



Sara Moulton teaching at The Cook's Warehouse

Who's Cooking?

You are. With a little help from local cooking schools. **BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK**

Can't cook or just plain bored of your own cooking? No worries. Help is readily available at cooking classes across Atlanta.

"Having been a professional cook, since the beginning my desire was to teach people how to cook," says Mary Moore, owner of The Cook's Warehouse, an upscale gourmet cookware store and cooking school with four locations. "There's a cooking school at every location—I wouldn't do a store without one; it's a core part of our business. The goal is to help people have more fun and a more rewarding experience with their cooking, to put them in control of what they're eating."

How are topics and instructors chosen? "We definitely listen to our customers and take suggestions," says Moore. "We also take cues from what's happening in the world of foods, what's trendy and what's coming up, what unusual things are going on. We try to be fresh and relevant and seasonal. We'll do classes around what's growing in gardens, what holidays are coming up, what's fresh and new, which authors are available. And we also have a lot of cookbook authors and instructors from the national and international scene come in (celebrity chefs like Todd English, Sara Moulton,

Hugh Acheson and John Besh, among others).

Classes focused on fundamentals are perennial favorites. "Our Number 1 class is knife skills," says Moore. "The hands-on pasta class sells out every time. Sauce and baking are also very popular. And pressure cooker classes have become more popular over the last two years."

At The Cook's Warehouse, the largest vocational cooking school in the Southeast, about half of the more than 800 classes taught each year are demonstrations and half are hands-on. "Having a tactile experience here translates better at home," says Moore. About 25 people can attend a demo, while a maximum of 16 can participate in a hands-on session. In addition to taking place in the company's professional kitchens that are all equipped with top-end equipment, all classes include recipes, samples of the food prepared and complimentary beverages. On the day of the class, students also receive a shopping discount on the more than 15,000 kitchen products available.

While The Cook's Warehouse has racked up an impressive number of awards, it's not the only cooking school in town. Hal's Kitchen is the city's newest cooking school. The brainchild of Cyndi Sterne, who for several years led

popular cooking classes for adults and children at the Marcus Jewish Community Center, Hal's Kitchen is named after her encouraging father.

"My biggest goal in opening Hal's Kitchen is to show people that cooking can be a fun experience and not stressful," says Sterne. "We offer a huge range of classes, covering everything from recreating menus from a Parisian café, to farmer's market tours which end with a farm-to-table dinner in the truest sense, as well as tricks to creating fabulous fondants. The one common thread is teaching a necessary skill in a relaxed and entertaining atmosphere." Hal's boasts two cooking class studios, each equipped with high-end kitchen appliances.

Classes are taught by Sterne, Culinary Director Jessica Ray (who previously worked as culinary director for Viking), and several local chefs and culinary artisans. In addition to adult classes, Hal's Kitchen gears some classes especially to teens and children. No matter the students' age, "I want people to relax and enjoy the process of cooking," says Sterne.

The Cook's Warehouse: 4062 Peachtree Rd., Brookhaven, 404-949-9945; 180 W. Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur, 404-377-4005; 1311 Johnson Ferry Rd., East Cobb, 770-565-8005; 1544 Piedmont Rd., Midtown, 404-815-4993; www.cookwarehouse.com

Hal's Kitchen: 206-B Johnson Ferry Rd., Sandy Springs, 404-847-6991, www.halskitchen.com