

SEEVA

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A Sterling
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SCIENCE

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Sweet Nothings

Holidays are that time of the year when you indulge in sweet treats and traditional desserts that come with a festive twist



BINDU GOPAL RAO

Pumpkin Cake Roll, Sugar-plum Christmas Candy, Spiced Fruitcake with Brandy, Gingerbread Men Cookies, Christmas Yule Log, Stollen, Panettone, Rum Balls, Baked Alaska, English Trifle and Christmas Pudding. Well the list is longer, but these are just some of the sweets that will send you to dessert heaven. And why not for Holiday is that time of the year when there is a clear sense of cheer. And this year, some much-needed cheer during the pandemic.

'TIS THE SEASON

Christmas cake or the traditional Christmas cake is a merger of two very well-known dishes – the plum porridge, or pottage, and the Twelfth Night cake. The plum porridge was traditionally served on Christmas Eve. That was the origin of the Christmas pudding.

With advancing technology and the industrial revolution, ovens became household conveniences and the age-old method of boiling or steaming the pudding underwent change, according to Neelabh Sahay, executive chef, Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences. He added that flour, butter and eggs gave it the shape of a cake. In the olden days, it would have been eaten at Easter. The Christmas cake evolved when dried fruit of the

season and spices (symbols of the spices bought by the Magi) were added. The cake was originally eaten not at Christmas but on the Twelfth Night, the Epiphany. With the slow decline in popularity of the Twelfth Night and the gradual increase in Holiday festivities in the 1830s, the cake was eaten on or around Christmas Day. They became very popular at Christmas parties. By the 1870s the modern Christmas cake had evolved.

FAMILY BOND

Christmas is a festival of joy and family gatherings and cakes are a traditional symbol of teamwork and the warmth of the family.

Chef Beral Polekironi, chef de cuisine, Mövenpick Resort Kuredhivaru Maldives, recalls his childhood in Tamil Nadu where his grandmother would cook her version of Christmas cakes on a homemade wood-fired oven.

“Other than using the traditional ingredients such as rum, raisins, nuts and orange, we also make use of ‘pandan leaves’ which gives it a very authentic Maldivian touch and renders a unique flavor to this cake,” Polekironi said. “We mostly boil the leaves and extract the essence in our Maldivian version of the cakes. The flavor is well balanced with coconut.

We have also experimented by using these leaves as a cake liner, lending a unique taste.”

SPIRIT OF YULETIDE

The festive season is all about celebration and Christmas is a time when you indulge your sweet tooth.

According to Watcharavee Ru-jeechotiphat, executive chef, Pimalai Resort & Spa, Koh-Lanta, Krabi, “At Pimalai, we prepare a wide selection of cakes and desserts on Christmas, such as mince pie, Panettone, Christmas pudding, and fruit cake every year. Of course, one traditional Christmas cake we do not miss on that night is Log Cake. It is a symbol of joy and happiness in life. Moreover, we also do a traditional Log Cake and [include] other flavors, such as passion fruit, pandan and tiramisu.”

A yule log is a traditional dessert served near Christmas, especially in Belgium, France, Switzerland, Canada, Lebanon, Syria, Spain and the United Kingdom. It is also known as a buche de noel, which originally referred to the yule log itself and was transferred to the dessert only after the custom had fallen out of practice.

Kevin Miller, head pastry chef at The Lanesborough London, has his own special version.

“I would usually make a yule log using a chocolate sponge and dark chocolate ganache but decided on something a little different this year,” he said. “Typically, this would use flour, eggs, sugar and vanilla extract (cocoa powder if making a chocolate sponge) and for the ganache usually chocolate and cream. Another option is usually the fruit Christmas cake which is made months in advance and marinated with brandy for flavor and preservation covered in a layer of marzipan and then a layer of fondant icing.”



Dundee Cake courtesy Novotel Kolkata Hotel Residences

TIPS TO MAKE A CHRISTMAS CAKE

- The butter and sugar mixture should be creamed properly so that no sugar grain remain undissolved. The mixture should be pale yellow in color.
- Eggs should be added one by one and allowed to mix properly. The eggs should not be added all at once.
- After baking the cake, sugar syrup should be sprinkled on top to keep it soft and moist longer.
- The dry fruits should be soaked at least for a week in dark rum, so that the flavors seep into the fruit and provide a full-bodied flavor. If you avoid liquor, orange juice can be added for flavor instead.

YULE LOG (courtesy The Lanesborough London)

You need no specialized equipment beyond a shallow baking pan. “You can use recipes as a base to follow but you can also add some small twists with spices or subtle flavors to make it unique, as well as being creative with your own garnishes to fit the season,” Miller said. “Take your time to follow the recipe and you won’t go wrong. Have fun when making it, maybe with some Christmas songs in

the background and a glass of mulled wine, perhaps.”

Components: Swiss roll sponge, White chocolate ganache and cherry gel

SWISS ROLL SPONGE

- Sugar (1) 1.8oz
- Egg yolks 5.3oz
- Sugar (2) 7.4oz
- Egg whites 3.5oz
- Flour plain or cake 3.2oz
- Baking powder 0.7oz
- Whole milk 1.8oz
- Vegetable oil 1.8oz
- Vanilla extract 0.2oz

METHOD

- Whisk the egg yolk and the sugar (1) together in a kitchen aid mixer until light and fluffy and set aside
- Whisk the egg whites and the sugar (2) to a stiff peak meringue
- Gently fold the meringue into the egg yolk mix until combined. Sift the flour and baking powder and fold into the egg mixture ensuring there are no lumps
- Take a bit of the mix and add in the oil, milk and vanilla, then fold this into the main mixture
- Spread the cake batter on to a

greased tray, 24x16 inches, lined with baking parchment. Bake at 338°F for 12 minutes. Remove from the oven and remove the cake from the tray and allow to cool on a wire rack

WHITE CHOCOLATE GANACHE

- White chocolate 7.1oz
- UHT cream 7.1oz
- Unsalted butter 2.7oz
- Passion fruit puree 1.5oz
- Cinnamon powder 0.2oz
- Ginger powder 0.2oz

METHOD

- Melt the white chocolate in a bowl, either in the microwave in 30-second bursts or over a double boiler and set aside. Bring the cream to boil and pour the cream into the melted chocolate and mix until smooth and combined
- Warm up the passion fruit puree and add to the chocolate at 122°F
- Cut the butter into cubes and add to the chocolate ganache at 140°F
- Add the cinnamon and the ginger powder and mix well
- Let it cool in the fridge. Remove from the fridge to bring it to room temperature for assembly

CHERRY JAM

- Cherry puree 18.1oz
- Frozen cherries 4.5oz
- Glucose syrup 3.6oz
- Caster sugar 3.6oz
- Pectin NH 0.8oz

METHOD

- Bring the puree, frozen cherries and glucose to a boil
- Mix the sugar and pectin together and add to the cherry mixture and continuously mix until it reaches 221°F. Pour into a container and allow to set.
- Place into a blender and blend

until smooth and keep aside for assembly

ASSEMBLY

- Remove the baking parchment from the Swiss roll and put it on another piece of baking parchment atop a chopping board.
- Spread the white chocolate ganache over the cake in a nice even layer, leaving some behind for the outside of the log. Allow to set in the fridge for 10 minutes.
- Remove from the fridge and spread the cherry jam on top of the ganache. Take one edge and fold in slightly and begin to roll the cake into a Swiss roll, either all the way or to the size of your choice.
- Spread the remaining ganache on the outside of the Swiss roll log and garnish with chocolate shavings to make it look like a wooden log. Allow it to set in the fridge. Portion and serve as desired.



Chocolate Matcha Truffle Forest courtesy Sante Spa Cuisine



Fig and walnut ice cream courtesy Sante Spa Cuisine