

Take a Knife Skills class

Elena Cho spends a pleasant evening splicing and dicing – perfecting her knife skills at the highly regarded L'Atelier des Chefs cookery school in London.



For many, the idea of going to cooking school conjures up images of intimidating chefs clad in white uniforms belting out instructions in French to panic-stricken students. Professional kitchens, after all, are known to be pressure cookers, and cooking school is meant to prepare many a future chef for such a demanding environment.

Not all cooking schools, however, promise such a stressful experience. One school in particular, L'Atelier des Chefs located in the heart of Marylebone in central London, invites students of all levels to enjoy one of a number of masterclasses designed to make the experience of learning how to cook enjoyable, delicious and stress-free.

I spent an evening at the school as one of seven students attending a masterclass called "All About Knife Skills." Over the course of two hours, we learned what it takes to chop and slice like a professional chef from teacher Andre Dupin, an experienced chef who has worked for the likes of Gordon Ramsay at Claridges and Chez Bruce. We learned basics such as how to hold a knife properly and how to guide and glide it across the cutting board, then practiced our newfound skills on everything from onions and avocado to red mullet. The approach was surprisingly hands-on and the instructions were clear and easy to understand. We tried our hands at filleting and skinning a whole fish, stuffing small baby squids with a chorizo mixture, and how to plate our food gourmet restaurant-style.

The menu consisted of four dishes spread out over two courses: to start, we prepared a red mullet ceviche with avocado, red pepper, lime and coriander followed by grilled sardines with salsa verde. For our final course, we enjoyed fillet of plaice with beurre noisette, capers and asparagus and then stuffed squid with chorizo. The quality of the ingredients as well as the overall taste of the dishes was superb. Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the meal was at the end when we sat down as a class at the long communal table just outside the kitchen to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

L'Atelier des Chefs is a true gem of a school. The staff is friendly and the atmosphere relaxed and informal. The immaculately clean and modern kitchen with its industrial ranges and ovens is open and bright. Classes here are packed with fun and flavour. And best of all, there's no washing up required.

PROS:

- Beautiful space
- A wide variety of cookery classes
- Delicious and easy to follow recipes
- Easy to source ingredients used in recipes
- Friendly staff
- Knowledgeable instructors

CONS:

Not all cooking is done individually—some is done in teams or by chef.

L'Atelier des Chefs, 19 Wigmore Street, London, W1U. Classes cover a variety of cooking styles and subjects and range from £18 for a half-hour lunch class to £144 for a four-hour Grande Cuisine masterclass. Various cookery items are available for sale in the cookery boutique.

<http://www.atelierdeschefs.co.uk/>

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