

BRINGING HEALTHY MEALS TO YOUR TABLE

~ Local Options
for Cooking Classes

**Natalie Marble of
Ann Arbor Cooks!**

Photograph by Rachael Waring

By Sarah Rigg
Photography by Rachael Waring

A good diet is a key component of good health, but many people don't have time for elaborate recipes or don't know how to make healthy food taste good. Eating out is convenient, but it isn't always easy to make healthy choices from the menu. Cooking at home allows you to make mindful decisions about using healthier ingredients, but learning to make healthy recipes at home in a way that appeals to the whole family can be a challenge.

Luckily, whether you're hoping to simply cook healthier versions of your favorite comfort foods or want to make a radical change in your diet, to become vegetarian or go totally raw, there are classes and services in the Ann Arbor area that can help you find healthier ways of eating.

Ann Arbor's many cooking classes

While some cooking classes in the greater Ann Arbor area focus on presentation or learning world cuisine without a strong emphasis on nutrition, there are a number of classes in Washtenaw County that focus heavily or exclusively on healthier fare.

Those who enjoy traditional American and French cuisine and just want to discover some healthier techniques and recipes might enjoy taking classes with Ann Arbor Cooks!.

Started in May 2009 by Natalie Marble, Ann Arbor Cooks! offers some of the only full-participation classes in Washtenaw County. Marble said that when she was researching places to teach cooking, she found mostly demonstration classes.

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Healthy Cooking Classes in Ann Arbor

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“Participation classes are where my heart is,” Marble said. “When students connect with ingredients and techniques, their confidence to create at home is much greater.”

Marble trained at the L’Academie de Cuisine, a small, private French culinary school in the Washington, DC, area that emphasizes cooking skills.

While many of Marble’s classes focus on having fun with food rather than specifically on health food, she said she does try to include local, organic ingredients whenever possible.

“I use the Farmers Market a ton,” she said. “We aren’t fully organic, but I certainly try to bring as much organic product in as we can and promote that awareness.”

Marble also has started offering classes that are specifically aimed at people who want to eat healthy. For instance, earlier this year, she held a class for those who want to try going vegetarian and another for those who have made a resolution to eat healthier.

“I use the Farmers Market a ton. We aren’t fully organic, but I certainly try to bring as much organic product in as we can and promote that awareness... Just because I’m classically French trained doesn’t mean that everything is dripping with cream and butter.”

-- Natalie Marble of Ann Arbor Cooks!

“Just because I’m classically French trained doesn’t mean that everything is dripping with cream and butter,” she said.

Marble said she emphasizes technique over recipes, and that applies to her healthy cooking classes as well. She shows her students how to steam and blanch rather than fry their vegetables and fish, and how to take the same basic, healthy ingredients and season them in radically different ways.

“I’m trying to show that you don’t have to take the flavor out,” Marble said. “Just because you’re eating healthy, it doesn’t have to be boring.”

Marble said she’s still learning what the Ann Arbor community is looking for in cooking classes, but that her clientele is definitely aware of the big issues such as the slow food and locavore movements.

“We’re seeing a big return to the kitchen,” Marble said. “Despite what some people might say, particularly locally here, people want to be aware of where their food is coming from.”

Adult enrichment classes offered through Ann Arbor Community Education and Recreation are another resource for healthy cooking classes. Linda Brzezinski, program supervisor for adult enrichment programs, said that she’s seen “a lot of interest” in cooking classes.



Photograph by Rachael Waring

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Natalie Marble

“We get a lot of requests for classes that are about healthy cooking,” Brzezinski said. “Currently, many of our cooking classes are co-sponsored with St. Joseph Mercy at the Catherine McAuley Center. Their classes are all health-related and taught by registered dietitians.”

The city’s adult enrichment programs offer cooking classes at other locations as well, including Huron High School, the two local Whole Foods stores, and in the kitchen of Big George’s Appliance store.

Brzezinski said class sizes are typically kept small, so that students can get more one-on-one attention from the instructor.

“For instance, at Big George’s, you’re sitting right up to the breakfast bar, directly opposite the cooking surface. You can’t get more than fourteen people in there. It’s a nice, intimate class with lots of interaction with the instructor.”

Jamie Allison

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Location A2yoga Studio, 2030 Commerce Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Contact Ana Powell 734-216-4006 / www.a2yoga.com

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2.5 hour class \$50 2 hour class \$40 Kirtan \$10

Justin Allison has studied with Jamie and John Friend since 1995. He received his Anusara certification in 2002. Justin continues his studies with John Friend and Dr. Douglas Brooks, Rajanaka Tantra Scholar. Justin, a world class musician and skillful assistant, adds musical ambiance to Savasna and leads Kirtan.






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Brzezinski said the adult enrichment cooking classes attract a wide variety of participants, from high school students to mature adults and seniors. She added that the Community Education and Recreation department is “continually striving” to add more healthy cooking classes since, currently, demand outstrips availability.

Another option for cooking classes is “Flavors to Savor,” offered through the Grass Lake Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is a 145-acre nature preserve space that specializes in rejuvenation retreats. Their mission, according to their online brochure, is “to provide a space and programs where people can learn to reestablish balance and connection within their personal and natural worlds.”

The classes at Hollander’s feature cuisines from around the world, from Italian pasta dishes to Indian cuisine. The emphasis at Hollander’s is not specifically on healthy food, but rather on developing an educated palate. Still, many of the dishes offered are healthy and cooked with local ingredients.

Flavors to Savor is the sanctuary’s sustainable agriculture and catering service. It uses a “dirt-to-plate” food concept that provides organic meals and hands-on education for events at the sanctuary, as well as cooking classes. This spring’s class schedule includes offerings such as “Gluten-Free Picnic” with instructor Joanna Mills and “The Mediterranean Diet: Three Great Dishes” with David Leavitt.

Heather Brumwell, a volunteer with the Sanctuary, said the classes started in the summer of 2009 and focus on foods that are “organic, healthy and local,” adding that they’re also “extremely fun.” All of the proceeds from class fees benefit the sanctuary.

Brumwell said the sanctuary’s mission has three branches: land stewardship, rejuvenation and restoration services, and food for health. While the cooking classes obviously fit the “food for health” mission, they also contain elements of rejuvenation and land stewardship. Brumwell said that eating healthy

doesn’t have to be serious or boring, though. The goal is to make locally grown and organic food into meals that are “fun and interesting.”

“We’re constantly making efforts to move toward creating the cleanest, most interesting relationship with food,” said Brumwell, referring to a philosophy of organic, local, sustainable food, not fraught with ethical problems like factory-farmed food. “And food is key for helping in recovery, or if you’re going through a health issue... Basically, we’re trying to give back to the earth while creating fun, new, exciting meals.”

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Cooking and Food Preparation Classes:

Ann Arbor Cooks!

Instructor: Natalie Marble

Emphasis: Traditional French and American cuisine.

Address: Inside the Main Dish Kitchen, 5060 Jackson Rd., Ann Arbor

Phone number: (734) 645-1030

Web site: www.annarborcooks.com

Grass Lake Sanctuary’s Flavors to Savor

Instructors: Various

Emphasis: Healthy dishes with local, organic ingredients.

Address: Classes held at various locations.

Phone number: (720) 218-9861

Web site: www.grasslakesanctuary.com

Ann Arbor Community Education and Recreation’s Adult Enrichment Cooking Classes

Instructors: Various

Emphasis: Varies, but many classes focus on heart-healthy meals

Address: Classes held at various locations

Phone number: (734) 994-2300, ext. 53203

Web site: http://aareced.com/reced.home/reced.programs/adult_enrichment

Raw Food Classes at Living Yoga

Instructor: Ellen Livingston

Emphasis: Raw food recipes, advice, and support

Address: Living Yoga LLC, P.O. Box 3275, Ann Arbor

Phone number: (734) 995-0875

Web site: <http://livingyoganow.com/index.html>

Hollander’s Kitchen & Home

Instructors: Various

Emphasis: Variety; world cuisine.

Address: Kerrytown Mall, 410 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor

Phone number: (734) 741-7531

Web site: www.hollanders.com/workshops/

Other Healthy Eating Resources:

Wellness Community of Southeast Michigan

Focus: Free cancer support, including classes on nutrition and “cooking for wellness”

Address: 2010 Hogback Rd., Suite 3, Ann Arbor

Phone number: (734) 975-2500

Web site: <http://www.thewellnesscommunity.org/semich/main/index.php>

MHealthy - University of Michigan Health & Well-Being Services

Focus: Information, services and classes about fitness, nutrition, and more, for U-M employees and the general public. Offers healthy cooking demonstrations.

Phone number: (734) 975-3024

Web site: <http://hr.umich.edu/mhealthy/programs/nutrition/cooking/index.html>

Slow Food Huron Valley

Focus: Promoting sustainable agricultural practices and buying local food.

Web site: <http://www.slowfoodhuronvalley.com/SFHV/Welcome.html>

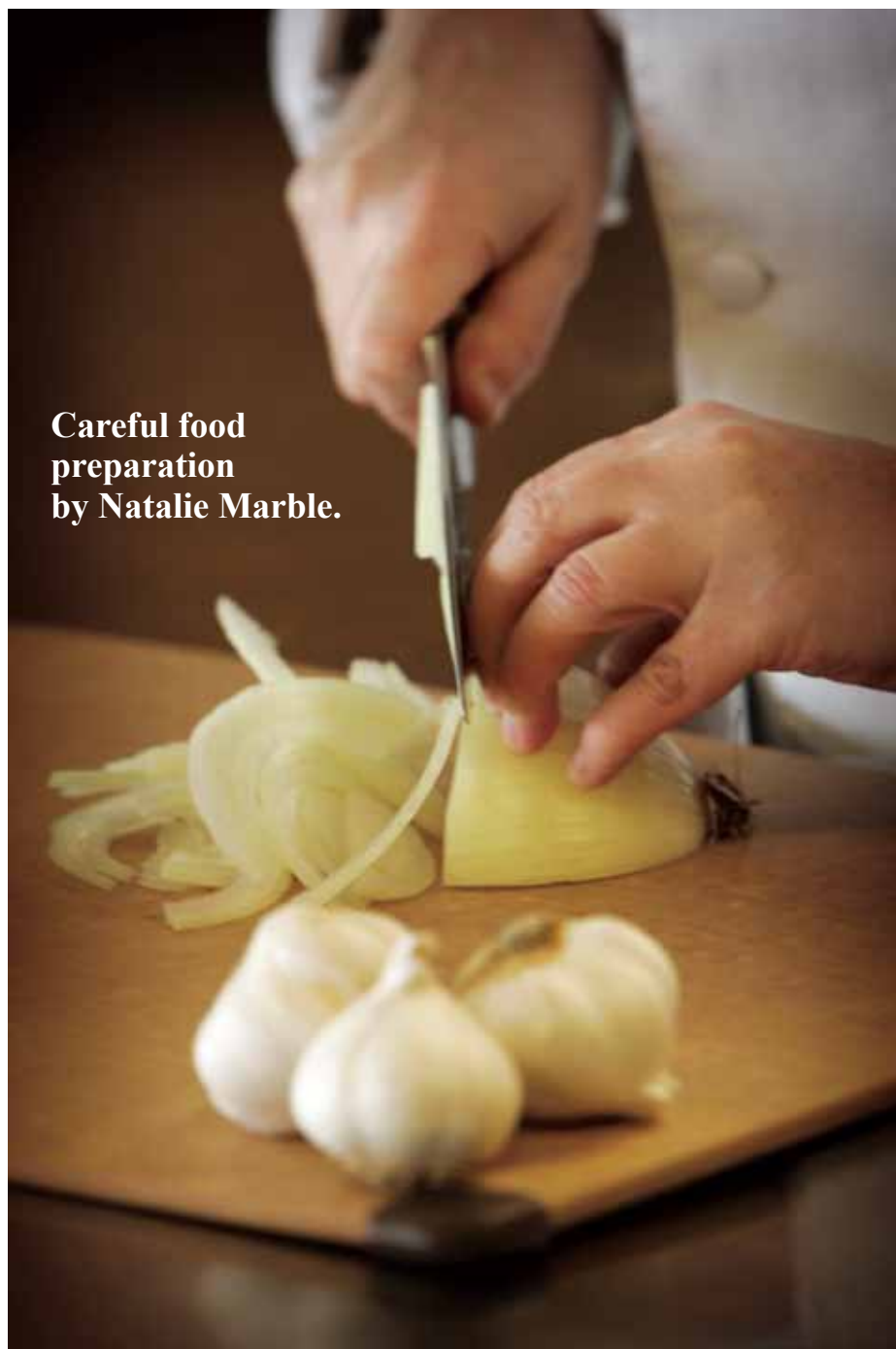
For more information: leadership@slowfoodhuronvalley.com



Food dishes prepared by Natalie Marble of Ann Arbor Cooks!

Healthy Cooking Classes in Ann Arbor

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Careful food preparation by Natalie Marble.

Photograph by Rachael Waring

Another place to take cooking classes is through Hollander's, a business best known for its stationery and paper supplies. They began offering cooking classes as part of the store's expansion last year, when they opened Hollander's Kitchen & Home.

The classes at Hollander's feature cuisines from around the world, from Italian pasta dishes to Indian cuisine. The emphasis at Hollander's is not specifically on healthy food, but rather on developing an educated palate. Still, many of the dishes offered are healthy and cooked with local ingredients.

George Rodgers, kitchen coordinator, said the classes are a recent addition, starting up in September 2009.

Raw foods educator Ellen Livingston said that some people worry about feeling deprived of comfort food on a raw food diet, but that this way of eating is actually "very satisfying and satiating."

"It's still really new to us," Rodgers said. He said chefs and cooks in the area have been enthusiastic about offering classes through Hollander's.

"We've been really lucky," Rodgers said. "People found out we started having these classes, and the teachers came to us. Right now, we're just featuring whichever cooks come to us and seem like a good fit for the store."

Those looking for a complete change of pace when it comes to dietary habits might benefit from taking a one-time seminar or an ongoing class with local raw foods educator Ellen Livingston. Livingston received Raw Nutritional Science training from internationally renowned raw food and fitness teachers Dr. Doug Graham and Professor Rozalind Gruben Graham.

Livingston's Web site explains that, for humans, "our natural diet [should] consist of fresh, ripe, raw, whole, organic plant foods. These are the foods nature provides for us, and these are the foods that make up the diet of our closest animal relatives — specifically, the bonobo monkey, who shares most of our DNA and our exact digestive system, and eats a diet of mostly raw fruit and some leafy greens. When humans eat this fresh raw plant diet, devoid of animal or grain products, we thrive. Degenerative disease is avoided and our bodies work the way they're supposed to."

"My most popular current class is called "30 Days of Raw Vibrance Coaching Group," Livingston said. "It helps people be on a raw diet for 30 days. It inspires them and shows them what's possible."

More than a food preparation class, this course offers a weekly support meeting that includes a raw food meal.

Natalie Marble and guests enjoy the completed meal.



Photograph by Rachael Waring

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“We sit down and have a raw dinner together at the meeting,” Livingston said. She said many people pursuing a raw diet struggle because they don’t have support from family and friends, who don’t understand the raw food diet. The meeting provides a rare opportunity for camaraderie with others interested in raw foods.

Livingston also teaches two-hour classes with very simple recipes and a one-day informational seminar that explains the science behind the raw food diet.

“People do better if they really understand why they’re doing it and what it’s all about,” she said. Livingston typically gets questions about how to get adequate protein and calcium on a raw foods diet and how to follow the diet safely.

She said that some people worry about feeling deprived of comfort food on a raw food diet, but that this way of eating is actually “very satisfying and satiating.”

“What’s very positive is that you’re eating foods that are so obviously alive,” Livingston said. “They’re just vibrating with pure water and energy. They’re water-rich and nutrient dense. You get a lot of nutrients per calorie, so you don’t have to overeat on calories to fulfill your need for nutrients.”

Livingston said there’s a lot of conflicting information out there about raw food diets and many different ways to approach a raw food diet. She emphasizes a low-fat diet whose mainstay is fruit.

“Most people, given a chance to remember, absolutely love fresh fruit,” she said. “It’s hard to overeat on fruit because it’s so satisfying. Your appetite shuts down at the appropriate time.”

Livingston also teaches yoga, and says that exercise is the other half of the equation when it comes to healthy living.

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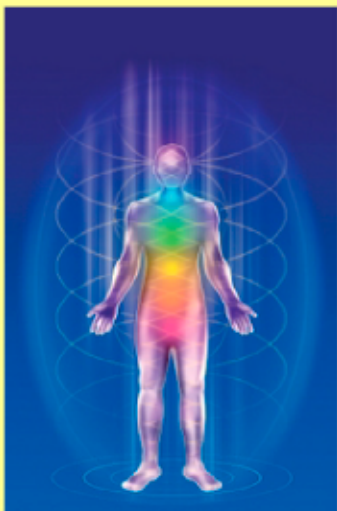
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LAURIE AKERROS BA, MA, LMT is a member of the International Network of Esoteric Healing, and she teaches classes worldwide. Her formal education was in psychology, and she has 30 years of training and experience in holistic healing, with a varied "toolchest" to offer her clients and students. She is a cranio-sacral practitioner, a vibrational and flower essence therapist, and energy healer with a private practice in Ann Arbor.

To register for classes, call: **734-255-2677**

