

Fruitcake is often too dry, but the chocolate coating solves that. Bliss.

Call me crazy—this one's my fave. I love the heaping helping of nuts.

I like it more than I expected. Really, really I do! Would be very good warm with whipped cream.



Artisan Chocolate Squares

Grandma's Fruit and Nut Bar Cakes

All Natural Amaretto Peach Hazelnut Cake

## The fruitcake files

There are so many reasons *not* to eat fruitcake—too hard, too sticky, too nutty, too fruity, too boozy and, some say, just plain icky. Nebraska's Beatrice Bakery Company wants to change that. Bakers load their perfectly moist cakes with chunks of real fruit and nuts (no mysterious green bits), and they offer appealing alternatives to traditional fruitcake, such as blueberry-walnut and orange-cranberry. Our curiosity piqued, we put Beatrice Bakery Company to the ultimate test: the office kitchen.

"I'm sorry. I just can't," pleaded one staffer. "I probably won't eat fruitcake again unless I'm hunting for free snacks," admitted another. "I would much rather have chocolate-covered pretzels," declared a third. But as the afternoon munchies kicked in, more people braved the fruitcake. And by the end of the day, our staff numbered more lovers than haters. The traditional loaf and chocolate-dipped squares earned raves from longtime fruitcake fans (a small but passionate club), and nouveau flavors such as amaretto-peach-hazelnut won over the skeptics. For fruitcake, that's pretty darn impressive. Bravo, Beatrice. From \$14.99 for a 12-ounce loaf (800/228-4030; beatricebakery.com).

## READER'S PICK

### MAYOWOOD

Ellen Griffin, of the Twin Cities area, loves to visit Rochester, Minnesota, in November. The reason? Christmas at Historic Mayowood, when civic groups and designers break out the twinkle lights and evergreens in the 1911 home of Dr. Charles Mayo (cofounder of the Mayo Clinic). "Last year was the best I'd ever seen," Ellen writes. "The living room and dining rooms are beautiful in their Nutcracker-suite (or sweet!) splendor, and almost every room in the mansion is decked out for the holidays." Open November 5–21; closed Mondays and Thursdays. Reservations required. Admission charged (507/282-9447; olmstedhistory.com).

## 12 months of football

For fans and alums, Asgard Press' vintage football calendars stoke team pride, but the art and history buffs in our office also loved their retro charm and great graphic design. (Plus, they're printed on 100 percent recycled paper with soy ink.) Each one features illustrations from a dozen game programs, and the selection of schools available is huge. Best of all, Asgard makes new calendars each year for every team, as well as stationery and posters, so you'll never have to wonder what to get your nephew again. \$18.95 (302/295-8992; asgardpress.com). ■

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