

# KITCHEN *on* FIRE

*Bored with reading cookbooks and watching the Food Network?*

Berkeley culinary school turns classes and team-building events into lively entertainment

[www.KitchenOnFire.com](http://www.KitchenOnFire.com)



In early 2005, Chef MikeC. and Oliver Said began thinking about the ultimate recipe for a cooking school that would give amateur chefs the essence of a professional education without the drudgery or expense.

MikeC. – a graduate of the California Culinary Academy who had been with Sur La Table since 2002, both as a resident instructor and manager of their in-store culinary program – and Said – an award-winning cookbook author and managing partner of the immensely-popular CÉSAR Tapas Bar next door to Chez Panisse in Berkeley – knew it had

to be fun in order to compete with the powerful Food Network, the hundred or so cookbooks in print, and other classes available in the region.

The result was **KITCHEN ON FIRE**, possibly the only culinary school that teaches you how to cook like a pro while making it feel like party.

How did they do it? First, they picked one of the Bay Area's most inspiring locations – Berkeley's Gourmet Ghetto, where Alice Water's launched a culinary revolution in 1971 with the opening of her landmark Chez Panisse. KITCHEN ON FIRE is situated just two doors down, on the second floor of the new Epicurious Garden, in a neighborhood rooted in the organic and natural tradition.

Once the site was selected, they concentrated on creating a mellow environment to serve as a stress-free retreat where guests can make new friends while sharpening their skills. So they designed the 1200 square-foot gallery-like space to resemble an upscale San Francisco loft, featuring a state-of-the-art kitchen sized to handle up to 40 hands-on students at a time. The walls are splashed with bright reds and oranges. Cool music plays in the background. Floor to ceiling windows fill the studio with natural light and open onto an airy balcony with a birds-eye view of bustling Shattuck Avenue below.

Upon arriving, guests nibble on appetizers. Hands-on classes begin with a brief orientation, loaded with professional tips and guaranteed to produce a few laughs. Then everyone dons aprons and heads to the work stations, where they'll prepare complete meals (all the prep work and measuring is done for you), then chow down before heading home. To spice it up, guests are encouraged to bring wine or their favorite bar drinks (sipping is allowed throughout the session!).

The curriculum – consisting of a sizzling roster of hands-on classes, demonstrations, lectures and cook's tours – gives first-timers and accomplished home chefs plenty to chew on. For instance, a weekly 12-part series – called **The Basics of Cooking** – journeys through knife skills, stocks and soups, mother and small sauces, stewing and braising, sauté and stir fry, pan and deep frying, grilling, roasting and broiling, yeast breads, quick breads and doughs, and starches and grains – climaxing in an Iron Chef cook-off in which classmates will fix a multi-course meal from a mystery basket of ingredients. Other regular hands-on series include **Test Kitchen** (which unravels the science behind why things taste different, depending on how they're prepared), **Knife Skills** (taught by Chef MikeC., a highly-regarded expert), **Cooking 101** (individual dishes are tackled with relish), and **Theme Party** (secrets of professional party planners revealed!). Monthly events include a **Singles Night** and behind-the-scenes regional **Culinary Tours**. As much as possible, KITCHEN ON FIRE uses organic and natural products, with an emphasis on locally-grown fresh produce.

**A complete schedule is available at [www.KitchenOnFire.com](http://www.KitchenOnFire.com)**, with easy online registration. (NOTE: new classes and culinary events are added frequently.)

Since opening in April 2006, KITCHEN ON FIRE has also become a Mecca for private team-building events and parties. Recent corporate clients have included Wells Fargo, Old Navy,

Charles Schwab, American Express, and Zhone Technologies. The popular Gourmet Ghetto has also hosted member dinners there this summer.

The co-owners also offer a range of consulting services, including recipe development, staff training, professional and home kitchen design, and product testing. KITCHEN ON FIRE is sponsored by KitchenAid®, Anolon Advanced® Gourmet Cookware, and Furi® Cutlery.

\* \* \*

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Lyla Foggia  
Foggia Public Relations LLC  
(503) 622-0232  
lyla@foggiapr.com