

I haven't had good sea urchin in ages," you think. "And I'm really, really in the mood for good sea urchin." Any kind of sea urchin will do—fried, ambéed, you don't care. Your sea-urchin craving happens only once every few months or so, and your wife thinks it has something to do with your mother, whom you once described as "prickly." This is not surprising, because your wife hates your mother. At any rate, you have no idea where to find good sea urchin. Or bad sea urchin, for that matter. You'd ask your assistant for a recommendation, but she's too busy faxing merger documents to the wrong tax attorneys. You're not even sure she knows what a sea urchin is. The day's mail sits unopened in a pile on the edge of your desk and you reach under a stack of envelopes to find a letter from *New York Magazine*. It's the annual "Best of New York" issue. You've considered it an objective qualifier, and you suspect that magazines that publish "best of" issues are in some sort of institutional solipsism—things are "the best" because the magazine thinks they're "the best," but you decide to go with it. They've obviously spent months researching this tuff, and what difference does it make how *New York Magazine* differentiates between one knitting circle (page 88) and another? (Is the instructor knitter? The knitting better? Do the amateur knitters—the knitting poseurs—go elsewhere?) You note that the Best Place to Buy Flat-Screen TVs

# Culinary Arts

*It's time to use that Viking range for something more adventurous than kitchen eye-candy.*

**THE INSTITUTE OF CULINARY EDUCATION** 50 West 23rd Street (212-847-0700; [iceculinary.com](http://iceculinary.com)) With its sprawling test kitchens and dizzying array of courses, ICE, founded in 1975 by the late, great chef Peter Kump, can justifiably brag that it teaches "America's largest menu." Whether you sign up for the vaunted Techniques series—which has imparted the fundamentals of cooking to legions—or courses like Maki & More or Southern Barbecue, chances are you'll come away with lessons you can savor for years to come.

**NATURAL GOURMET COOKERY SCHOOL** 48 West 21st Street (212-645-5170; [natural-gourmetschool.com](http://natural-gourmetschool.com)) Although it offers classes like Raw-Food Basics and Sea Vegetables: A Deep-Sea Adventure, Natural Gourmet's appeal goes beyond tempeh fans. It's healthy cooking, yes, but healthy cooking bursting with flavor: You're as likely to make a world-class strawberry parfait as you are a seitan bordelaise.

**DE GUSTIBUS COOKING SCHOOL AT MACY'S HERALD SQUARE** 151 West 34th Street (212-439-1714; [de-gustibusinc.com](http://de-gustibusinc.com)) De Gustibus is further proof that we indeed live

in a charmed city. While its location—on the eighth floor of Macy's—is unassuming, the talent on display is anything but. In addition to classes in cuisines as varied as kosher, Italian, and Asian, the school provides an opportunity to learn from the best: Wylie Dufresne, François Payard, and Jonathan Waxman are just a few of the chefs in its spring lineup.

**KAREN LEE** 142 West End Avenue (212-787-2227; [karenleecooking.com](http://karenleecooking.com)) With 30 years of experience, five cookbooks to her credit, and an infectiously passionate personality, Karen Lee is one of the city's most renowned instructors. Specializing in healthy, vegetarian, and Asian-fusion cooking (as well as American and classic Italian), Lee teaches dishes like wild-mushroom spring rolls and steamed wild salmon with fresh thyme and verjus.



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