



LifeCOOK Sample Itinerary

Below you'll find a sample of some of the experiences at LifeCOOK. This itinerary is subject to change based on seasonal availability and the experience of participants.

Day 1 | Arrive in France

Arrive, settle in and make La Vaquerie home.

We'll meet you at Valognes train station or Cherbourg ferry port and bring you to the farm. Settle into the student house, meet the group and explore La Vaquerie, with time to unpack and relax after your journey.

Get oriented to the kitchen, equipment and basic kitchen safety, then take a first look at the LifeCOOK pantry and how we'll use it over the coming days.

Evening: Welcome dinner prepared by our in-house chef.

Day 2 | The Fundamentals

Start with the skills that make everyday cooking work.

Begin with a classic French omelette and learn about eggs, heat, seasoning and timing. Move on to knife skills and mirepoix, then use those foundations to build a proper bolognese.

Head to a local boulangerie to learn about bread in everyday French life and pick up a classic French sandwich for lunch.

Back in the kitchen, make a Caesar salad from scratch, including the dressing, and learn how to taste and adjust as you go.

Lunch: A classic French sandwich from the boulangerie

Dinner: Spaghetti bolognese + Caesar salad

Day 3 | The Perfect Roast

Shop well. Cook simply. Get the timing right.

Head to a French market and learn how to choose produce, recognise what's in season and shop with a meal in mind. Everyone chooses their own lunch from the market.

Back at La Vaquerie, learn how to prepare and roast a whole chicken, make proper roast potatoes and cook seasonal vegetables. The real lesson is timing: getting several different things to the table hot and ready at the same time.

For dessert, turn Normandy apples into a Tarte Normande, learning the basics of pastry along the way.

Dinner: Roast chicken + seasonal vegetables + proper roast potatoes

Dessert: Tarte Normande

Before finishing for the day, make homemade granola for tomorrow's breakfast.

Day 4 | Waste Nothing

Yesterday's dinner becomes today's ingredients.

Start the morning with yoghurt and the granola you made the night before.

Then take yesterday's roast chicken apart. Learn to make stock from the bones and use it as the foundation for homemade chicken soup.

The same principle carries into dinner, when leftover bolognese gets a completely different second life. Finish by learning one of the simplest and most useful French desserts.

Lunch: Homemade chicken soup

Dinner: Loaded baked potatoes with bolognese transformed into chilli

Dessert: Chocolate mousse

Day 5 | A Taste of Normandy

Crêpes, cider and some of Normandy's great everyday foods.

Start with crêpe making, then turn your attention to a French café classic, learning how a good béchamel becomes the foundation for a proper Croque Monsieur.

In the afternoon, visit a Normandy cider producer. Walk through the orchard, learn how cider is made and taste it at the source.

Back at La Vaquerie, make traditional buckwheat galettes for dinner and finish the day by turning the morning's crêpes into Crêpes Suzette.

Lunch: Croque Monsieur

Dinner: Galette complète

Dessert: Crêpes Suzette

Day 6 | Shop Like the French

Discover the shops, ingredients and people behind the food.

Head into Cherbourg to explore the specialty food shops that remain part of everyday French life. Visit a butcher, cheesemonger and other local food shops, learn what to look for, ask questions and choose a few things to bring home.

Put together lunch from the shops you've visited before returning to La Vaquerie.

In the afternoon, get your hands into dough with a simple focaccia and learn the basics of working with yeast. Make a classic quiche, learning how to make a savoury pastry case and a simple custard filling that can be adapted to whatever is in season.

Later, sit down together for a tasting of the cheeses you've brought home and learn to recognise different styles, textures and flavours.

Lunch: Own choice in Cherbourg

Dinner: Quiche + focaccia + seasonal salad

Evening: French cheese tasting

Day 7 | Sea to Table

Follow food to the Normandy coast.

Head to the sea for a day built around some of Normandy's defining ingredients.

Visit an oyster producer and taste oysters beside the water. Learn how they're grown, how the tides and landscape shape them and about the people and traditions behind one of the region's great foods.

Enjoy lunch on the coast before turning your attention to fish. Learn how to recognise freshness, prepare a whole fish and cook it simply. Make a simple sauce to go with it and see how a few well-chosen ingredients can be enough.

Back at La Vaquerie, put those skills to work.

Lunch: Restaurant with coastal view

Dinner: Fresh fish + seasonal vegetables + a simple homemade sauce

Day 8 | Make It Your Own

You're in charge of the kitchen.

Today comes with a budget instead of a recipe.

Working in small groups, decide what you want to make, plan what you need and shop within a set budget. Back at the farm, turn what you've bought into a meal, with guidance when you need it.

Taste, adjust and troubleshoot as you go. Think about salt, fat, acid, heat and texture. Learn to recognise what a dish needs rather than simply following instructions.

Make something you actually want to eat, and work out how to get there.

Dinner: The meals you've created.

Day 9 | Cook for Other People

Because knowing how to feed people is part of knowing how to cook.

Today, take on one of the great French dishes: boeuf bourguignon.

Visit the butcher and learn about choosing the right cut, then build the dish slowly using many of the techniques you've practised throughout the week: knife work, browning, seasoning, heat and patience.

The rest of the meal is up to you. Decide what to serve alongside it, divide the jobs and take responsibility for the cooking, timing and serving as a group.

Make a classic crème brûlée for dessert and bake something to give away, because cooking isn't always about feeding yourself.

Before dinner, sit down for a guided wine tasting. Learn how to taste wine, what to notice and how food can change what's in the glass.

Set the table, bring everything together and settle in for a long dinner.

Dinner: Boeuf bourguignon + the dishes you've chosen

Dessert: Crème brûlée

Day 10 | A Celebration Lunch

See where great ingredients and great cooking can lead.

After more than a week in the kitchen, head to the Normandy coast for a Michelin-starred lunch overlooking the sea.

This time, you're not cooking. Slow down and pay attention to what's happening on the plate: the ingredients, seasoning, balance, texture and presentation, and the way the meal unfolds from beginning to end.

Meet the chef and hear about their approach to ingredients, seasonality and creating a menu. Ask questions about what you've eaten and see how some of the same fundamentals you've been working with all week are taken in a completely different direction.

Spend some time exploring the coast before heading home.

Lunch: Michelin-starred celebration lunch

Afternoon: Time on the Normandy coast

Evening: A deliberately simple supper back at the farm.

Day 11 | What Can We Make?

Finish with what you have, not what a recipe tells you to buy.

Open the fridge. Look through the pantry. See what's left.

Your final challenge is to turn it into lunch. No shopping list and no last-minute trip to the store. Work out what needs using, what works together and what you can make from what you already have.

Then take a final look at the LifeCOOK kitchen. What ingredients proved indispensable? What did you barely need? What would you keep in your own pantry? What could you now make without looking at a recipe?

Final lunch: Made by you, from what remains.

Spend the afternoon enjoying La Vaquerie, packing and hanging out together before one last evening around the table.

Evening: Final dinner at La Vaquerie.

Day 12 | Say Goodbye

One last breakfast around the table.

Enjoy a final breakfast together before packing up and saying goodbye to La Vaquerie.

We'll take you to Valognes train station or Cherbourg ferry port for your onward journey.
Head home with ten days in the kitchen behind you and plenty more cooking ahead.