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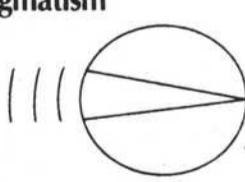
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Cake walk

Baked goodies carry on Christmas traditions

By **Albert Schmid**
Food Critic

Ever wondered how fruitcake became a holiday tradition? It seems that if there's one thing you can count on during the holiday season, it's that you'll always get stuck with a fruitcake you're not going to eat.

A former roommate and I have been "giving" the same fruitcake back and forth for the last five years. (Guess who is scheduled to get it this year.)

I'm sure some people like fruitcake, but I am not one of them. It is said that the longer you age a fruitcake, the better the flavor becomes. I don't know about anyone else, but I would have a real problem cracking in to a 12-year-old fruitcake. Still, I can't help but wonder who thought up the whole idea and why.

As it turns out, the fruitcake is a British contribution to the culinary arts. The earliest fruitcake recipe I could find was called a "Good Holiday Cake" in Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management. It was the creme de la creme of British Cookery in its day — 1861.

And there's evidence that fruitcake may have come in to the culinary picture even earlier than 1861.

Every family seems to have its traditional holiday cake, such as potato cake, fresh apple cake, rum cake and yes, the fruitcake.

Potato cake

My family's favorite was my grandmother Nancy's Potato Cake. It has a unique flavor worth trying, but like fruitcake, it's not for everyone.

- The ingredients:**
- 2 cups sugar
 - 1 cup butter or margarine
 - 3 cups flour
 - 3/4 cup port wine
 - 4 eggs (separated and both beaten)
 - 1 cup cold mashed potatoes
 - 2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1 teaspoon cloves
 - 1 teaspoon allspice
 - 1 16-ounce box raisins
 - 4 tablespoons cocoa

2 cups chopped pecans

The directions:

Pre-heat the oven to 250 degrees. Place a pan of water on the bottom rack of the oven to keep the cake moist. While cooking don't let the water cook dry.

To start the cake, cream the sugar and the butter. Add the port wine, egg yolks, and mashed potatoes.

Mix until totally incorporated. Add all the dry ingredients and mix well.

Fold in half of the egg white. Repeat with the other half until the egg white is well-incorporated.

Place the mixture in a well-greased bundt pan and bake the cake for 90 minutes to two hours. To test, put a toothpick in to the center. If the toothpick has a little stickiness to it, the cake is just right. Don't wait until the toothpick comes out dry.

Fresh apple cake

The fresh apple cake is also a really nice alternative to the traditional fruitcake. If you like spiced cake you will really like this cake. This is an adaptation of a cake recipe given to me by my third grade teacher, Sue Holmsley, in San Antonio, Texas.

- The ingredients:**
- 3 eggs
 - 1 cup vegetable oil
 - 2 teaspoons vanilla
 - 3 cups flour
 - 2 cups sugar
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 - 3 apples, cored, peeled, and sliced
 - 1 cup chopped pecans

The directions:

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix the eggs, oil, and vanilla until well-beaten. Add all of the dry ingredients and mix well. Add the apples and pecans, and stir in, by hand, until well-incorporated. Pour into a greased bundt pan and bake for about an hour or until you can poke the cake with a toothpick and have it emerge clean.

Rum cake

If you like the brandy flavor of fruitcake, but not the fruit, a Rum Cake might be right down your alley. This is a fun cake to make as well as

eat.

Cake ingredients:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 and 1/2 half cups butter or margarine
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup dark rum (80 proof)
- 3 and 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

Glaze ingredients:

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup dark rum (80 proof)

The directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. For the cake, cream the butter and sugar. Add the eggs one at a time until totally incorporated, then add the rum. Mix until you have an even batter. Add the dry ingredients, and mix well. Then add the nuts and mix. Pour the mixture into a greased bundt pan. Bake for 45 minute to an hour or until you can finish the toothpick test with dry results. For the glaze, melt the butter in a pan. Add the water and the sugar and boil for five minutes, making sure to stir the whole time. Remove the mixture from the heat and add the rum. Pour the sauce over the cake a little at a time, allowing it to soak in.

White fruitcake

Don't like the traditional dark fruitcake? Try this one.

- The ingredients:**
- 4 cups flour
 - 1 and 1/3 cup pecans
 - 1 and 1/3 cups white raisins
 - 1 and 1/3 cups candied cherries
 - 1 cup shredded coconut
 - 1 teaspoon baking powder
 - 3/4 cup butter or margarine
 - 2 cups sugar
 - 5 eggs
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 1/3 cup brandy

The directions:

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix the pecans and the fruit into the flour. Add the baking soda and mix. Cream the butter and the sugar together. Add the eggs one at a time until all are used. Then add the vanilla and the brandy, and mix until incorporated. Add the dry mixture to the wet mixture and blend. Pour evenly into one greased bundt pan or two greased bread pans. Bake for about an hour.

Christmas by the numbers

1. Number of singing Santa telegrams delivered by Tune-a-gram last holiday season: 10.
2. Cost of giving a youngster a "Gauch", a life-size child's off-road vehicle, capable of driving 5 miles per hour, with real working lights, moving pistons and a rechargeable 12-volt battery: \$379.99.
3. Quarts of eggnog expected to be sold over the holidays at Goodrich Dairy, 1126 South St.: 50.
4. Quarts of eggnog expected to be consumed by local band Plastik Trumpet over the holidays: 25.
5. Strings of burgundy-colored garland the Target Store on 48th Street will sell this Christmas: 100.
6. Women who have bought red velvet Santa bikinis, with white fur trim and a matching hat, at Boog's Rock 'N Roll Boutique: 6.
7. Price of an unopened "Mannheim Steamroller Christmas" vinyl album at the Goodwill: 69 cents.
8. Price of an unopened "Mannheim Steamroller Christmas" compact disc at Camelot Records in Gateway Mall: \$13.96.
9. Fruitcakes made every 3 days at Super Saver, 2662 Cornhusker Highway: 50.
10. People fed by the People's City Mission last Christmas: 809.
11. Decorations expected to be donated to the KFRX Low Budget Christmas Display by Dec. 25: 1000.

Information gathered by staff reporter Patrick Hambrecht.