



COOKING

all over the world

More and more, our holidays embrace the local food scene. But if you really want to immerse yourself in the regional cuisine, what better way than by taking a cookery course and coming away armed with true insider knowledge. In the first of a three-part series, we profile 50 of the best cookery schools outside Europe. Read on to find the best classes – and holidays – from Peru to Jordan, from Thailand to Tasmania...



MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

cookery schools



FRUI MARRAKECH, MOROCCO

Waking up to breakfast on a riad rooftop, with the distant call to prayer, Marrakech is the place to enliven your senses. Surprises are in store too as creative holiday company Frui brings you a fantastic school led by chef Mahacine, who guides you through Moroccan salads, tagines, couscous and desserts in an olive-tree courtyard. A four-day gastronomic exploration of the country's cuisine will also give you an introduction to Berber whisky (actually a tongue-in-cheek name for the ever-present mint tea, a national obsession usually served with sweet pastries). Learning how to prepare it will be key, particularly for relaxing after packed days spent diving in and out of markets, spice shops, hammams and henna-tattoo parlours – all with an expert guide to ensure you're back safely in time for tea. frui.co.uk

REUBEN'S, FRANSCHHOEK, SOUTH AFRICA

Few people are as passionate about South African food as Reuben Riffel – and when taking a trip through the dramatic landscapes of Franschhoek, a stop-off at the chef's eponymous restaurant is an absolute must. Take your experience to the next level by signing up for one of his culinary weekends, where you'll learn to cook signature dishes, attend local wine, whiskey and chocolate tastings, and experience a *braai* (barbecue) – as well as enjoy a four-course dinner in his restaurant, naturally. reubens.co.za



HOLIDAY ON THE MENU, JORDAN

Jordanian food is deceptively fresh and simple. The correct balance of flavours, textures, timing and spicing demands skill and expertise, some of which you are bound to acquire during this seven-night trip. The menus match the glorious setting of Petra, the main base, and have an equally timeless allure: green wheat soup, aubergine dip, dried fava beans in oil, pan-roasted chicken, milk and pastry pudding are all likely to be included in the five cooking sessions. The week includes visits to markets, farms and orchards, plus time to explore the Rose City, float in the Dead Sea and visit Mount Nebo from which Moses viewed the 'Promised Land'. holidayonthemenu.com

DAR LES CIGOGNES, MARRAKECH, MOROCCO

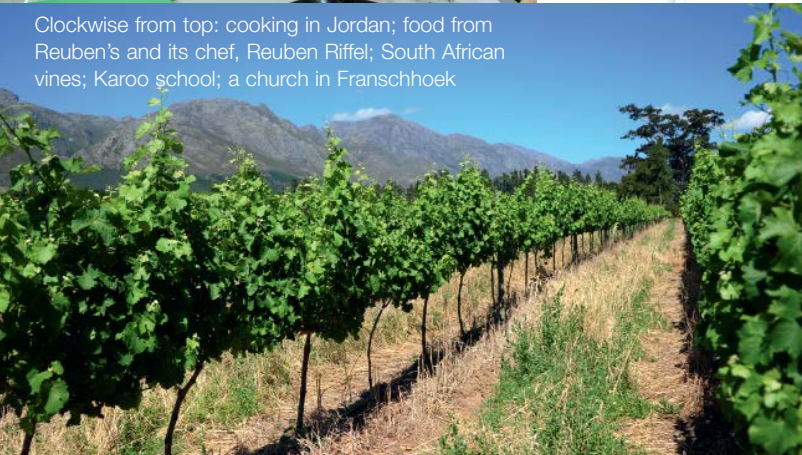
Flexibility is a key feature of any good cookery school – a quality that allows students of different abilities, skill levels or motivations to get the most out of the experience – and this is the main draw at Dar Les Cigognes. Simply accompany the chef to the market and return to watch *dadas* (traditional female cooks) sculpt sliver-thin filo pastry sheets into elaborate desserts; or get involved in every level of the process yourself, whether it's preparing tagine or making yoghurt. sanssoucicollecion.com



COOKING THE KAROO, SOUTH AFRICA

The Karoo may be a semidesert region in South Africa's heart, but it's certainly not dry when it comes to good eating. This week-long course is based in Prince Albert, a village at the foot of the Swartberg Pass dotted with Cape Dutch, Karoo Victorian and Georgian buildings. Stay in luxurious cottages and enjoy a trip packed with cookery lessons and vineyard, farm and market tours. It includes jam baking on a fig farm, bread- and cheese-making along with picnics and braai plus classes on cooking famous Karoo lamb, venison and one-pot dishes. There'll also be forays into once-isolated valley communities, and talks on conservation, ecology and geology. epitourean.com

Clockwise from top: cooking in Jordan; food from Reuben's and its chef, Reuben Riffel; South African vines; Karoo school; a church in Franschhoek



Clockwise from below: take a cookery course in north Africa as part of a gourmet trip and savour the stalls and souks of Marrakech; spices and tagines; work up an appetite in Petra; at the riad



AUSTRALASIA

cookery schools



‘From the moment you arrive at Tasmania’s Agrarian Kitchen, you’ll be entranced; within the hour you’ll be devising ways to replicate this bucolic culinary paradise’

THE AGRARIAN KITCHEN, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

From the moment you arrive at The Agrarian Kitchen, you’ll be entranced; within the hour you’ll be devising ways in which you could replicate this bucolic culinary paradise for yourself. Former food editor Rodney Dunn migrated to Tasmania from Sydney in 2007 to create his dream ‘paddock to plate’ sustainable farm – he launched a cookery school here in 2009, and it’s been booked solid almost ever since. Operating out of a 19th-century schoolhouse, classes contain just nine students and most kick off with a foray to pick the ripest and plumpest from the school’s gardens (which even include a herbal tea section). While the most popular class, The Agrarian Experience, focuses on cooking seasonally, using homegrown and foraged produce, others specialise in preserving, craft beer brewing, cooking with fire or, temptingly, ‘The Whole Hog’. theagrariankitchen.com

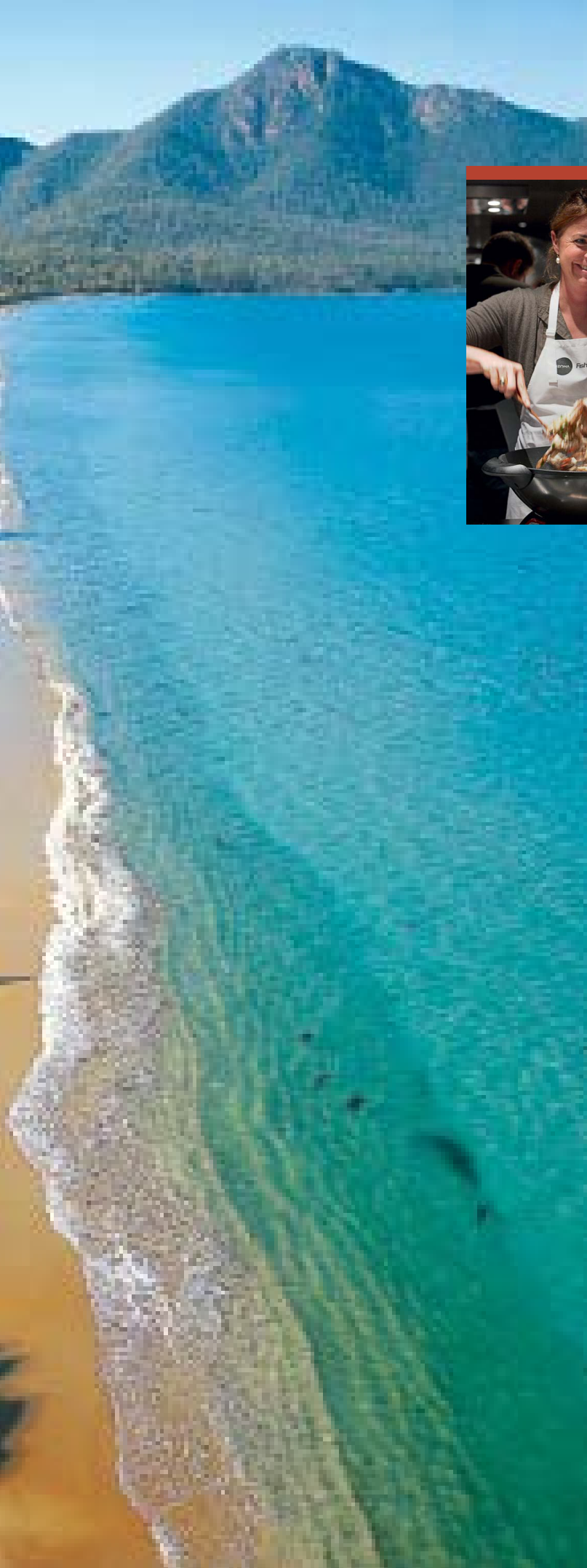
AKAROA COOKING SCHOOL, AKAROA, NEW ZEALAND

A waterside edge in the heart of an ancient volcano – not the first place you’d expect to find a cookery school, perhaps, but certainly a spectacular one. And Akaroa Cooking School’s magnificent setting – by the wharf in a charming colonial South Island centre of the same name – is just one part of the draw of this vibrant venue (albeit a big one). Local, seasonal produce with as much punch as the view is put to use in dishes ranging from smoked fish to fragrant Thai curries, delicate canapés to slow-cooked beef casserole. akaroacooking.co.nz

SYDNEY SEAFOOD SCHOOL, AUSTRALIA

Australia’s leading cookery school is a must-stop for anyone visiting the capital. Established in 1989 in the vast working fish market, it was originally designed to encourage a demand for then unfamiliar catch such as squid, red mullet and octopus. Since then the scope of the classes has widened hugely and they now accommodate a wide range of skill levels and subjects – all focused around fish and shellfish – and the venue has been remodelled into a state-of-the-art auditorium and practical kitchen. Note, however, classes can be large (up to 50 people) but after the keynote demonstration, the second half divides pupils into hands-on cooking groups of five. Seafood Barbecue is probably the most popular class, but you can also learn to whip up a superb chilli crab, ceviche and paella to dazzle the most demanding Dame Edna. Check the calendar, as many of Australia’s top chefs lead guest classes. sydneyfishmarket.com.au

Above: Sydney seafood school; by the beach in Melbourne. Right: Tasmanian coast



Below: perfect a crab salad at the Sydney Seafood School



CATHIE'S CUISINE, HAWKE'S BAY, NEW ZEALAND

With around 35 vineyards in easy reach, a weekend at Hawthorne House offers culinary respite from swilling and spitting your way around Hawke's Bay. There are four luxurious en-suite rooms in the Edwardian villa set in a beautiful garden so you only have to stagger a short distance to the kitchen. And stagger you probably will after one of Cathie Hamilton's champion breakfasts that includes homemade muffins, homegrown fruits, their own free-range eggs and artisan bacon. It's hands-on after that, with guests divided into lunch and dinner teams. Classes are small and can be structured for either beginners or more skilled cooks. Menus vary but the recipes have been devised to use local and New Zealand produce wherever possible. cathiescuisine.co.nz

SAVOUR CHOCOLATE & PATISSERIE SCHOOL, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The flag for the trendy Australian culinary scene is flown by hip Melbourne, but when it comes to food, the city is blazing a trail in more than just its cutting-edge restaurants and bars. It's also home to the first and only school in the South Pacific to specialise in chocolate and patisserie. There are five courses on macarons alone; classes cater for every skill level, from learning how to temper all the way up to creating chocolate showpieces fit for international competition. savourschool.com.au

ORANGE REGIONAL COOKING SCHOOL, AUSTRALIA

Just short of 300km from the bustle of Sydney, in an old country store, Lesley Russell's laid-back cookery school lends a taste of Australia without the intimidation of professional kitchens or the racing pace of city life. The ethos is simple: replicable dishes – the kind of thing you're likely to actually cook at home – all using seasonal, quality produce. Weekend and evening classes often incorporate global influences, with dishes ranging from lamb with Israeli couscous to roast peaches with honey mascarpone and pistachio. learntocook.com.au

FORAGERS, PEMBERTON, AUSTRALIA

Located in the wilds of the Southern Forests region of Western Australia, rustic-luxe Foragers boasts shiny new eco-chalets with views across the woods and a 7-hectare working farm with kitchen garden, orchards and rare-breed animals. One- and two-day courses range from preserving to cheesemaking and charcuterie or, of course, foraging. foragers.com.au

Photography by Danny Kidare; Mark Roper; Catriona Howatson

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

cookery schools



This page and opposite: getting stuck on Peruvian cooking. Opposite: taking in the sights and smells of Lima, Peru, and Valparaíso, Chile

‘In Valparaíso, sample dishes you are likely to learn include *caldillo de congrio*, a rich fish and vegetable soup, razor clams on the half shell and corn and beef pie’

A TASTE OF PERU FOR FOODIES, LIMA & CUSCO, PERU

If Peru had only given us the ceviche, it would suffice – but by the end of this seven-day trip, participants will understand exactly how and why Peruvian cuisine has become increasingly appreciated and fashionable. Based in Lima and Cusco, the course is a good balance of hands-on cooking, demonstrations, tasting menus and excursions. It takes in native, ‘criolla’ and traditional foods and ingredients, from the Andes to the Amazon, as well as new-style Peruvian cooking and the unique Peruvian-Japanese fusion cuisine. There are various farm visits, including a special lesson on potatoes. And, if you don’t come back without knowing how to make the world’s best pisco sour, well... you’ll simply have to go back again. activegourmetholidays.com

DIEGO RUETE, MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

When in Uruguay, and Montevideo in particular, chances are you’ll be going big on beef. Which is partly why a cookery course with chef Diego Ruete is so refreshing; he’ll teach you to cook lots of vegetable-rich local dishes too, imparting his wisdom on Uruguayan culture and traditions along the way. cook-o.com

CHILEAN CUISINE, VALPARAISO, CHILE

A well-mixed pisco sour always helps the day along, and by the end of a course at Chilean Cuisine, you’ll be an expert mixologist (for this cocktail, at least). Valparaíso is a glorious Unesco World Heritage city with a vibrant food culture, and Chilean Cuisine offers a flexible plan so you can ‘customise’ your cooking holiday, spending either a day, a few days or a week cooking traditional Chilean dishes from a daily changing menu of your choice. Hands-on classes start with a market trip to buy fresh, local, seasonal ingredients with your teacher, and have a minimum of two and maximum of eight to ten participants. Sample dishes you are likely to learn include *caldillo de congrio*, a rich fish and vegetable soup, razor clams on the half shell and corn and beef pie. You can also combine one of the day’s classes with a visit to the vineyards of Casablanca Valley. cookingclassschile.cl

BELCAMPO, BELIZE

A plush jungle lodge and organic farm set in the hills over a 4,855-hectare nature reserve in southern Belize, Belcampo is a seriously seductive hideaway. There are a number of culinary experiences on offer but sign up for the bean-to-bar class to learn how to transform cacao into chocolate, then that chocolate into the likes of a Mayan choco pud. belcampobz.com

THE INTERNATIONAL KITCHEN, MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Grilled beef and malbec, empanadas and malbec, pasta and malbec, chimichurri sauce and malbec – whatever the dish, Argentina has the perfect wine to match. Visits to some of the numerous Maipú vineyards and bodegas just a few miles from the park-and-plaza-filled city of Mendoza are included in a five-night package, as well as two cooking classes and a spectacular high mountain tour. One of the small hands-on classes focuses on traditional Mendocinian cooking; the other, at the Finca Adalgisa Boutique Hotel & Winery, uses freshly harvested, homegrown ingredients cooked in a clay oven and over an open fire with the farm’s Arauca olive oil. theinternationalkitchen.com

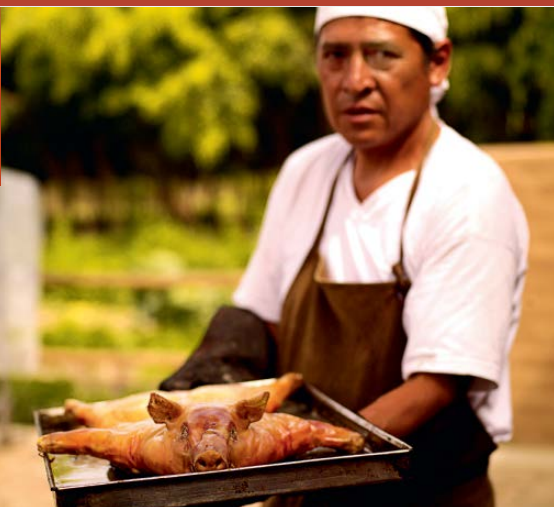
EL FRIJOL FELIZ, ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

Get to grips with the nuances of Guatemalan cuisine (it’s a cousin of Mexican) in small groups; sign up for several days and work your way through the roster of staples including *pepián* (stew), *chiles rellenos* (stuffed chillies), *hilachas* (shredded beef and potato) and *frijoles colorados* (red beans with pork). frijolfeliz.com

SKY KITCHEN, LIMA, PERU

Eating a meal on an open rooftop in the beating heart of Lima is an experience in itself, even if you haven’t cooked the food. But all the better when you have – and at Sky Kitchen, which is held in chef Yurac’s home, you’ll be preparing a minimum of three typical dishes under chef’s watchful gaze. Master the all-important ceviche, or opt for the Andean delicacies course for a taste of some lesser-known Peruvian classics. skykitchen.pe

Photography by Robert Pogson; Carl Pendle



NORTH AMERICA

cookery schools

Top to bottom:
head over Brooklyn
Bridge to sample
New York's spread
of cuisines; Times
Square; become
king of the cue in
North Carolina

THE BROOKLYN KITCHEN, NEW YORK, USA

Located in New York's funkier area, two-hour daily daytime and evening classes are held in the spacious teaching kitchen. New York's melting pot of ethnic cultures is mirrored in the range of class subjects – with over 100 to choose from, there's something for everyone, ranging from bagel making to a barbecue rib dinner, all with that Big Apple flavour. thebrooklynkitchen.com

LOS DOS, MERIDA, MEXICO

For gastronomes, the land of the Mayan people has plenty in store. Step forward chef David Sterling, whose cookery school is the first to specialise in the Yucatán region's cuisine. Don't expect moles and tacos though – situated in his gorgeous home, a restored colonial mansion in the city of Mérida, he'll get you started on achote-marinated red snapper roasted in banana leaves over a charcoal fire and tamales stuffed with chaya, pumpkin seeds and beans. Week-long workshops at the school include several classes and visits to local markets, pueblos and producers, as well as the ancient city of Izamal. los-dos.com

FOXGLOVE FARM, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Famously British Columbia's hippie enclave (imagine lots and lots of tie-dye, and not worn ironically), Salt Spring Island has long been championing the kind of organic and sustainable food that's now en vogue from Vancouver to Vilnius. At Foxglove Farm, a 49-hectare organic farm, cottage retreat and centre for 'arts, ecology and architecture' you can get a taste for that free-thinking communal spirit and learn something about organic food too. Retreats lasting between one and five days might mix writers, musicians and artists with farmers, foresters and ecologists; courses include cheesemaking, fungi foraging and growing produce for market. Stay in the cottages or the restored log farmhouse and you can feast on a basket of farm-grown seasonal goodies too. foxglovefarmbc.ca

NORTH CAROLINA BARBECUE SOCIETY, USA

American barbecue has never been bigger and, according to the North Carolina Barbecue Society, the state owns the title of 'Cradle of Cue' (North Carolina is also the second-largest pork producer in the world, a recipe for a good BBQ if ever we've heard one). During the society's BBQ Boot Camps, seasoned pit masters will teach you how to cook a whole hog, Boston butts, ribs, briskets – plus how to prepare all the essential sides such as baked beans and collard greens. ncbbqsociety.com

TANTE MARIE, SAN FRANCISCO, USA

For more than 30 years, Tante Marie has been offering a range of courses from its sunny San Fran location, making it one of the oldest cookery schools in the country. Whether you book a one-day class in knife skills or a week-long pastry 'camp' you'll receive the same high standard of tutelage as the renowned multi-month professional programmes. tantemarie.com



Clockwise from top left: dedication meets design at Yucatán school Los Dos; its *caballeros pobres* dessert; chef Susana Trilling; Los Dos; BBQ Boot Camp; Blackberry Farm

‘The region of Oaxaca stands out on the Mexican culinary map for its mouthwatering moles and pre-hispanic roots... among its many unexpected twists are pan-fried grasshoppers, iguana meat, giant topped tortillas, exotic fruits and chocolate’



SEASONS OF MY HEART, OAXACA, MEXICO

The region of Oaxaca stands out on the Mexican culinary map for its mouthwatering moles and pre-hispanic roots. Chef and broadcaster Susana Trilling provides a range of courses at her cookery school in an ideal setting between two traditional villages, about 15km from Oaxaco city. The most immersive are the week-long breaks, built around daily trips to markets, ranches and cottage industries, with one morning demonstration and one afternoon cooking class per day. The cuisine has many unexpected twists like pan-fried grasshoppers, iguana meat and chocolate, as well as exotic fruits, *tlayudas* (giant topped tortillas) and fresh seafood. Evenings are always free for you to enjoy the buzzing nightlife of the city. seasonsofmyheart.com



BLACKBERRY FARM, TENNESSEE, USA

Time moves slower at Blackberry Farm, a 1,700-hectare luxury hotel, farm and brewery in the Great Smoky Mountains. Quiet though it is, it manages to attract names such as Alain Ducasse to headline its regular cookery events. blackberryfarm.com



CUISINE AND SPA EXPERIENCE, SONOMA, USA

Serious food and wine buffs can live the dream at a top-end inn and spa 45 minutes' drive north of San Francisco. The small group cookery classes are led by a changing roster of distinguished chefs and cooks, so although the chance to work alongside legendary names such as Rick Bayless, Jacques Torres and Paula Wolfert does not come cheap, the experience is worth its weight in kitchen expertise. One day the focus may be on modern Californian, the next on Italian or Mexican, reflecting some of the composite elements that make up the American dining scene. The sessions are hands-on as everyone pitches in to create an entire dinner matched with wines from Sonoma and beyond. Each class lasts four hours, which allows time for sightseeing, vineyard visits and a choice from over 40 different treatments at the Garden Spa. gourmetontour.com

