparation from several foreign cuisines such as French, Asian, Spanish, Greek and, of course, Italian. Ethnic customs and heritage will be considered in relationship to global cuisine; effects of spices, herbs and condiments to economy meal preparation and culture will be considered.

Nutritional Cooking

Principles of planning, preparation and presentation of wholesome, nutritionally balanced meals. The course emphasizes designing meals on a seasonal basis following the principles of healthy cooking.

Psychology of Taste & Flavor

This is an introductory course in Food Science that explores and examines the physiology of how we taste and flavor food. From the simplicity of identifying “sour versus bitter” to the complexity of pairing food and wine, the objective of this course is to train taste buds to better understand flavors that are not generally accepted but require a deeper understanding before being appreciated.

Food and Beverage Operations and Management Experiential Learning

This course introduces one of the fundamental areas of study in the hospitality industry. Students will study the concepts and procedures of food and beverage control systems, cost control, operating budgets, effective management of food and beverage operations and cycles. Cost calculations, menu planning, storage, receiving, profit and budget forecasting, labor costs, service payment systems, and other topic-specific areas will be covered. This course includes 150 hours of Experiential Learning with our Community Engagement Member Institutions (CEMI). CEMI are dynamic learning environments created to foster learning through a structured interaction with the community. In addition to regular lecture hours, students will be involved in learning by doing through real projects and integration with the local population and territory in order to remove cultural and learning barriers as well as to develop a strong likelihood for success in life. The Experiential Learning hours are fully supervised by instructors who track students step by step during their learning experience, monitor and advise according to student needs, and support student initiative. This unique learning model allows students to benefit from an all-encompassing educational experience based on theory and practice in real enterprises, learning of comprehensive operational processes, problem solving, leadership, and management.