

An Italian Culinary Academy in the Heart of Soho

A.B. (May 11, 2011)



The Chefs of the future are training at the Italian Culinary Academy. Two of them were awarded the Italian Trade Commission Scholarship

Italy's cuisine is vast and multifarious. Sometimes driving a few miles even in the same region can bring your tasting buds to experience an array of flavors completely different from what you have just left behind. Moreover, food is inextricably intertwined with other aspects of Italian life, such as love, family, and friends. With such a complex universe to take in, perspective students of Italian cuisine need a well-rounded training, not just tutorials of techniques. The Total Immersion experience designed by Tuscan Chef [Cesare Casella](#) [2], Dean of Italian Studies at [The International Culinary Center](#) [3] in Soho, is intended to do just that.



[Dorothy Cann Hamilton](#) [4] in 2007, the same woman who twenty years earlier had created [The French Culinary Institute](#) [5], launched the [The Italian Culinary Academy](#) [6]. With a similar visionary intuition she thought it was time to give birth to an Academy that celebrated Italian culture and food. To direct the prestigious institution she called Casella who knew that at the sister-school, the French Culinary Institute, the title of Dean had been given to master Chefs [Jacques Torres](#) [7], [Jacques Pepins](#) [8], [Alain Sailhac](#) [9]. "I realized what an amazing opportunity I had," he confessed. The Tuscan Chef was given carte blanche and after two years of planning, he inaugurated this special piece of Italy in the heart of Soho.

Totally immersed in Italian culture, learning to speak and comprehend the language, students enrolled in the intense course have available the campus in New York City and a prestigious cooking school in Parma, Italy. "We don't simply teach techniques: our students study history, geography, and culture," said a proud Casella. Ten weeks of intensive cooking classes are spent in the States. Afterwards the students move to the bel paese for nine weeks at [ALMA](#) [10], the International School of Italian Cuisine led by [Gualtiero Marchesi](#) [11]. Before returning to the U.S. for final exams and graduation, they spend nine more weeks in a specific region getting a real-life experience in a restaurant.

"Of course in 28 weeks you can't learn everything," added Casella, "but once graduated our students will certainly understand the difference between authentic ingredients and imitations." "The course in Parma is meant, in fact, to prepare students who will then come back to the United States," explained the Tuscan Chef. "This is an investment for us," says the Executive Director of the North American branch of the [Italian Trade Commission](#) [12], Aniello Musella. "We are expecting these students to become the future Michael White or Mario Batali." The President of the Italian Trade Commission, in fact, believes that the hope is that future generations of Chefs are being created at the The Italian Culinary Academy.

And for this reason, this year, Italian Trade Commission donated two Scholarships worth a total of \$40,000 to two valuable students enrolled in The Italian Culinary Experience in 2010. Cameron Bryant and Terri Mouzon were the selected recipients. During a dinner at the Italian Culinary Academy, Bryant, a native of Mississippi, spoke about his experience working at [La salumeria](#) [2] as the trigger for his passion for Italian products and influencing his desire to seek an Italian culinary education at The Italian Culinary Academy. A New Jersey native, Mouzon had always sought inspiration from Italian culinary television personalities and from a lifelong love of Italian cuisine. Both award recipients look forward to opening their own Italian-influenced restaurants in the future. Deputy Consul Laura Aghilarre who attended the award ceremony, stressed how with this scholarship comes great responsibility because "the recipients are now ambassadors and witnesses of Italian culture."

The reception featured a menu which included authentic Italian ingredients, prepared by the students of The Italian Culinary Academy.

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[8] <http://www.kqed.org/food/jacquespepin/>

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