

# Can't Even Boil Water? Your Mouse Can Help

By **BONNIE ROTHMAN MORRIS**

**I**MAGINE you are in your kitchen, preparing a recipe that calls for homemade mayonnaise. You have never made it before, and the process as described in the cookbook seems daunting.

But if you are a student in Eric Arrouze's online cooking school, there is help. You can go to his Web site, [911cheferic.com](http://911cheferic.com), and call up a short clip of still images that shows Mr. Arrouze, a French-born-and-trained chef and cooking instructor in Vancouver, British Columbia, making mayonnaise himself. After these tips from a master, whipping eggs and oil into homemade Hellman's should be a cinch.

Mr. Arrouze's online tutorials are among a handful of cooking classes on the Web. None of these classes promise to turn the neophyte into the next darling of the food scene. What they do offer, online teachers and their students say, is a safety net for new cooks, and a place for kitchen enthusiasts to connect with an expert, no matter how far across the globe they are flung.

Mr. Arrouze, who also teaches classes at the University of British Columbia and other locations in the Vancouver area, says that a couple of hundred students have signed up for his online service, which costs \$7 a month. For that fee, they get unlimited access to several hundred QuickTime clips showing Mr. Arrouze at work.

In addition to basics, he offers tutorials on making exotic fare like escargots à la bourguignonne and pan-seared duck breast. There are even clips of kitchen techniques like boning fowl and chopping onions.

Other cooking instruction is offered by distance-learning Web sites like Suite University ([suite101.com](http://suite101.com)) and Universal Class ([universalclass.com](http://universalclass.com)), which are the online

where just about anyone can offer to teach others about anything.

At Universal Class, for example, Tracy Farnsworth, a stay-at-home parent in Milton, Vt., teaches "Cooking Basics" and "Baking Basics." Mrs. Farnsworth says she started teaching online to help pay the bills, and now makes about \$100 a week from teaching about 27 cooking students, as well as 113 students who take her course in shorthand.

"Cooking Basics" is similar to a correspondence course, consisting of written lessons — 14 in all, covering fundamental concepts like kitchen equipment, terminology, menu planning and, at the end, simple recipes. Students pay \$10 for the course and can take written tests to earn a certificate of completion (which costs \$18 more).

Writing a class that works was not easy. "I took what I felt was the hardest things to learn when I started baking" and wrote down the details, Mrs. Farnsworth said. The class instruction took her about a month to write, proofread and copy onto the electronic form provided by Universal Class.

At Suite University, several classes are offered, including "Cooking for a Crowd," a four-lesson course designed for people who are planning a big event at home and do not know how to proceed. Topics include budgeting, choosing dishes and calculating quantities. The course costs \$15, or \$20 if e-mail access to the instructor is included.

Diane Marchese of Batavia, N.Y., enrolled in the course when she was planning a graduation party for her daughter, with more than 100 guests. She had never taken a cooking course before, nor had she tried online education.

Although she eventually decided to hire a caterer after the guest list swelled to 140 and her ambition drooped, Mrs. Marchese said, she liked having e-mail access to her



Robert Kwong for The New York Times

**SCHOOLING** Eric Arrouze, a chef, shoots step-by-step photos of himself making a recipe and posts the assembled clips online.

baked ziti, and I asked about preparing it ahead of time and how many pounds per pan could I use," she said.

Online courses like these consist of written lessons, often supplemented with downloaded pictures and links to relevant Web sites. Students can talk to the teacher on class bulletin boards and through e-mail. As in any classroom, some students prefer to talk directly to the teacher instead of in class.

Mr. Arrouze's classes are structured differently: he shoots step-by-step photos of himself preparing each recipe and assembles them into a QuickTime clip that he then

loads on the Web. Students can choose any recipe they want to learn instead of following a set class agenda.

Recording each recipe takes a day. "I go to market, go home, do my cooking, everything A to Zed, and take pictures every two to three seconds," Mr. Arrouze said. "Me and my wife eat, we enjoy our meal. In the afternoon I build a movie."

He likens the Web site to an animated recipe book. "They can watch the movie as much as they want, when they want," he said. "They bring their laptops into the kitchen." He also offers e-mail access, and students in a panic over a falling soufflé can

even call him on his cellphone.

Elana Brief, a physicist at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and a student of Mr. Arrouze's, said she recently logged onto [911cheferic.com](http://911cheferic.com) to check out the recipe for beef bourguignon. "It's not that difficult," Ms. Brief said. "The Web site reduced anxiety about cooking."

Whether online cooking instruction will ever attract a large following is debatable. Even Mr. Arrouze acknowledged that the Internet is a far-from-perfect medium for learning how to cook. "Teaching a class at the university is hands-on — that's the best way to learn," he said.