ADULT EDUCATION

Roll with It

Spend a little time with Dirk Fucik, the owner of Dirk's Fish and Gourmet Shop, and he will convince you that fish is easier to prepare than you might think—especially when it comes to sushi. "There's no such thing as bad sushi," he insists, "if the ingredients are good."

Many students sign up for Basic Sushi—the most popular of the shop's many cooking classes—because they love sushi but have no clue how to prepare it. "They're just scared to roll," says Fucik, "which is why we like to do it in an un-complicated, hands-on, average-Joe kind of way." He also likes to have a lot of fun in the BYO class, which takes place in the evening and draws mostly couples.

The class begins with students gathering at a big table in the center of the store, where they enjoy homemade miso soup and ginger tuna salad. While they eat, Fucik shares the history of sushi, explains wasabi, masago, and other ingredients, and shares tips for picking the freshest and best fish for sushi. Each student is given a kit with all the fixings and tools to prepare five maki rolls and two nigiri rolls, among them a tuna roll and a salmon mango roll.

Once the rolling begins, Fucik circulates, offering pointers and advice. (The most common problem he encounters? Students putting too much rice in a roll.) He acknowledges that the two-hour session tends to run long because everyone is usually having too good a time to call it a night—which is probably to be expected in a class with the motto "Eat what you roll and roll what you eat."

Offered by Dirk's Fish and Gourmet Shop. Meets Tuesday, October 5th, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Dirk's Fish and Gourmet Shop, 2070 N. Clybourn Ave. $75. 773-404-9475.

The Real China

An attorney and international businessman who has spent the last 20 years commuting between Chicago and Asia, John L. Rogers is crazy about China. "It's overwhelming, with an energy that's unlike anything else in the world," he says. And its explosive economic growth makes it a country to be reckoned with—though not everyone seems to understand that. "I believe U.S. students are not being told of the world challenge they will face during their careers, especially with regard to China," Rogers says, explaining his motivation for teaching The Real China Challenge: Discussions on Modern China.

In this four-week class, students explore the key issues facing contemporary China, examine how it has positioned itself as a world leader, and discuss the challenge China presents to the rest of the world. After surveying the country's

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ADULT EDUCATION

history, Rogers brings students up to speed on modern-day China and its extraordinary rate of current and projected economic growth—a rate that far exceeds that of the United States.

Rogers also touches on a number of issues confronting China—including pollution, the one-child policy, worker unrest, and Internet censorship—and looks at some of its success in education, technology, and other areas. Finally, Rogers has students consider how China might affect what they do—or plan to do—for a living. It can be a daunting, eye-opening task. “Like banging your head against the wall,” Rogers says, “it feels good when you stop.”

Offered by Continuum, a continuing education program at Loyola University. Meets Wednesdays, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., from September 29th to October 20th at the Water Tower Campus, 25 E. Pearson St. $225. 312-915-6501.

The French Collection

For most of his life, Joe Cuniff has been surrounded by art. When he was a child, his mother adorned the walls of their home with reproductions of famous paintings—such as Renoir’s The Two Sisters (on the Terrace)—and as an adult, he spends his free time at art museums. Which is why Cuniff feels so comfortable teaching in one of the city’s most remarkable classrooms: the Art Institute of Chicago.

For his ten-week course this fall, Art History at the Art Institute of Chicago: Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Cuniff takes his students from gallery to gallery as they study one of the museum’s most renowned collections—which includes paintings by Renoir, Van Gogh, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, and others. “The paintings themselves teach us,” says Cuniff, who helps students observe, analyze, and discuss the different works of art.

In addition to the paintings, Cuniff also spends time discussing the painters. “People love hearing about the artists’ lives,” he says. Because the collection holds more than 30 paintings by Claude Monet, that painter, one of the founders of impressionism, gets special attention. Students follow the artist from his impoverished youth to the days when he shared a studio with Renoir to the productive decades at Giverny—a time of Monet’s life when he attracted an eager coterie of collectors, among them the Chicagoans who helped make the Art Institute the perfect backdrop for Cuniff’s class.

Offered by the Art Institute of Chicago.

“PEOPLE LOVE HEARING ABOUT THE ARTISTS’ LIVES,” SAYS JOE CUNIFF, WHOSE ART INSTITUTE CLASS FOCUSES ON BOTH THE PAINTINGS AND THE PAINTERS.

Jamming with Djembe

There is often a waiting list for West African Dance 1 at the Old Town School of Folk Music, and Idy Ciss, the class’s instructor, is only partly to blame. A professional dancer from Senegal, West Africa, Ciss made his first trip to the city in 1997 when the Cultural Center of Chicago invited him to perform; he now lives here and dances professionally with the Muntu Dance Theater of Chicago. “I love to dance, and I love to teach dancing,” says Ciss. “I always try to have fun with my students, too. That’s what’s important to me.”

Ciss’s enthusiasm accounts in part for his crowded classes at Old Town, where he has been teaching since 1998. And then there’s the music. At each class, musicians bang rhythmically on African djembe hand drums, which sound a percussive beat that sometimes rocks the entire school. (Robert Tenges, Old Town’s director of education and programs, jokes that the school’s new facility, slated to open in the fall of 2011, will offer not only more space for the class but also better soundproofing.) “Music plays a big role in encouraging people,” Ciss says, “and it also takes dancing to another level. I tell my students, ‘If you like to dance, you’ve got to listen to the music.’”

And they do. Dancing to the djembe—which means “come together”—students learn traditional West African dances that celebrate momentous occasions and ceremonies. At the end of the eight-week class, they come together one last time to dance with the live djembe music at the school-wide recital that concludes each Old Town session of classes.

Offered by the Old Town School of Folk Music. Meets Tuesdays from 5:00 to 6:20 p.m. or 8:00 to 9:30 p.m., from August 31st to October 19th or Sundays from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., from September 5th to October 24th at the Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln Ave. $180. 773-728-6000.

Family Ties

“As we go back to our roots, we all leave the country,” says Kelly McGrath, a spokeswoman for the Newberry Library, home to more than 17,000 published genealogies and other resources invaluable to people serious about discovering their ancestry or verifying family stories. In the fall seminar Compelling Stories, Verifiable Facts: Getting the Best of Both Worlds, students will learn how to conduct revealing interviews, verify newly discovered information, and transform stories into factual histories.

“Interviewing is like a dance,” says Daniel P. Smith, one of the course’s two instructors. “Sometimes you’re leading, and sometimes you’re following.” An award-winning journalist and the author of On the Job: Behind the Stars of the Chicago Police Department (Lake Claremont Press), Smith covers the basics of interviewing and introduces some real-world tactics—such as embracing silence and asking open-ended questions—to help students improve their interrogatory technique.

For the second half of the seminar, Grace DuMelle, a genealogist and the author of Finding Your Chicago Ancestors: A Beginner’s Guide to Family History in the City and Cook County (Lake Claremont Press), shows students how to verify the interviews and stories they collect. “Story is the biggest part of history, and everybody has a story,” she says. DuMelle demonstrates the methods required to substantiate stories with facts, touching on reference tools such as city directories and craft registrations. “A lot of times, people don’t think their story is important,” she says. “But when you do genealogy, you find out that everybody’s story is just as fascinating as somebody who is very influential or famous.”

Offered by the Newberry Library. Meets Saturday, October 9th, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St. $65 (10 percent off for seniors, students, and Newberry associates). 312-255-3700.