

WISCONSIN



Savory Spoon Cooking School

Ellison Bay, Wisconsin

Door County may not be as pristine as it was when the Europeans discovered it a few hundred years ago, but to many summer vacationers who return loyally each year, it is a spectacular, underdeveloped paradise with miles of natural beauty. Located in Wisconsin's Upper Peninsula, the county is wedged between Green Bay and Lake Michigan and stretches from below Sturgeon Bay to Washington Island.

Like most multiethnic areas, Door County has its share of traditions. For tourists, perhaps one of the most talked about eating experiences is the boil-over, a cookout passed on to modern diners by the early Scandinavian settlers. For many first-timers this unique dining experience is anything but elegant and savory, and, in fact, urbanites may find it primitive—but that is part of its appeal to tourists.

The featured food for the boil-over is whitefish steak cuts, which are placed into baskets before being submerged into a huge pot of boiling water containing sweet onions and potatoes. Before the baskets are removed from the pot, kerosene is tossed on the fire, which explodes into a huge flame. This causes the water in the pot to boil over, dousing the flames and washing away the fish oils floating on the surface of the water. The baskets of fish are then removed from the pot, and the food is served with plenty of butter and coleslaw. The feast ends with a slice of the traditional Door County cherry pie.

Cooking school students who wish to contrast this with a more traditional and appetizing dining experience should head to the Savory Spoon Cooking School near the tip of the peninsula in Ellison Bay. Classes are held in a historic schoolhouse that has been converted into a handsome state-of-the-art kitchen especially designed for teaching small groups of students.



Chef Janice Thomas, founder of the cooking school, prepares a pie.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SAVORY SPOON COOKING SCHOOL

Janice Thomas, who founded the school in 2004, shares the teaching spotlight with local food celebrities.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

The school is very young, but Thomas brings to it over twenty years of experience in the food industry, fourteen of them spent running a catering company in Tucson, Arizona. During those years, when she wasn't helping her husband manage their four restaurants, she would cater events like the LPA and LPGA Golf Tournaments or christen new kitchens by holding cooking classes in them to demonstrate the appliances. She also took a four-week cooking class at Le Cordon Bleu in regional French cooking and, whenever time permitted, private classes with respected chefs in France, Mexico, and Ireland.

PHILOSOPHY

Her teaching goal is to connect students with food. She wants them to fall in love with cooking and create a recipe book that they can share with their families. She worries that, if the fast-food trends continue, Americans may never outgrow their fast-food dependency and will lose out on the joy of enjoying and creating flavorful slow foods.

ABOUT THE CLASSES

The class begins with a forty- to forty-five-minute demonstration/lecture on how to purchase products, slice foods, and more. For quick, efficient cooking, all ingredients are laid out for each student to use, measured exactly, identified, and covered with plastic wrap. The students are given five recipes that they prepare in groups. The recipes will require a mix of skills and steps, from the simple to the complex. Students will learn to use locally grown ingredients to create tasty and familiar foods like tacos, burritos, and enchiladas, and less-familiar foods like Asian Pâté with Grand Marnier on Wonton Crisps.

Each class has a unique focus, and students who want to make a long weekend of it can attend three or four distinctive evening classes. One might include Asian bistro flavors, another barbecue sauces, and another French countryside cooking. Students who prefer a shorter class can take a Sweet Saturday Morning class, which lasts one-and-a-half hours. In this class students make confections of all sorts to take home, from toffee to truffles.

Class Costs: \$45 to \$65 per person.

Class Frequency: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, June through October.

Class Length: Three to three-and-a-half hours (6:00 to 9:30 p.m.).

Class Type: Demonstration/hands-on.

Class Size: Fourteen to sixteen students.

Lodging: The school does not provide accommodations, but the following lodgings are nearby:

Woodenheart Inn, 11086 Highway 42, Sister Bay, WI 54234; (920) 854-9097; www.woodenheart.com. This is a log home constructed to be a bed-and-breakfast in 1992. It offers full amenities, including wireless Internet access.

Spiced Rubbed Pork Tenderloin



Compliments of the Savory Spoon Cooking School

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ancho chile powder
- 1 large shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons adobo sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3½ pounds pork tenderloin, trimmed and cut crosswise into 8 equal parts
- 12 dried corn husks
- 4 ounces goat cheese
- ¼ cup chopped dried Door County cherries

1. In a small dry skillet over high heat, stir cumin and coriander until aromatic, about 1–2 minutes. In a small bowl, mix the cumin, coriander, pepper, chile powder, shallot, olive oil, adobo sauce, salt, and garlic until a paste forms. Rub all sides of the tenderloin with the paste; cover and chill overnight.
2. Choose corn husks that are wide and clean, and soak them in warm water for 1 hour. Drain and pat dry. Tear four of the corn husks lengthwise into strips ½ or ¾ inch wide, and tie the strips together to create corn husk ribbons.
3. Place one pork tenderloin serving in the center of each remaining corn husk. Place one slice of goat cheese and 1 tablespoon of the cherries on top of the tenderloin. Wrap the corn husks around the pork and tie the center and the ends of each with corn husk ribbons, enclosing pork completely. Place pork bundles on a baking sheet.
4. Preheat oven to 350°F. Bake pork bundles uncovered until instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of each registers 150°F, 20–25 minutes, depending on thickness of pork.
5. Place pork bundles on plates and remove the corn husk ribbon from one end of each, folding the corn husk back slightly to expose some of the meat. Spoon the Cherry Avocado Salsa alongside (recipe follows).

Serves 8.

Juniper Inn (Fish Creek), N9423 Maple Grove Road, Fish Creek, WI 54212; (800) 218-6960; www.juniperinn.com. This comfortable and attractive property is near Peninsula Park and two distinctive villages, Fish Creek and Ephraim. It has the usual basic appointments, including private bath, fireplace, and private deck. Hillside Inn, 9980 Water Street, Ephraim, WI 54211; (866) 673-8456; www.visitephraim.com. This is small, elegant, nineteenth-century inn in picturesque Ephraim has been carefully restored in recent years to preserve its historic heritage.

Activities: Flanked by cherry and apple orchards, this relatively narrow area of the Upper Peninsula (about 75 miles long) is a mix of contrasting images—the remote and developed, the barren and lush—all within easy reach of each other. As a result, there is something for everyone, including five state parks, campgrounds, boat launches, hiking trails, sandy beaches, and a picturesque collection of communities like Fish Creek (which has the historic Alexander Noble House), Sister Bay (with its Old Anderson House museum), Egg Harbor (and its Cupola House), Crossroads (a nineteenth-century village), and much more. For more information contact: The Savory Spoon Cooking School, 12042 Highway 42, Ellison Bay, WI 54210; (920) 854-6600; www.savoryspoon.com.

Cherry Avocado Salsa



Compliments of the Savory Spoon Cooking School

Ingredients

- 1 yellow pepper
- 12 ounces tart cherries, chopped into quarters
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and chopped
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 2 ripe avocados, halved, pitted, peeled, and diced (always buy an extra one for backup)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro (leaves only, no stems)

1. Char pepper over gas flame until blackened on all sides. Place charred pepper in a plastic bag to sweat for 15 minutes. Peel, seed, and chop pepper. Set aside.
2. Combine cherries, sugar, maple syrup, and orange juice in a bowl. Add pepper, orange zest, avocados, and cilantro.

Makes 3 cups.