

Cooking class at Santa Fe School of Cooking



COOKING CLASS:ERIC SWANSON, INN ON THE ALAMEDA;COURTESY OF THE INN ON THE ALAMEDA, RISTRAS:ERIC SWANSON

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

The pavement in Santa Fe, N. M., is speckled white with pepper seeds. Breezes swing the *ristras* or dried chile pepper pod arrangements that hang near doorways and windows, occasionally with enough force that they hit the adobe walls, burst open and spill seeds. While *ristras* may, as legend suggests, ward off evil spirits, dried chiles often flavor salsas, stews and more. So whether you prefer green or red chiles, the seed confetti signals that you're in the ideal place to tantalize taste buds.

The chance to feast on authentic Southwestern fare is a key reason to visit. "Santa Fe, New Mexico, ranks highest in number of restaurants per capita," says Chef Rocky Durham of the Santa Fe School of Cooking. Indeed, the city boasts 241 restaurants and 70,000 residents (or about 150,000 including the entire county), with dining options ranging from casual fajita carts alongside the historic plaza to upscale contemporary bistros. Since the plethora of restaurant options can seem daunting, especially for first-time visitors, the Santa Fe School of Cooking hosts walking tours. Each one-mile route showcases four different restaurants, with food and drink samples served at each stop. The three-hour experience is a unique opportu-

nity to gain insider insight into the Santa Fe dining scene.

Each restaurant along the route is one that the Santa Fe School of Cooking colleagues count among the city's finest. "Every place we visit makes everything from scratch," says Durham. "They also support local producers. This is my hometown. I'm a fiercely proud New Mexican." At each stop the chef has prepared something special exclusively for walking tour participants. Since stops vary and because the chefs each vie to top one another with their special creations, the progressive meal is impressive and inimitable. Thus, walking tours are popular among tourists as well as local residents.

Demonstrations and hands-on classes at the Santa Fe School of Cooking make it possible to recreate Southwestern flavors at home. "Based on ingredients and cultures, New Mexican is different than Texan, Mexican, and Southern Californian cuisine," says Chef/Instructor Danny Cohen. Cooking school classes showcase traditional New Mexican ingredients, some focused on traditional recipes and others adding modern twists.

To meet demand as well as encourage repeat visits, "our classes do change," says Susan Curtis, who launched the Santa Fe School of Cooking 20 years ago. "In these hard economic times, we've realized that people are more interested in basic, traditional New Mexican cooking, since it's tasty plus so often healthy and affordable."

A TASTE OF SANTA FE



Ristras hang everywhere in Santa Fe.

IF YOU GO

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"Taste The City Different" packages range from \$675 to \$1,302 for two and include three nights accommodations, walking tour and demonstration cooking class at the Santa Fe School of Cooking, shopping and dining gift certificates, daily breakfast buffet, and wine and cheese reception.

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Inn on the Alameda

Recipes vary by course theme and focus. One constant is that the chef instructors are eager to work with a full range of students, from novices to experienced cooks. "Some people are visual learners, some read, some taste," says Cohen. "In our classes, we do it all in hopes that something sticks."

The Inn on the Alameda is the only Santa Fe hotel that partners with the Santa Fe School of Cooking. The Inn's exclusive "Taste The City Different" package is a getaway designed for foodies of all levels. Nestled in an artistic community where inspiration seems to hang in the air, The Inn on the Alameda boasts spacious guest rooms. Beyond necessities like a soft bed and spacious bathtub are welcome extra amenities like a gas fireplace, private balcony, free Wi-Fi, daily breakfast buffet and wine and cheese reception each evening. Mexican tile, handmade furniture, local artwork and warm colors lend design warmth. Situated three blocks away from the hustle of the historic plaza, the Inn on the Alameda offers a quiet reprieve within convenient walking distance of the city center. It's also the closest hotel to the popular Canyon Road art gallery district, just one block away. "Forty percent of our guests are repeat clientele," says Deb Swanson, general manager.

"Taste The City Different" combines tasty cuisine and enjoyable accommodations for a trip that satisfies the soul as well as the stomach. **SP**