

the cake

Sweet memories may be a memory, but the demand for cakes and confections is on the rise. Birthdays, weddings and bar and bat mitzvahs are making bakers busy throughout the remainder of the year. If your sweet tooth is in need, here are three suburban Chicago bakeries sure to please.

Press
North (847-272-6990) has been in the name for nearly 80 years but has a new location for just eight months. The bakery is on a mix of old and new, still attractive that relies on it for its traditional Texas cookies, while simultaneously offering new creations. The one-of-a-kind cakes are a stone from other bakeries, says long-time owner Costello.

Expect a cake for any occasion, though it's not the high-end cake orders to its sister bakery. Gladstone focuses instead on custom creations. In addition to the standard sheet cakes that can be customized by combining a variety of flavors, fillings and design elements, they offer cut-out and 3-D cakes as well. A new twist on the standard layered cake is a cake designed into a specific shape. This past year Gladstone featured a cake cut to the shape of a car.

Expect cakes that limit their design element to the cake itself contributes to the design. For example, globe-shaped cakes and airplane-shaped cakes. At a customer's request, Gladstone baked up an edible version of a car and placed his look-alike in the hands of a customer requested and received a cake that tasted and tasted like its namesake treat. Gladstone fields an increasing number of custom cakes customized to meet the needs of customers. They already offer a sprinkling of sugar-free cakes, including cheesecake, mousse cake and other cakes. The bakery is working towards some gluten-

For anyone requiring peanut-free desserts, or any dessert of an uncompromised quality, **Gerhard's Elegant European Desserts (847-234-0023)** in Lake Forest is a fine option. The space the bakery occupies was previously Market Square Pastries for 60 years. Now owned and operated by Mary Greub for 14 years, the bakery gets its name from her husband, Chef Gerhard Greub of Four Seasons fame and of Swiss descent. The latter that ensures his bakery is a peanut-free environment; the Swiss, similar to many Europeans, do not use peanuts, peanut butter or any peanut derivative in their kitchens.

Adhering strictly to a high European standard, Gerhard's uses only the finest ingredients, many of which are imported. Because of its vigilance in protecting the purity of its ingredients, Gerhard's is in step with the general trend towards healthier eating.

"There's no junk in our food," Greub maintains.

Unlike the majority of the other bakeries, Gerhard's uses no Crisco. The chocolate used is a pure Swiss concoction with no preservatives or wax. Keeping with the European way, its goods are proper-portion sized.

Though that may mean the chocolates are slightly smaller than what we are accustomed to, nothing is diminutive about its cakes' taste. Gerhard for the Four Seasons Hotel created the bakery's signature cake: the chocolate Marjolaine. This is actually a "cake-free" cake, consisting of two layers of chocolate meringue filled with white chocolate Toblerone, covered in ganache, fine quality fudge, and garnished with dark chocolate. That's not to your taste? Then try the bestseller: the classic dark chocolate mousse cake with two layers of chocolate genoise and semi-sweet Swiss chocolate mousse, topped with ganache and butter cream rosettes. This cake appeals to four and 84-year-olds alike.

Ten cakes are always stocked at Gerhard's. These and any other may be customized for any occasion—yes, even for dog weddings such as the one held in Gurnee with a canine bride and groom and 200 human guests in attendance. The wedding cake was a tiered affair in the shape of a dog bone. Gerhard's welcomes such special requests.

Says Greub, "It would be a mistake to box customers into a corner and not allow their creativity room to blossom and influence the design and direction of their cakes."

Another consummate culinary artist can be found at **Dream Cakes Bakery (847-675-0500)** in Skokie. Veronica Cañete opened

special occasions



the site two years ago with husband and fellow Kendall College graduate, Mark Kwasigroch. Back then, the business was called Delec To Go; it offered an extensive menu of soups, salads and sandwiches in addition to the cakes that have since become the business's focus due to their popularity. A few non-dessert items from the original menu are still available, but the Dream Cakes signature item is the Isabella, a chocolate caramel mousse cake. The mango torte is equally popular as is the banana parfait, which boasts banana mousse and Nutella filling. But if your dream cake is a butter cream sheet cake, look elsewhere. That is not part of these chefs' repertoire.

"We want to be known as different," Veronica explains, and the word is getting out. The bakery has fulfilled requests from as far away as Maryland for Veronica's handmade creations.

Though obviously the cakes themselves cannot be shipped, Veronica's exquisite hand-sculpted sugar figurines can be. Her cake adornments transform an ordinary cake into an extraordinary one. Although they can be consumed, they are often saved as treasured keepsakes. The painstaking process of molding the sugar décor typically takes days to complete as each part must be painted and dried before the next can be added. Custom orders therefore require a week's advance notice. The results are worth it—both beautiful and precise. And of course, the cakes are as good to ingest as they are to ogle.

Of Mexican heritage, Veronica adds a Latin twist to much of what she makes. Nowhere is this more evident than in her production of JelArt, her colorful gelatin creations. Employing a traditional Mexican technique, Veronica starts with a clear gelatin that must sit two-to-three days. Once it is set, she injects syringes of liquefied colored gelatin and handcrafts vibrant, elaborate flowers within. The result resembles a glass paper-weight but is entirely edible and the tastes unique. The texture is firm, and the flavors are unusual: tequila, apple, rum, eggnog, even bubblegum for the kids.

Whether you are looking for something traditional or truly unusual to make your next celebration special, you are sure to find it at any one of these three bakeries. Hungry yet?



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