

Class acts: Restaurant courses take diners behind the menu



Wondering what's going on behind the scenes in your favorite restaurant? More Boston spots are offering a chance to learn up-close-and-personal than ever before.

On Saturday, Eastern Standard (528 Commonwealth Ave., 617-532-9100), in partnership with sister spots Island Creek Oyster Bar and The Hawthorne, is giving food fans a marathon chance to learn what goes into their renowned food and beverage programs with six mini-courses from 11 a.m. to 5:20 p.m. Participants can study scotch, learn about preparing raw food, enjoy cheese as dessert and more.

"It springs from what we do here every day," Deena Marlette, a manager and the brainchild behind the program, told the Herald. Marlette, who has a master's degree in education, said the restaurants will often post teasers from their daily staff-wide meetings on social media. "People hear about what we do and they say, 'How can we get in on those (meetings)?' It kind of sprang up out of that."

While the whole day might seem a bit daunting, the mix-and-match nature of the classes means the day can be tailored to any taste. "(The classes) are made for the everyday food fan and the everyday Eastern Standard fan," Marlette said. "I was thinking we would be overwhelmed by regulars, but through word of mouth we also have first-time diners and students from the gastronomy program at Boston University."

Eastern Standard isn't the only hot eatery offering a peek into their kitchen. Ken Oringer and Jamie Bissonnette's enoteca **Coppa** (253 Shawmut Ave., 617-391-0902) is offering a cheese-making course on Saturday as well. Lourdes Smith of Fiore di Nonno, a small-batch mozzarella shop in Somerville, will teach a course on stretching and forming fresh, homemade cheese. The class runs from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the \$85 cost includes breakfast coffee and pastries, lunch, a drink and a take-home recipe.

Shanti Indian restaurant in Dorchester (1111 Dorchester Ave., 617-929-3900) is also offering a behind-the-scenes experience, as chef Anand Pokhrel walks diners through the flavors of five traditional dishes, offers a demonstration and shares a favorite recipe on Monday.

"The hardest thing about Indian cooking is getting past the intimidation of all the different spices. That's why we started these classes ... to familiarize people with the flavors of Indian cuisine," Pokhrel said. The class runs from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and costs \$25.

Prefer to stay in the comfort of your own home? Try a to-go wine class from **Formaggio Kitchen** in either the South End (268 Shawmut Ave., 617-350-6996) or Cambridge (244 Huron Ave., 617-354-4750). "When we started doing the Formaggio Food Community with community-supported cheese and charcuterie from small local producers, we thought, 'We should do that with wine,'" said Julie Cappelano, the shop's wine buyer. "Each month has a theme — be it grade, region, winemaker — so along with the (three) bottles you get a packet on the grapes, the winemaker, tasting notes, food and cheese pairings. You can do all the wines at once or one at a time," she said. This month's theme is sangiovese grapes, and they will be available for pickup starting tomorrow. A one-month membership costs \$60.