



# FRUITCAKES

## yule love

### Dear fruitcake, we're sorry

STORY AND PHOTOS BY YING NEE OOI •  
GREATER NIAGARA NEWSPAPERS

It's sweet, nutty and dripping in liquor, but still, the fruitcake has earned a rotten reputation.

The fruitcake is seen as a cruel, yule-time joke of a gift for the naughty.

But Wendy Wolter, owner of Wolter's Bakery in Amherst, said the down-trodden dessert is actually quite nice — she said she can barely keep up with their holiday fruitcake inventory.

"We have a number of customers that just can't wait for us to make the first fruitcakes of the season," she said. "It's all the kinds of different nuts — and quality nuts make the best fruitcake."

Wolter's German family recipe produces loaves that are rum-soaked, decked with raisins and candied fruits, pecans, walnuts and almonds that will make other holiday desserts seem like doorways without mistletoe — simply uncharacteristic.

"It's a German fruitcake with an American flavor," she said. "I hope the fruitcake will not be something they put in the back of the cabinet. I'd like them to create good memories with their food."

Like memories, Wolter's fruitcake will last forever without tasting like a 1970s Twinkie.

But a good fruitcake needn't be stored.

"It'll have a richer flavor over time. You know how there's only one fruitcake made and passed from person to person?" she said. "It's because people have (a fear) of trying new things. But with a little douse of brandy sauce on it, the fruitcake is excellent."

Still think traditional fruitcakes are as lethal as poinsettias are to the family pets? Think again.

#### A gift-giver's guide to fruitcake:

##### Muscoreil's

■ **WHERE:** 3960 Niagara Falls Blvd., Wheatfield.  
■ **PRICE:** \$9.99 to \$45.50.

■ **SHELF LIFE:** Wrap it in brandy-soaked muslin cloth and store it in a tin at room temperature, and the fruitcake will have a whopping one-year shelf life.

■ **PRESENTATION:** Put it in a festive tin or tie a gold ribbon and bow around it.

■ **CONTACT:** (716) 692-9081.

##### Sweet Beginnings

■ **WHERE:** 3759 Delaware Ave., Kenmore.  
■ **PRICE:** \$4 to \$7.50.

■ **SHELF LIFE:** Because of the less-dense consistency, this fruitcake should be stored at room temperature for no longer than a week.

■ **PRESENTATION:** Make it a centerpiece for other holiday desserts or serve it warm with egg nog.

■ **CONTACT:** (716) 875-1431.

##### Wolter's Bakery

■ **WHERE:** 5225 Sheridan Drive, Amherst.  
■ **PRICE:** \$8.95 to \$15.95.

■ **SHELF LIFE:** Properly stored, this fruitcake will stay fresh at least until next Thanksgiving.

■ **PRESENTATION:** Top with sorbet for a holiday sundae.

#### FRUITCAKE ...

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Ernest Ramstetter, co-owner of Muscoreil's Fine Desserts in Wheatfield, said their variety is full of the usual fix of candied fruits and nuts and doused in Muscoreil's key ingredient.

"It's like a chewy, nutty and fruity nougat," he said. "We use an apricot glaze and an apricot brandy, and we douse it. It's not

enough to get drunk or anything, but it's got enough to flavor — Grandpa's still got to drive home, right?" he said.

Ramstetter said mass-produced fruitcakes killed the dessert's reputation.

"When it was mass-marketed and saturated with artificial fruits were used — that's what ruined the persona," he said.

"You have the store brand ones where you can save it till your son goes to college, and you can still give it for Christmas."

You can rest assured that fruitcakes at the Town of Tonawanda's Sweet Beginnings Bakery won't be as old as the family heirlooms.

Darren Wells' fruitcake is just making its debut in the 30-month-old bakery he owns with wife, Jaime. The rebellious fruitcake, albeit baked with traditional candied green and red cherries, ginger, citrus peel and pineapple, is flavored with a dessert red wine instead.

"It adds more of a fruitier flavor — and it's a break from the rum," he said. "You can use different types of wine, but we used a Lambrusco wine because it's on the sweet side." Wells said no Christmas powder tools will be needed to slice his fruitcake.

"Everyone thinks of a heavy block they get as a company present or in a fruit basket," he said. "This is not your typical fruitcake. Ours tends to be on a lighter side and not as dense."

But if the thought of saccha-

rin-infused fruits and nuts is too many aluminum-wrapped memories of Aunt Gertrude, an idea of a fruitcake — resort to another treat.

Cold Stone Creamery in Amherst has some holiday empathy to spare. Throughout December, they will trade your unwanted fruitcake for a 5 percent discount off their medium ice cream cakes.

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