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Christmas Cake Origin 13th Century Convent

The fruit cake has become so firmly established as part of the Christmas tradition that few people ever stop to think about its origin. It was way back at the beginning of the 13th century that a nun laboring in the kitchen of a German convent produced what has been claimed to be the world's first layer cake.

Presumably because of its origin, this cake acquired a religious significance and was soon the required thing at such events as christenings, weddings and funerals.

It also appeared in various forms on Holy Days — at Christmas, for instance molded in the form of a manger, and decorated with prices and fruits to represent the gifts of the Wise men.

This Christmas cake was probably the first "special occasion cake, the 13th century forerunner of what is today a thriving industry. The "special occasion" cakes as it is produced today could very well be called the "every occasion" cake because the list of occasions for which one of these is made has been growing steadily ever since the ancient Chinese fashioned special pastry to appease the anger of the gods.

The demand on the ancient Chinese "special occasion" expert were less exciting. His principal function was to fashion the pastry in the shape of human being. These morsels were then sacrificed to the gods instead of human beings. As had been the case in China before the "special occasion cake made its appearance.

The God of Fog, in particular, was notorious for his consumption of such delicacies and whatever the results of the change from protein to pastry, it was an admitted

improvement in the lot of those who would otherwise have been cast upon the waters of any number of fog-shrouded China rivers.

The early Romans, Greeks and Egyptians were others who prepared offerings in the form of special cakes for their gods, with the Egyptian dieties preferring a combination of white flour in a leavened dough that was sweetened with honey and flavoured with spices. The Romans are in fact generally credited with originating the wedding cake.

The "special occasion" cake also had its day in England where in mediaeval times a huge Twelfth Night or Christmas cake was considered a

social necessity at family gatherings.

Evidence at hand indicates it was here that the art of cake-icing began to flower, with the status seekers of the times vying with one another in the fashioning of the figures of men, animals and plants, castles and the like from what the chronicler of the day described as "snow white confectionery."

One of the many appealing customs related to the Twelfth Night cake involved the baking of a pea and a bean in each cake. The man who found the pea and the woman whose piece of cake contained the bean were acclaimed the King and Queen of the Twelfth Night — and the party was on.

Eat Lightly And Enjoy The Season

The holidays, with all the delights of roast turkey, plum pudding, eggnog, Christmas cookies and cakes, are just ahead. While no one wants to forego Christmas feasting, bear in mind that all of these delicious things are fattening. It's no time to throw caution completely to the winds and it's also no time to ruin pleasure in the season by nibbling on a lettuce leaf.

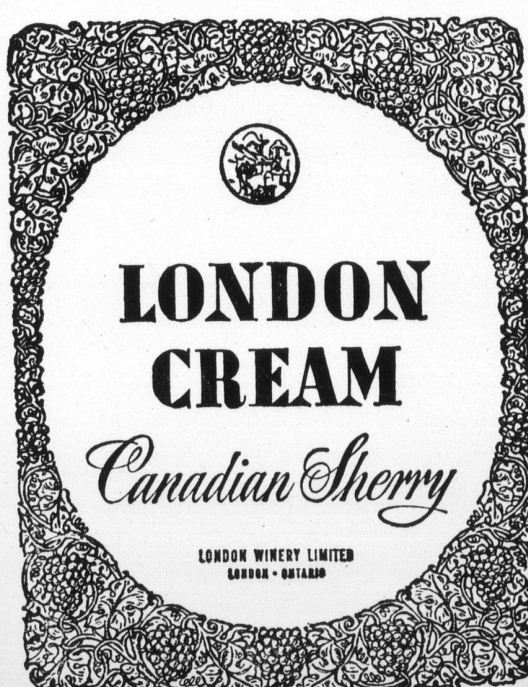
Be moderate about the portions. Pass up the second helpings. Don't stuff until uncomfortable, even though this may be in the good old tradition. Learn to say polite "No,

thank you" to your hostess and mean it. If she's wise, she won't insist. If she does insist, pretend not to hear. Have plum pudding but then don't decide you'll just celebrate by having the pie, too.

When the holidays are over, adopt a cottage cheese diet for two days and you'll take off five pounds in the next two days, eating cottage cheese three meals a day. And so feel better.

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