

Strategies

Our 23 favorite culinary adventures range from half-day sessions to weeklong courses.



Thailand

BANGKOK—A quick and lovely sail across the Chao Phraya river delivers you from the **Mandarin Oriental** to the beautifully restored house brimming with antiques that's home to the hotel's cooking school (mandarinoriental.com/bangkok; from US\$130). And what a course: under the tutelage of chef Narain Kiattiyocharoen, you'll master 30 dishes over the course of six consecutive, sensory-rich days—though you're welcome to sign up for just one five-recipe class. Learn to prepare iconic dishes, starting with

a detailed introduction to the fundamental ingredients and cultural ancestry of Thai cuisine. Taste, smell and touch local herbs from the hotel's on-site garden before venturing to the kitchen for hands-on experience. You might have the chance to whip up a batch of *gai takrai* (deep-fried chicken with crispy lemongrass), perhaps the most addictive fingerfood ever, or *haw mok thalay*, a creamy seafood mousse rich with coconut milk and spice, and studded with tender pieces of shellfish. The lesson is peppered with anecdotes and tips (a brass wok makes the most sensational curries) suitable for both novice cooks and experienced Thai chefs. The class ends, of course,

in a lavish lunch and a goodie bag with bundles of fragrant spices. → **SPEND THE NIGHT** This grande dame needs little introduction. It's as effortlessly classy as ever. **CHIANG MAI**—At the colonial-style **137 Pillars House Hotel** (137pillarshouse.com; from US\$115), chef Jaiphak Na Chiang Mai tempers the heat of traditional fiery recipes. Fans of Thai food eager to master *tom yum goong* (prawn soup with lemongrass) and *gaeng kiew wan gai* (green curry with chicken) won't be disappointed. → **DON'T MISS** A visit to the local Tanin Market, where students shop for ingredients such as lemongrass and galangal before pulling out the mortar and pestle.

Italy

TUSCANY—

At the 12th-century **Castello di Vicarello** (*vicarello.it*; from US\$260; doubles from \$530), hotelier and cookbook author Aurora Baccheschi Berti focuses on the rustic cuisine of Maremma, on Tuscany's southwest coast. → **TOP DISH** Tortelli with ricotta and spinach, which you'll prepare using the estate's own olive oil and produce from the kitchen garden.

CAMPANIA—In Naples, owner and master *pizzaiolo* Enzo Coccia of the celebrated Pizzeria La Notizia holds weeklong classes through his **Pizza Consulting** (blog.pizzanapoletana.com; from US\$950). Learn the secrets behind Neapolitan pizza—from proofing *doppio-zero*-flour dough to firing wood-burning ovens. → **DON'T MISS** A visit to one of the regional olive and tomato producers that supply Coccia's restaurant.

Fixing a traditional Thai dessert of glacéed bananas at the Mandarin Oriental Bangkok.

WASINEE CHANTAKORN