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Winthrop University

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# Mediterranean Diet Class Eats Well in America and Soon in France and Italy

## Quick Facts

- The Mediterranean course counts for non-science majors as one of their General Education requirements.
- Called the Nutritional Biochemistry of the Mediterranean Diet, the class has 21 students checking out the healthy aspects of Italian and French living.



Senior Anna Brenner shows off the pizza she created.

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – The **Mediterranean diet** – with its emphasis on seafood, olive oil and fresh ingredients – is the subject of a Winthrop University class and study-abroad trip.

Called the **Nutritional Biochemistry of the Mediterranean Diet**, the class has 21 students checking out the healthy aspects of Italian and French living.

The group began meeting in January to learn about the diets, lifestyles, basics of biochemistry, bioenergetics, sugars, fats, proteins and foods that are key components of the Mediterranean diet. The culminating activity is a **May 14-23 trip** when the group will travel to Nice, France, and then on to Modena, Florence, and Rome in Italy.

“The course was designed to provide a meaningful experience for everyone involved. My goal is to demonstrate how a basic understanding of a few chemical and biological concepts can profoundly impact how you perceive the relationship between yourself, your food, your health and your community,” said **Nick Grossoehme**, an assistant professor of chemistry. “This course has been a very fun and educational experience for me, and I hope that the students feel the same.”

The Mediterranean course counts for non-science majors as one of their **General Education requirements**. Grossoehme and fellow teacher **Michelle Wolf**, director of the **Academic Success Center**, said it also is a good example of a fruitful collaboration between the center and faculty to help a



Executive Chef Michael Bader demonstrates the preparation of striped bass.

diverse population of students.

**Senior Kelsey Pittman**, a music and religion major from Rock Hill, has loved the course because Grosseohme breaks down why specifically these foods are healthy and shows on a molecular level how they fuel the body. "I think that the material in this class has been challenging, but being able to relate it to food and a huge trip coming up made it easier to be more motivated to study the science behind foods," she said.

Fellow student, **Connor Renfro**, a junior English major from Columbia, said the class is teaching him important tips. "I did not know how much chemistry affected my everyday life," he said. "It's a fascinating combination of nutrition, biology and chemistry...Some parts of the chemistry were easier because it was fun and relevant, and I was more motivated to study."

To help demonstrate the food concepts, the students learned to cook a feast on March 27 in the **DiGiorgio Campus Center** with the help of **Aramark Dining Services**. **Executive Chef Michael Bader** and **Food Service Director Pam Yurkovic** sponsored a Mediterranean cooking class for the students. Bader, no stranger to Mediterranean cooking, and two assistants worked with the students to prepare a feast of salami, prosciutto, rosemary foccacci, grilled yellow tail, steamed clams, striped bass, salad, pasta and pizza. Students used fresh and local fare, prepared with olive oil, herbs and seasoning.

"The Aramark feast was fantastic," Pittman said. "The pizza and bread dough had a sweet flavor to it. It felt good knowing that what I was eating was good for me. Also, it felt great to know that the food was not processed."

Once the food was made, everyone sat down to enjoy the results and to experience the fellowship around such a meal. Wolf observed that eating together is the foundation of the cultural identity and continuity of communities throughout the Mediterranean basin. "For that society, it is a time of social exchange and communication, an affirmation and renewal of family, group or community identity," she said.

During their overseas trip, students will walk down the **Promenade des Anglais** in **Nice**, and visit local markets and taste the finest fresh foods from the **Cote d'Azur**. Some of the sights they will see in **Rome** and **Florence** include the **Vatican** and the **Sistine Chapel**, **Colosseum**, **Spanish Steps** and **Trevi Fountain**, **Piazza del Duomo**, and **Piazza della Signoria**. To fulfill the culinary aspect of the class, the group will visit a winery, eat a Tuscan lunch, view an olive press and cheese making, as well as watch production of balsamic vinegar and olive oil.

Other study-abroad trips can be found at: <http://winthrop.abroadoffice.net/facultyled.html>.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu).

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