DUKE SPONSORS WINE APPRECIATION WORKSHOP

DURHAM, N.C. – Craig Heffley has been the wine buyer at Fowler’s Gourmet in Durham for nearly four years.

Years earlier, as a college student, he waited tables at a restaurant.

So Heffley is long familiar with the apprehension a person might feel when trying to choose the right wine for a meal or special occasion.

For the past year, Heffley has taught wine-appreciation classes through the Duke Office of Continuing Education’s Short Courses Program. This summer, Heffley is packing up his wine bottles and heading to the beach, where he will be leading a three-day workshop called “Fine Wine Appreciation.” The Duke-sponsored workshop is being offered Aug. 15-18.

Participants will explore differences among the wine-producing regions of the world, learn about great values in wine and study “the essential wines that any expert should know,” Heffley said.

“We’re hoping to take people who aren’t that familiar with wines and make them comfortable with wine in any situation,” Heffley said. “If they have an idea what they want, they can go into a wine shop or restaurant and they can tell whoever is there what they want or find it on their own.”

Asked who might sign up for one of his classes, Heffley replied: “We get people who are just of legal age, we get retirees, we get people from all different kinds of financial status, we get people who are pretty progressive and pretty conservative, a good cross section.

“It used to be that people thought of wine as a higher class, ritzy thing. In most parts of the world, it’s not. It’s just a part of the meal.”

Laurel Ferejohn, program director for Duke’s Office of Continuing Education and Summer Session, said people sign up for the wine-appreciation courses for a number of reasons, including to match the right wines with the right foods, to be able to give wine as a gift or to “identify wineries that are going to take off but that are reasonably priced now.”

“Wine has had this huge renaissance in our culture,” Ferejohn added. “It’s a cultural trend, and it’s something people want to know about.”

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Another reason why interest in wine has jumped is because of the health benefits associated with it, Heffley said. “And once a person can go in and find a good inexpensive wine, it starts the ball rolling. They find out they can get into it without a lot of disposable income. It’s something for everyone, not just wine snobs.”

Heffley said he’s even had restaurant owners who want to polish up their wine list take his classes. “There are so many wines out there. We try to focus in on what wines are good values. When customers get educated, they can save money and save themselves distress from buying the wrong wine.”

Sue Jarrell, a 42-year-old business analyst with Duke’s Student Information Services and System Project, has taken two wine-appreciation courses through the Duke Short Courses Program. She said Heffley “shares his wine knowledge without the ‘snobliness’ folks tend to associate with wine appreciation.

“Whether you are a ‘wine novice’ or a seasoned oenophile, Craig can speak at your level. There’s no pretension, just an enthusiasm for wine” that makes this class enjoyable.

The workshop is being held at the Trinity Center, located on 62 acres near Morehead City. The cost of the three-day workshop, which includes all meals, is $695 for a single room, $595 for a double room and $450 for people who plan to commute each day. In addition to the wine-appreciation sessions, there also will be time for beach walks, bird-watching and lounging by the pool.

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The Duke Office of Continuing Education and Summer Session is offering a number of other workshops on the coast this summer. They include the 20th annual Duke University Writers’ Workshop, July 25-29; “Strictly for Beginners: A Creative Writing Workshop,” Aug. 8-11; “The Heart of It: Researching and Writing Memoir and Family Oral History” with the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke, Aug. 8-11; and “Finding Your Voice: A Creativity Workshop and Retreat for Women,” Aug. 15-18.

For more information, contact the Duke Office of Continuing Education and Summer Session at (919) 684-6259.

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