

He Travels – Take Cooking Lessons When Travelling



Damien Harris

Damien lives for food and wine. He has lent a hand to most of South Australia's best vineyards and is now managing the vines at Toitino Estate Wines in Paracombe, in the Adelaide Hills. He also makes wine, including a uniquely dry Gewürztraminer. His love of food complements his love of vino and while travelling he enjoys learning how to prepare local cuisines.

After a long flight with awful airplane food and stale recycled air, there's nothing like the smells that hit you when you get out onto hot, humid and hectic foreign streets.

My overseas adventures always include getting to know the local cuisine by hitting the streets to discover the local delights. And the best way I have found to really understand exotic food is to join a cooking course.

I usually do this at the start of my journey so I can really appreciate the local culture through the various flavours and ingredients. And who better than a local chef to help you find the ultimate meal at just the right price? I have attended cooking courses in Indonesia, Malaysia, and India – as well as plenty here in Australia.

Cooking courses are usually a day or an afternoon where you are shown traditional methods, tools of the trade, and techniques. Often they include a trip through local markets.

Travel guides by Lonely Planet or Eyewitness Travel Guide Series from DK generally cover cooking courses available. Lonely Planet even produce world food books for cuisine from New Orleans to the Caribbean. These include recipes, where to eat and drink, understanding the menu, pronunciation, etiquette and food history sections. So there is no excuse for being scared of exciting new culinary adventures.

My viticultural and winemaking experiences, learning how to understand my palate and what

constitutes particular tastes, have really helped me to understand food and the myriad of flavours around the world.

I remember in Indonesia learning how to make santan (coconut milk) from fresh coconuts. That fragrance will always stay with me – whenever I smell it it reminds me of travelling. And I have never purchased coconut milk in a can since I bought a coconut grater at a local market.

Check with customs before purchasing spices or wooden utensils. I invested fifty dollars in a great big bag of saffron (spices are amazingly cheap in Asian countries) only to have it confiscated at the airport. If in doubt – declare (it can be quicker through the queues as well).

So give it a try when you get to your next holiday destination. Spend a day or two relaxing (avoiding the club sandwiches), then book yourself in for a cooking course.

Take a camera, a sense of adventure, and an empty stomach to absorb all of that delicious food you are about to cook.

The sad part is that you have to come home, but your next shopping trip will be so much more exciting when you plan to prepare the recipes you learnt in another country.

I've just booked myself into a Moroccan cooking course... Mmmm, can't wait!



FIND COOKING CLASSES

AUSTRALIA

- Cook and Stay
www.cookandstay.com.au
- Red Balloon Days – experience website that includes cooking classes www.redballoondays.com.au
- GoDo - another experience website that includes cooking classes www.godo.com.au

INTERNATIONAL

- Infohub – US based website that has a comprehensive guide to cooking classes all over the world www.infohub.com
- Lonely Planet www.lonelyplanet.com
- Eyewitness Travel Guides – published by DK
(available in most bookstores)