

TIMOTHY G. ROUFS AND
KATHLEEN SMYTH ROUFS

Sweet Treats around the World

An Encyclopedia
of Food and
Culture



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An Encyclopedia of Food and Culture

Timothy G. Roufs and Kathleen Smyth Roufs



Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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*This book is dedicated to the next generation of sweet treats enthusiasts
around the world, especially Casey Pedro Roufs, Claire Kathleen Roufs,
Eli Campbell Roufs, and Nora Elizabeth Roufs*

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PREFACE

Everyone in the world loves sweet treats. We are hardwired to love sweets. But everywhere in the world, cultures fashion their wares in delightfully different ways to fulfill our human craving for sweets. In *Sweet Treats around the World*, we explore this myriad feast of sweets with an emphasis on an anthropological approach that focuses on foods in a holistic, historical, and comparative manner, in a survey of sweet treats worldwide, by country or region.

A work of this nature, encompassing as it does more than 100 countries, must, by necessity, rely on secondary sources and the help of many people. Two things should be said about that: First, a genuine heartfelt “thank you” goes to all of the people known and unknown who made such an adventure possible, and second, the methodology involved inherently makes it impossible to do in-person checks on all aspects of the materials. Vigorous attempts have been made to check and cross-check materials, and when possible native residents and other professionals have been asked to review the materials and contribute their favorite recipes. To the many who have done that, and have suggested helpful revisions and additions, we owe a great debt of gratitude, especially to Stanley E. Aschenbrenner, PhD (Greece); Saba Anduaem (Ethiopia); Leonore Baumler (Germany); Manish Basu (India, Scotland); Angela Batenburg (the Netherlands); Janet Benson (Intercontinental); Michael Burke (England); Jorge L. Castiblanco Calderon (Colombia); Kathy Cuddihy (Arabia); Srita. Flor Díaz (Peru); Jonathan Darby (Wales); Karla Dudley (Canada); Martha Lorena Espinosa (Mexico); Teódulo Espinosa Victoria (Mexico); Martha Elena Felix Brasdefer (Mexico); Chad Gillard (Denmark); Ieva Saulite Gorrilla (Latvia); Christabel Smyth Grant (Ireland, Scotland); Alena Hanáková (Czech Republic); Jennifer E. Jones, PhD (Jordan); Richiko Kamata (Japan); Ruriko Kamata (Japan); Takehito Kamata (Japan); Markéta Křížová, PhD (Czech Republic); Morris Levy, PhD (Belgium); Maggi Macleod (Scotland); Gabriella Oláh (Hungary); Zoe-Elizabeth Sariyanni, PhD (Greece); Asnakech (Ethiopia); Carolyn Molloy (Australia); Edwin King Murphy (Australia); Srita. Luzmila Ojeda (Venezuela); Ben Pawson (Scotland); Barbara Heuberger Rose, PhD (Malta); John-Mark Roufs (Mexico); Claire Schmidt (New Zealand); Dmitrii Svitich (Russia); David Syring, PhD (Ecuador); Abhilasha Shrestha (Nepal); Neeru Shrestha (Nepal); Puja Kafle (Nepal); Mayssam Tamim (Arabia); Melissa Olson Varanasi (Norway, Sweden); Paul van Reyk (Sri Lanka); Nora Vicinska (Latvia); Anne Louise Vidgen (Australia); Gretchen Woodfield (Philippines); Clifford A. Wright (Turkey); Mai See Xiong (Kazakhstan; Hmong); and the staff at the Embassies of

the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Federative Republic of Brazil, and the Republic of Peru. We also owe our thanks to the many friends who contributed recipes to this volume. We gratefully acknowledge their delightful contributions with their recipes. We enjoyed the journey together, with our many friends, through this amazingly sweet world and are grateful that our grandchildren—Casey Pedro, Claire Kathleen, Eli Campbell, and Nora Elizabeth—were willing to occasionally accept homemade sweet treats in lieu of our time. Thanks are also due to our wonderful editor Kaitlin Ciarmiello, Senior Acquisitions Editor, Geography and World Cultures, and Erin Ryan, Senior Coordinator, Editorial Operations at ABC-CLIO, to Sivakumar Vijayaraghavan, Copy Editor, for his insightful copyediting, and Sasikala Rajesh, Senior Project Manager, for her invaluable assistance, and to the equally wonderful staff of the University of Minnesota Duluth Library. While we are grateful for all of these important contributions, any responsibility for errors is our own. We apologize to the people of the many interesting cultures of the world whose delectable treats would simply not fit into a work of this size and nature. More information and additional recipes discussed in this volume are available online at <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/SweetTreats.html>.

In this volume, general statistics and data come from the *World Fact Book* (2013). We have been influenced by, rely on, and recommend the works of Harold McGee in the area of food chemistry (2004); Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat in the general area of food history (2009); Michael Kronl (2011), Sidney W. Mintz (1986), and Tim Richardson (2002) more specifically for the history of sweets; Alan Davidson (2006) for selected details on sweets and food in general; John Dobbing (1987), Michael Moss (2013), and Joanne Chen (2008) on sweetness; Felipe Fernández-Armesto (1987, 2002, 2009, 2010) for general history; Helen C. Brittin (2011) for a useful checklist of foods of the world; and Lynne Olver (2013) for a useful food timeline.

We hope you enjoy your adventure into the wonderful world of *Sweet Treats* as much as we did preparing this *smörgåsbord* of sweets.

INTRODUCTION

From the very first moments of life, babies love sweets: from day one and for the rest of their lives. Babies in utero prefer sweet flavors from about 14 weeks. Premature babies differentiate between sweet and non-sweet. Sugar makes children feel good; it is an analgesic. Infants can discriminate among different sugars and are responsive to differences in sweetness concentrations (Drewnowski 1987, 187). As they grow older, children increasingly like sweet treats, and prefer more intense sweetness than adults. Children are further conditioned as they go along in life. The more they eat sweets, the more they like and want sweeter foods. We are, in short, hardwired for sweets. Infants' clear preference for sweets has led big food corporations to assert that added sugar in their sweetened foods is "natural."

While it is natural that we are all born to love sweet tastes, we are also born to love energy-rich fats and salt. We especially like combinations of the three: sugar-fat-salt. In our prehistoric past, an inborn love of sweets, fats, and salt helped our species survive. Our ancestors' very survival at one time depended on eating sweet treats, initially fruits with their fructose-laden nectars. A recent *National Geographic* article suggests that 22 million years ago African apes survived year-round on the sweet fruits of the rainforest canopy, and that a mutation subsequently occurred to allow the early primates to efficiently store surplus fructose (fruit sugar) as body fat, an adaptation powerful for survival. Analysis of food trapped in the teeth of a 2-million-year-old "southern ape" (*Australopithecus africanus*) suggests that our remote relatives existed on a unique diet of forest fruits and other woodland plants, including bark and the sweet sap beneath, turning to the soft, sweet, albeit less nutritious, inner bark when times were difficult (Briggs 2012). Along with fruits and honey, the sweet liquid provided our ancestors with their first sugary treats.

Add some fat and a little salt to the fruits, honey, and sweet saps and one has reached a prehistoric "bliss point" balance of those primordial urges that food giants today spend years and millions of research dollars engineering into their modern-day sweet-treat food products. We have learned all flavor combinations other than salt, fat, and sweet, including important taste-related smells. Our prehistoric ancestors did not live in environments where they had access to a lot of intensely sweet, fat, or salty foods, so in earlier times our inborn cravings were of great survival value. The availability of sweet treats has changed, and our inborn yearnings for today's manufactured sweet treats have sometimes become a nutritional problem, albeit the treats remain dietary delights to many.

Today, in much of the world, the main sweet treat is sweet fruit. One of the first great events in Western traditions witnesses the serpent tempting Adam and Eve with the “forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” in the Garden of Paradise—to which one of the primeval couple readily succumbs, followed by the other (who went first varies with cultures). Many say the forbidden fruit was an apple—not likely, as apples were not present in the Middle East in scriptural times, and besides, *apple* was a word that up until the 17th century included almost any foreign fruit. The forbidden fruit was more likely a fig, a pomegranate, or some other prohibited sweet fruit delicacy. Scriptures do not say. Cultures around the world tell much the same tale. So began the knowledge of good and evil itself, on the beginning of the road to delectable sweet treats leading ultimately to our modern-day “death by chocolate,” *baklava*, Häagen-Dazs ice cream, and all of the nearly good-enough-to-die-for sweet treat favorites that folks around the world now enjoy.

Whatever else happens in the world, our primal urge for sweets remains intact and operative. Fighting for their “stomach share” of digestive space in consumers’ gastrointestinal tracts, commercial food giants today intentionally engineer their sweet treats to “optimize” (their term) offerings to center on the “bliss point”—that specific combination of sugar, fat, and salt that resonates with our inborn urges. Their research pays off; their strategy is fruitful. Foods scientifically optimized at their bliss points prey upon inborn cravings, producing both bountiful sales and pleased consumers.

Companies, in addition, alter the very physical shape and structure of sugars, fats, and salts for things like “mouthfeel” and “flavor burst,” to cater to other widespread culinary preferences, to boost the allure and “hedonic response,” and hence, sale, of foods. Food engineers amplify the sweetness of sugar 200 times or more its natural strength. Food chemists’ pursuit of allure, suggests Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Moss, leaves nothing to chance, with the food engineering teams using

Sensory-Specific Satiety: Why You Always Have Room for Dessert

Why is it that you *always* have room for dessert, even after you have eaten a full meal to the point where you cannot eat one more bite, as on Thanksgiving?

The reason is called “sensory-specific satiety,” a concept scientists use to explain how when a person has filled up on one or more types of food, when presented with another that differs in taste, texture, aroma, or even temperature, appetite is renewed and eating generally begins again. Rats in the laboratory do the same. It is also why people generally eat more at a buffet than when being served at the table.

brain scans, for example, to study how “the brain lights up for sugar the same way it does for cocaine”—handy scientific information for formulating commercial sweet treats (Moss 2013, xxvii). In short time, the food industry was not only producing delectable foods that made one happy, but it was also producing foods that people craved. *Craved!* Some use the word *addicted* to describe their state. The sugar–cocaine parallel, interestingly enough, indirectly and discretely appears in one major ice-cream maker’s advertisement, claiming that their product is a “scientifically proven” way to make one happy (Moss 2013, xxxvii). In modern-day industrial society, it is also scientifically proven that hunger is a relatively poor driver of cravings. We are driven to eat by “other forces in our lives,” including emotional and social needs; convenience; and the lure of taste, aroma, appearance, texture, and “mouthfeel”—features recognized as important in sweet treats by the Chinese and Japanese thousands of years ago and by other mothers and grandmothers around the world for generation upon generation. Mouthfeel is second only to the bliss point in its ability to predict how much craving a food—a product—will induce, a feature accidentally discovered by Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield in formulating their famous ice creams. Giant food companies are hooked on salt, sugar, and fat in their relentless quests to provide sweet treats and other foods with the greatest allure at the lowest cost resulting in the highest profits. Sugar, in modern times, not only sweetens, but it also replaces more costly ingredients, adds bulkiness and texture, and aids in preserving food and extending shelf life, all, of course, beneficial to “the bottom line,” albeit not the waistline.

Increasingly, around the world, health-conscious consumers and organizations troubled about the current “obesity epidemic” send up warning flags, the more scientific-minded noting that high amounts of added sugars in one’s diet lead to “metabolic syndrome,” health-risk factors like high levels of fat and insulin in the blood. Most health-conscious observers argue that sugar provides “empty calories” (“discretionary calories” to the food industry) with little-to-no nutritional value, with some scientists arguing even that sugar is toxic at high doses. Others, such as the Two Fat Ladies—British television food personalities whose popularity in England was second only to the Queen and the Beatles—toss caution to the wind and encourage the consumption *and enjoyment* of butter-rich delights and similar foods. Nothing substitutes for sweet cream butter, points out Marion Nestle (no relation to the Nestlé company), arguably the most sensible, perceptive, respected, and all-around best-informed nutritionist and food writer of our times.

Taste, from the scientific point of view, is a complex matter. Some of the most interesting and important work on the physiological psychology of taste, including the key accompanying component smell, has been conducted by Linda Bartoshok, Howard Moskowitz, and by the scientists at the independent Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia. Their research reveals that special receptors for sweetness on every one of the mouth’s up to 10,000 or so taste buds connect, one

way or another, to the pleasure zones of the brain—the parts that light up for sugar and cocaine. “Sweet receptor proteins” detect sugar as it dissolves in our saliva and send signals to the brain. Different receptors on the tongue receive each of the other four basic tastes: salty, bitter, sour, and umami (“deliciousness,” the taste of the molecule glutamate). Substances produced in the brain that increase our appetite (endocannabinoids) arouse the sweet taste receptors on the tongue. Other sweets-related functions in and of the brain—including the major role smell plays in the enjoyment of our sweet treats—are still being researched, and exactly how they work is not yet clear. However, it is clear that the starches we eat convert to sugar and the faster they convert, the quicker the brain’s pleasure centers “light up” on the scientists’ instruments. Taste receptors light up for sugars all the way down our esophagus to our stomach and pancreas. Sugars combined with fat and salt excite the brain even more, as they produce the bliss point.

Sugars are responsible for sensory tastes and food features other than sweetness, flavors involving color (which psychologically affects flavor), aroma, texture, moisture retention, improved shelf life, and browning. A scientifically complex browning reaction involving fructose (fruit sugar) and amino acids, known as the Maillard reaction, contributes full and intense flavors, colors, and aromas to our treats and is basic to browning crusts in baking; and making chocolate; maple syrup; caramels; and caramel coloring in foods, coffee, dark beers, and snacks.

Caramelization, a similarly complex event as the Maillard reaction, but involving only sucrose (table sugar), is a distinct, heat-related process that produces golden-brown crusts and nutty flavoring in baked, toasted, roasted, and grilled foods. Caramelization gives great flavors to candies and other sweets. Browning reactions, in general—including slow browning of moist foods and the high-temperature Maillard and caramelization brownings—all produce new flavors and tastes that are characteristic of the cooking process, which itself goes back to primordial times—flavors we have come to love in our baked and cooked sweet treats.

In the general history of sweet treats—after the fall of Adam and Eve—several key events that fashioned our modern-day sweet treats offerings stand out: the discovery of chocolate, the discovery of sugarcane/sugarcane processing and its eventual introduction to the Western world, the discovery of the process of economically converting beets to sugar, the appearance and utilization of modern scientifically oriented food technologies, the invention of efficient industrial processing of corn-based sweeteners, the rise of research-based mass marketing (including the production and distribution of materials especially attractive to children), and the appearance and widespread acceptance of “convenience” foods along with the practice of eating-outside of the home.

Chocolate appeared on the sweet treats scene in about 1100 BC in Central America, as a festive beer-like beverage and status symbol. It remained important in Mesoamerica until the arrival of the conquistadors in the early 16th century, when the

foreigners slowly began to adapt it. While no one knows for sure when cacao—chocolate—first reached Spain, the first *documentary* evidence for the actual appearance of chocolate in Spain comes from the records of a visit by Bartolomé de las Casas and a delegation of Quiché Maya Amerindian nobles from Spanish-ruled Guatemala to Prince Philip in 1544. Over the next 100 years, chocolate became increasingly popular in the Spanish court, as the sugar-laden hot drink that eventually the Swiss transformed into the sugar-rich chocolate bar that we know today.

Sugarcane, a native of the tropical areas around New Guinea, likely had multiple origins, with different varieties originating in various locales. Papua New Guinea, where sugarcane is prominent in legend, appears as a source of sugarcane domestication as early as 8000 BC. People in Polynesia, Southeast Asia, and India probably grew sugarcane for medicine and/or for its sweet juice, as is still done in India and many other parts of the world. The earliest known reference to sugarcane comes from around 1000 BC, from an Indian love poem in the sacred Hindu text *Atharva Veda*, where sugarcane is a symbol of sweetness and attractiveness. By the sixth century BC, the people of India had figured out how to boil sugarcane’s sweet juice until it crystallized into something like sugar. By then the sugar production in India was sophisticated enough for Sanskrit texts to refer to 12 varieties of sugar, some fine, some rough, and some with different levels of sweetness. Linguists trace the word “sugar” to the Indian Sanskrit *sarkara* (meaning also “gravel” or “sand” or “a gritty substance”), which is referenced in documents dated to around 350 BC. The first written evidence of *solid* sugar use comes from a Persian (modern-day Iran) tablet of 510 BC, which describes sugar as coming from the Indus Valley (in modern-day India and Pakistan)—a sugar resembling the modern hard, raw, dark brown sugar known as *gur* or *jaggery*. The first reference to sugar in Western literature is attributed to General Nearchus of Crete, commander of Alexander the Great’s army in 327 BC, who came upon it in what is now the Punjab region of Pakistan and India. Up until that point, especially in the West, sugar refinement remained largely “a secret science, passed master to apprentice” (Cohen 2013, 86).

Honey in Western Europe began to yield to sugar as a major sweetener, beginning with the Arab occupation of southern Spain and Portugal in the later Middle Ages (AD 711–1492). Arabs had originally adopted industrial sugarcane irrigation and processing techniques from India, via Persia, and brought sugarcane and sugar production to the Iberian Peninsula. Arabs for a long time knew and used different varieties of sugars, like the Indians in sixth century BC. The worldwide sweet treats’ transition from honey and sweet syrups to sugar transpired through 15th- and 16th-century Portugal and Spain as part of what Alfred Crosby Jr., termed “The Columbian Exchange.” The Columbian Exchange of sugar took place at the very end of the nearly 800-year occupation of Al-Andalus (Andalusia), the area of Spain and Portugal and part of France controlled by Moorish and Arab peoples. The main sweet treat legacy of the Muslim rule of Al-Andalus was sugar. “Sugar,” as Sidney Mintz, the

preeminent scholar of sugar succinctly noted, “followed the Koran” (Mintz 1986). During their rule on the Iberian Peninsula, Muslims introduced sugar and sugar-based cuisines made from egg yolks, cinnamon, sesame seeds, dried figs, rice, almonds, honey, and fresh fruits. By 1492, Muslim political rule in Iberia was over, but Muslim cultural influence remained, along with its predilection for sugar-based sweet treats.

Christopher Columbus, a Genoa-born sugar merchant sailing under the auspices of Ferdinand II and Isabella I of what became Spain, on his second of four voyages, in 1493, brought sugarcane from the newly conquered Canary Islands to Hispaniola in the Caribbean (the modern-day Dominican Republic). Next to the actual “discovery” of America in 1492, the most significant deed of Columbus was the introduction of sugar and the sugar plantation system to the New World. Although the Portuguese dominated early 16th-century New World sugar production, Spain pioneered sugarcane, sugar-making, the use of African slave labor, and the plantation system in the Americas. The American colonies quickly became the main supplier of sugar to Europe. In the 16th and 17th centuries, England, the Netherlands, and France joined as sugar-producing colonialists and competitors to Spain and Portugal, and after 1700, with increased production and competition, sugar was transformed from a luxury medicinal-spice product into one that was more commonly used in cooking, albeit sparingly. And the world of sweet treats—and the world as well—has never been the same. Sugar is now one of the major food products in the world.

A large part of the increasing use of sugar as a sweetener was initially tied to the introduction of bitter cocoa, bitter tea, and bitter coffee to Europe. Sugar made these piquant stimulating beverages more appealing to Europeans. In the early 19th century, more sugar began to be produced from sugar beets, as cane sugar was still expensive. As the result of research, aided, in part, by Frederick the Great of Prussia, a small beet sugar refinery was established in Central Europe, in Silesia (now part of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany), in 1800. The Napoleonic wars cut off supplies of cane sugar to France, and in 1812, Napoleon Bonaparte began cultivating and producing beet sugar on a large scale. By mid-19th century, sugar beets had become an economically important source of a fully refined white sugar, and, moreover, as a product of temperate-zone countries, it could easily be produced in Europe, especially in France, Germany, and Britain, as well as in the United States. From that point onward, beet sugar increasingly invaded the sweet treats world—at least up until the introduction of commercial corn sweeteners in the 1970s. Sugar beets, which now usually contain about 20 percent sugar, are the second most important source of sugar in the world.

Today Americans consume, on average, about 77 pounds of caloric sweeteners each year (some reports suggest even more), or 22 teaspoons of *added* sugars per day. Reports suggest the amount is almost equally split three ways between sugars

derived from sugarcane, sugar beets, and corn-based sweeteners, plus some honey and sweet syrup, although, more recently, Daniel E. Lieberman suggests that about half of the sugar Americans consume now derives from corn (Lieberman 2013).

Since the 1980s, corn-based high fructose syrups (HFCSs) have become especially important to the world of for-profit sweet treat foods, because they are relatively cheap and, being syrups, they come in convenient easy-to-use liquid form (although dry honey and molasses are now said to be easier to use than their liquid counterparts). Fructose blends vary in composition from around 55 percent fructose and 42 percent glucose in the HFCS-55 blend used in soft drinks to 42 percent fructose and 53 percent glucose for the HFCS-42 variety used in items like baked goods. “High-fructose corn syrups” are so termed because earlier versions were higher in fructose (about 75 percent), when originally invented in 1957. According to Harold McGee, the science guru of the kitchen, the solids in HFCS-42 provide the same sweetness as the syrup’s equivalent weight in table sugar.

“Sugar” refers to many kinds of caloric sweeteners. *Fructose*, found in fruits and honey, is the sweetest of common sugars; its chemical structure varies, thus also its effect on sweet receptors. *Sucrose*, commonly produced from sugarcane and sugar beets, is refined table sugar and is preferred in candies and preserves because of its consistently pleasant taste, even at high concentrations. Other sugars, by contrast, impart undesirable tastes when highly concentrated. *Glucose*, also known as “blood sugar” and “dextrose,” found in many fruits and honey, is less sweet than sucrose. *Lactose*, the sugar found in milk, is used less in sweet treats as it is also less sweet than table sugar. *Maltose* is the sugar found in the malted barley of malted milk. Regular thick American corn syrup—distinct from HFCS—consists of glucose and small starches and remains important in confectionary foods as it prevents other sugars in candy

High-Fructose Corn Syrup

A Japanese scientist named Yoshiyuki Takasaki invented an industrial process for creating high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) in the mid-1960s, patenting it in 1972. HFCSs are now glucose-fructose blends, varying in composition from around 55 percent fructose and 42 percent glucose in the HFCS 55 blend used in soft drinks to 42 percent fructose and 53 percent glucose for the HFCS 42 variety used in items like baked goods. “High-fructose corn syrups” are so termed because earlier versions were higher in fructose (about 75 percent). Today, HFCS is one of the major industrial sweeteners. Both HFCS and sucrose (table sugar) have the same sweetness by weight.

from crystallizing and producing a grainy texture, and it imparts a thick, chewy texture to sweet treats.

Sugar substitutes include sweeteners like saccharin (Sweet’N Low), aspartame (Nutra Sweet and Equal), sucralose (Splenda), and acesulfame-K (Sweet One and Sunett). Sugar substitutes range in “relative sweetness” from 0 to 800,000, with both sucrose and HFCS based at 100, and neotame (a modified version of aspartame produced by NutraSweet), said by the manufacturer to be “the fastest growing sweetener in the world,” scaling out at 8,000 times the sweetness of sucrose (by weight). Glucose, by contrast, rates 74, whereas fructose rates as high as 173. The more common sugar substitutes vary widely in relative sweetness: aspartame has a sweetness rating of 18,000, saccharin, 30,000, stevioside, 4,000–30,000, acesulfame-K, 20,000, and sucralose, 60,000. The more traditional licorice root has a relative sweetness index of 5,000–10,000, making it a natural choice sweetener in many parts of the world (McGee 2004).

Traditional natural choices today, as in prehistoric and early historic times, include honey and sweet syrups like date palm syrup/honey, fruit syrup like *verjus* and *saba* (grape syrup), maple syrup, birch syrup, agave honey, fig syrup, malt syrup, sorghum, molasses, golden syrup, and treacle. Mesolithic cave paintings (about 9,000 years old) near Valencia, Spain, depict bees and ancient honey gatherers—some of the very first non-game prehistoric art subjects found in the world. A wall painting of a honeycomb at the archaeological site of Çatal-Hüyük in the Anatolia region of Turkey suggests that apiculture, or beekeeping, thrived as early as 6600 BC. Rock art and texts in ancient Babylonia, Greece, Rome, Egypt, Crete, Cyprus, and Sicily all attest to the importance of honey from the earliest days of recorded history. Indonesia has had honey so long that it evolved its own species of giant honey bees. Five-thousand-year-old-plus clay jars recently unearthed in the Eurasian country of Georgia are said to contain the world’s oldest honey. The oldest written reference to the use of honey is thought to be Egyptian, appearing in about 5500 BC. By about 3500 BC, Lower Egypt, the North, had become the main center of beekeeping and was called “Bee Land,” and the pre-pharaoh rulers of Lower Egypt had begun to call themselves by the formal royal title *bit*—“he of the bee.” By about 2400 BC, beekeeping appeared in several temple reliefs, including the oldest depictions of beekeepers in action. Beekeeping in Greece likely arrived early on via its initial contacts with Egypt. From Crete, the largest and most populous of the 2,000 or so Greek islands, comes one of the world’s oldest written honey recipes.

In the New World, ancient writings of Mayans and Aztecs abound with references to their love of honey and its importance in their cultures. The Maya of the Yucatán Peninsula are famous for their honey and chocolate. Although important in all cultures of ancient Mexico, honey was especially prominent among the Maya. The bee god, a major deity of the Maya, *Ah Mucen Kab*, is featured prominently

in the iconography of ancient Maya. The importance of honey in ancient Middle America can be seen in the early Spanish attempts to stop its production as a competitor to their newly introduced sugarcane. Before the arrival of Spanish sugar, Aztecs and other ancient Mesoamericans used two kinds of sweeteners, as their descendants still do throughout central highland Mexico: honey from their native “stingless” aboriginal honey bees and “agave nectar” from the maguey or “century plant.” Agave honey is mainly produced from the blue agave of the southern Mexican highlands—the same succulent used in the production of tequila and mescal. Agave honey is becoming increasingly popular in the United States, as a sweetener among folks concerned about healthful eating. Agave honey is 1.4 to 1.6 times as sweet as sugar, and is slightly over one-half to almost 100 percent fructose (Johannes 2009).

Today, honey production worldwide is in trouble. Since 2005, “Colony Collapse Disorder” and a host of other diseases, commonly used pesticides, diminishing plant variety, and loss of habitat due to industrial monocropping practices, have raised havoc with honey production. In the United States, since 2007, one-third or more of colonies have been dying each year—a rate, some worry, is unsustainable (5–10 percent per year was the old norm). The mysterious malady affects both honey production and the pollination of sweet treat ingredients, like those of America’s iconic apple pie.

With the existing worldwide difficulties with bees and honey production, we might well need to turn to historical sources for natural sweeteners—the same sweeteners that were popular before the advent of inexpensive cane and beet sugars. Sweet syrups like date palm syrup, fruit syrups like *saba* and *verjus*, maple syrup, birch syrup, fig syrup, malt syrup, sorghum, molasses, golden syrup, treacle, and agave honey might again become more prominent sweeteners. The ancients loved *verjus* and *saba*, two classic grape syrups. They often cooked ripe grapes down to a thick, concentrated, sweet-tart, aromatic syrup—known to the Romans as *sapa*, to the Italians as *saba* or *mosto cotto*, to the Turks as *pekmez*, and to the Arabs as *dibs* (McGee 2004). The Italian *saba* is about half glucose and half fructose. For *verjus*, a slightly sweet alternative to vinegar or lemon juice, fruits thinned six to eight weeks before harvest were crushed and filtered. Sweet fruit syrups provide sweetness, tartness, and aroma. They also made other popular fruit syrup sweeteners from pomegranates, dates, and figs. Regional historical sweeteners like agave honey, maple syrup/sugar, and birch syrup remain popular in areas where their primary ingredients are plentiful. With the arrival of cane and beet sugar production, derivative syrup products became important sweeteners, including molasses, golden syrup, and treacle. Similar products like sorghum syrup/molasses and barley malt syrup remain largely regional favorites. Barley malt syrup is a thick dark brown sweetener made from malted barley, sorghum syrup from high-sugar-content sorghum grasses. Modern commercial fruit syrups are a relatively recent

versions of the traditional syrups, but with both aroma and color removed. Today, manufactured fruit syrups are about 75 percent sugars, mainly glucose and fructose, often identified on labels as “fruit sweeteners.”

Manufacturing blossomed with the Industrial Revolution and its increasingly scientific approach to producing foods. Both home cooks and industries steadily turned to “modern” commercial products for making their sweet treats. Alfred Bird of Gloucestershire, England, a chemist and food manufacturer who had earlier invented the famous Bird’s powdered egg-free custard in 1837, invented baking powder in 1843. In America, baking powder for leavening cakes and “quick breads” appeared and caught on after the American Civil War, in 1866. Marion Harland’s *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* was one of the first, in 1873, to include recipes for chemically leavened cakes, cakes leavened with something other than yeast. In the 1870s, the Swiss developed modern chocolate as we know it. American cooks readily took to using cooking chocolate, baking powder, “baking soda,” powdered custard, powdered gelatin, and other newly arriving and increasingly affordable ingredients. Mass-produced kitchen bakeware, hardware, and gadgetry like apple peelers opened new sweet treat horizons for American homemakers. Metal cast-iron cookstoves began replacing hearth and brick-oven cooking early in the 19th century and by midcentury cookstoves were commonly accepted in urban middle-class households, adding to the convenience and productivity of homemakers. Homemade baked goods flourished.

Mass-produced home freezers, and refrigerators with freezing compartments large enough to hold more than a couple of ice cube trays, became popular after World War II, in the 1940s, making frozen foods commonplace—including pre-baked and ready-to-bake frozen sweet treats. By the mid-1950s, companies like Kitchens of Sara Lee were distributing high-quality frozen sweet treats nationwide. World War II changed much of the world, including American, European, Australian, and other homemakers’ broader social options, as well as their baking and baked goods worlds. Wartime shortages and rationing put sweet treats on hold throughout much of the world or at least diverted them to the fighting forces. In America, the big flour manufacturers and other commercial food industries devoted many of their research and production efforts to feeding the troops. After the war, adapting to, and promoting, changes in the new social milieu, General Mills introduced “Betty Crocker’s” “just add water” boxed cake mixes in 1947—in ginger, spice, yellow, and white. In 1948, “Ann Pillsbury” followed with the first boxed chocolate cake mix. Although cake mixes had appeared on the American scene in 1929, they did not catch on during the Depression years and did not become popular until after World War II.

After World War II drive-ins and restaurants became popular in America, as did eating out in general, all aided by American’s growing love of the automobile. Convenience foods and commercial snacks increasingly caught on, popularizing “secondary eating”—eating not at mealtimes—bolstered by inventions like the

microwave. By the 1960s, the counter-top microwave had come of age and quickly took center stage in American homes, to become what has been called both “the most revolutionary food trend in the U.S.A. in the past 25 years” and “the greatest discovery since fire.” Today, over 90 percent of American homes have at least one microwave. From the mid-1960s through the early 1990s, all socioeconomic groups in America increasingly ate out more and spent less time cooking at home. Researchers now suggest the trend leveled off and stabilized after the mid-1990s, with no substantial decrease in cooking and eating at home occurring thereafter (Smith et al. 2013). Nevertheless, in 2007–2008, Americans obtained about one-third of their total daily energy outside the home, from fast-food establishments, cafeterias, and restaurants, but only slightly more than one-half of the adults spent any time cooking at home on any given day. Home food sources reportedly remain the top provider of daily energy across all sociodemographic groups, accounting for about two-thirds of the total energy intake. People “graze” and “snack” more, thus a substantial amount of the foods eaten at home are not necessarily home-cooked. When people do cook, they are relying more heavily on packaged and convenience foods. People essentially “buy” time through the purchase of ready-to-eat or near-ready-to-eat convenience foods requiring little-to-no preparation, other than, perhaps, heating in the microwave. Commercial sweet treats play a key role in these modern eating patterns.

Since the war years, modern-day international and increasingly consolidated commercial sweet treats companies in industrialized countries have served up ever more fabricated sweet treats. We see today, for example, individually wrapped commercial apple pie nuggets with added chemical ingredients lists longer than the original colonial women’s recipes. Accustomed to the commercial giants’ sugar-laden offerings, with their spot-on bliss point formulae, we have arrived at a point in history where few young people in America even know how to make a “scratch” cake. Researchers report, however, that it is unknown how much people cook from scratch in general, or if “home cooking” consists mostly of heating up pre-processed foods.

So what then bodes the future of sweet treats?

The future is here. One can now prepare sweet treats and other “comestibles” at home by printing them with a 3D food printer. While scientists at the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research worked at printing a main course of something resembling steak and chicken, researchers at the French Culinary Institute in Manhattan, since 2011, have been printing sweet treats like geometric chocolates, cakes, and cupcakes. They aspire to explore new frontiers in celebrating mother’s birthday:

You want to bake a special cake for your mom, so you boot up the 3-D printer in your kitchen. Loaded with a dozen cartridges filled with pastes of chocolate, marzipan, and other ingredients, the machine downloads instructions

from the Internet. You key in a specific texture, size, and flavor, and then you insert a 3-D message in the center—Happy Birthday, Mom!—to be revealed only after she takes a bite. The machine does the rest, assembling and baking a pastry so scrumptious it rivals a virtuoso chef’s in richness and complexity. (Lipton and Lipson 2013)

You can “send” a piece of your mother’s cake online to all of your friends with suitably equipped printers. Students and researchers associated with Cornell University’s Fab@Home venture, a project led by Professor Hod Lipson aimed at making 3D printing technology readily accessible, have been experimenting with food fabrication since 2006. A consumer-version 3D printer about the size of a microwave oven, now available at your local office supply store, attaches to a computer and with its syringe-like cartridges filled with chocolate or a variety of pastes and fluids, working like hot-glue guns, will “print out” your custom treats. Jeff Lipton, a Cornell mechanical engineering graduate student working on the project, suggests that 3D food printing will be next phase of the digital revolution; he predicts, “food printing will be ‘the killer app’ of 3D printing.” Lipton thinks, “the lure of feeding Grandma’s cookie recipe into a printer will help personal fabricators expand beyond the geek crowd” (Segall 2011). “This would be a slam dunk for cookies at holiday time,” says David Arnold, director of culinary technology at the French Culinary Institute in Manhattan. “Anything that requires a high level of precision that people don’t usually have with their hands, in terms of making icing or decorations, this thing can perform amazingly well” (Segall 2011).

While early 3D printed treats were made from simple pastes that hardened when dried or cooked, today’s high-tech versions use ingredients aimed at accommodating a larger range of ingredients, cooking temperatures, and recipes. Today research into 3D food printing focuses on creatively customizing food shapes of existing foods, like creating internal designs and intricate sculptures. Researchers recently created cookies with writing *inside* of them, and with etched messages on top, starting with a Christmas cookie recipe of the grandmother of a visiting Austrian scientist. They are also experimenting with new textures that chefs might not be able to fabricate otherwise, like a porous matrix that allows frying oil to penetrate much deeper into the treat, resulting in something delicately crispy and greasy, like a cross between a donut, a tortilla chip, and raw ramen noodles. A Japanese firm now offers to add smell via an attachment to your cell phone. Susana Soares at London South Bank University used flour made from crushed bugs to print edible objects that look like butterfly wings and honeycombs, a treat that would at least be recognizable in shape by the ancient prehistoric honey hunters of Spain.

What’s next?

No doubt, eventually “cooks” will be able to program the “bliss point” and “mouth-feel” of a wide variety of sweet treats and customize each piece to the sensitivity of

the taste bud configurations of individuals. Lipton and Lipson are more modestly looking forward to the day when they can try as-yet-unprintable gastronomic miracles like donut burgers.

For those not “into” technology, and especially for those around the world not yet into 3D printing—or futuristic molecular gastronomy like cooking with nitrogen oxide canisters as does the famed Ferran Adrià of the former *El Bulli* restaurant near Barcelona, Spain—the future is the past. The traditional sweet treats that grandmother made—using word-of-mouth instructions from her grandmother, and she from her long line of grandmothers of the unknown past—will remain classic favorites, especially on festive holiday occasions, along with native fruits, as our inborn primal urges call out for—nay, *crave*—the sweet treats of yesterday and those of tomorrow. Tried-and-true classics will remain, alongside 3D printed Christmas cookies—like the reincarnations of the Austrian scientist Franz Nigl’s grandmother—and whatever else the future may serve up. Grandmothers’ wares around the world will forever be cherished “confections-desserts-salivators-tongue-titillators”—to borrow from the translated traditional word for sweet treats of the Burmese language—as our primal urge for sweet treats remains lifelong, universal, and eternal.

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A

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is surrounded by Iran, China, Pakistan, and three countries of the former Soviet Union. Despite attempts to build a stable central government, continued political instability and a resurging Taliban presence contribute to a tumultuous recent Afghan history. Afghanistan is a poor Asian country with a meager standard of living. Nevertheless, the Afghan people are survivors, and besides fusing the tastes and flavors of the bordering countries, the cuisines and cooking methods of the varied ethnic groups (including Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek) contribute to the great blends of flavors that utilize native ingredients in this multicultural, multilingual, mostly mountainous, rugged country.

It is not surprising, because of their proximity to India, that the Afghan people enjoy the flavors of cardamom, cinnamon, mint, cloves, coriander, and saffron; these spices give Afghan food fragrant, aromatic overtones, as the Afghan palate prefers foods that are neither too spicy nor too hot. Locally grown nuts and fruits complement most meals. The northern plains produce succulent grapes, apricots, pomegranates, melons, plums, berries, oranges, walnuts, and almonds. Pistachios and pine nuts, also grown on the northern plains, are world famous for their exceptional quality.

Daily desserts and sweets are luxuries to most people living in Afghanistan, an Islamic country where the Muslim culture, religion, and calendar shape most events and festivities. *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival, celebrates the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting, purification, and sacrifice. Sweets are especially important in the observance of the month-long fasting of Ramadan, with the faithful breaking their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan fasting each day of the month with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with dates in commemoration of the Prophet's own breaking of the fast. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Eid* festivities, and especially in *Iftar* meals. The four-day, *Eid ul-Adha*, the Festival of Sacrifice, celebrates the end of the Hajj, the religious pilgrimage to Makkah, one of the five Pillars of Islam. The sweet treats shared at each *Eid* include nuts, sugared almonds, and pastries or sweets such as *halwa e sojee*, and semolina-flour *halwa*, usually made in large quantities and shared with friends and family. (*Halvas* are dense, sweet confections made with bases of flour, nuts, legumes, seeds, or vegetables. They are popular and practical because they contain locally available ingredients and do not require refrigeration.)

Other *Eid* sweets include *halwa-e-swanak*, a golden nut brittle, *sheer payra* (cardamom fudge), and *goash-e-feel*, “elephant ear pastry,” deep-fried and sprinkled with a mixture of ground pistachios and confectioners’ sugar.

Nowruz, the first day of the New Year, falls on the spring equinox as defined by the Afghan solar calendar. *Haft mewa*, a traditional Afghan New Year dried fruit salad, contains an auspicious seven varieties of fruits and nuts, usually walnuts, almonds, pistachio, hazelnuts, dried cherries, dried apricots, and raisins. The preparation of *haft mewa* is of utmost importance to the Afghans; a successful preparation means the compote stays fresh, signifying the family will have a year of good luck.

Betrothals, or engagements, are elaborate events, with traditions varying among the different ethnic groups. These events are, for many Afghans, a contract between families, so the celebrations are laden with sweets and happiness, and the more lavish the exchanges between the families, the nobler the union. Although the meal is elaborate, the quantity and quality of sweets elevate the status of the occasion. Sweet *halvas* and syrup-soaked pistachio and walnut-layered *baklavas* are essential betrothal treats; festival foods also include *firni*, a cardamom-flavored custard, and *shola shireen*, a delicate rice pudding flavored and colored with saffron. Of course, these sweets have ethnic and regional variations, but desserts and sweets with cardamom, rose water, saffron, pistachios, and almonds complete all of the celebration menus.

Joyful occasions such as births, betrothals, weddings, and other rites of passage, including *Nowruz*, are cause for celebratory meals and festivities that are marked by extravagantly prepared menus and sweet treats—events that bring Afghan families and friends together to support each other and share happy, sweet occasions in challenging times.

Tahneek

Sweets are an important part of the religion of Muslims. Health in Islam reflects a state of equilibrium between body, mind, and soul; hence honey, dates, and sweets, in general, take on religious, medicinal, and culinary importance. Very traditional Muslim parents rub a piece of well-chewed sweet date on the soft palate of a newborn baby as something sweet to begin the infant’s journey of life in the temporal world, to keep the child safe from evil, and as sort of an initial call to prayer for the newborn. It is a practice called *tahneek*, following the example of the date-loving prophet Muhammad who performed the ritual on children of his companions. If a date or other sweet fruit or honey is not available, Muslims practicing *tahneek* may use anything sweet to welcome a newborn into the world. The practice is said to have many spiritual and physical benefits, as well as a physically soothing effect on the newborn.

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Arabian Peninsula

(Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen)

Seven modern-day countries comprise the desert peninsula east of the Red Sea. The largest, covering most of the peninsula and the third-largest country in Asia, is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with 26.9 million people (5.6 million of which are non-nationals), 90 percent of whom are Arabs. Officially, 100 percent of Saudi nationals are Muslim. The smallest country on the peninsula is Bahrain, an island east of Saudi Arabia with 1.3 million people, of whom 81.2 percent are Muslim. Bahrain is only three-and-a-half times the size of Washington, D.C. Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Oman, and Yemen, fall in between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in size. More than three-fourths of the total population of the Arabian Peninsula lives in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In the UAE, 81 percent of the population, essentially the private workforce, is foreign; in Saudi Arabia, it is estimated that foreigners hold 90 percent of the private-sector jobs. All peninsular countries are primarily urban, except Yemen, where three-fourths of the labor force is engaged in agriculture and herding. Yemen, on the southwestern tip of the peninsula, is one of the few locations where high rainfall allows viable commercial agriculture. All countries are Arabic-speaking and Muslim.

The earliest hunting and gathering peoples of the peninsula lived predominantly along the coasts, most likely enjoying honey and dates with their fish and shellfish. From the end of the last Ice Age, nomadic foragers populated most of the habitable areas of the peninsula. For thousands of years the transhumant Bedouins have made the peninsula their home. Today about a million-and-a-quarter Bedouins, in about 100 tribes, live in Arabia. Traditionally, they move seasonally to fresh pastures with their milk-producing goats, sheep, and camels. Milk, together with dates (*tamr*), unleavened bread (*abud*), and cardamom coffee, form the basic Bedouin diet, supplemented on special occasions with meat from their herds. Milk products include strained yoghurt (*labneh*, eaten fresh and dried), buttermilk (*laban*, milk soured for longer keeping), curds, hard cheese, and *smen* (liquid clarified salted

fermented butter, similar to ghee, made from churned goat milk or, more often, sheep milk, heated with a little flour and occasionally seasoned with coriander or cumin). Bedouin sweet treats were, by circumstance, limited to items made from dates, *dibis* (a thick, sticky molasses-like syrup oozing from dates in storage, or pressed), occasional wild berries, or other fruits such as figs, milk products, and hunted honey.

Arabs eat a lot of honey. Beekeeping on the southern Arabian Peninsula (as opposed to honey hunting), was first suggested by Pliny the Elder in the first century AD. But it was not until the time of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century that beekeeping became prominent (Ransome 2004). The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul: the *Qur'an* and honey. Yemen, the peninsula's largest honey manufacturer, produces high-quality honey from the *Sidr* (jujube) tree, a tree of medicinal value mentioned four times in the *Qur'an*. The province of Al Baha in southwest Saudi Arabia is widely known for its annual International Honey Festival.

For feasts and celebrations, Bedouin women make special sweet treats, such as *halva* (also known as *halawa*, meaning “sweetness” in Arabic), a sweet candy made from *tahini* (a paste made of ground sesame seeds), and honey. *Tahini* is also mixed with *dibis* to make a sweet dessert that is usually eaten with unleavened bread. Bedouins prepare a nutritious, energy-dense treat called *bsisa* with roasted and ground whole wheat mixed with sugar, salt, water, and olive oil. *Bsisa* is a sweet lightweight food prepared for traveling. For longer journeys, Bedouins also make a version called *ba-theeth*, a special dried, easy-to-carry preserve of chopped dates, parched flour, and *smen*, heated and kneaded into bars. Wheat, barley, and sorghum have been used for thousands of years. A classic breakfast dish of the central region, dark brown *hunayni*, includes ground dates, semolina, *smen*, and cardamom seasoning, simmered until firm.

Virtually every occasion includes cardamom coffee and, from the 19th century onwards, sweet mint tea. Coffee (*kha'weh*) is a central part of Arab hospitality, and hospitality is famously fundamental to Arab culture. While neighboring northeast Ethiopia is known as the home of coffee, coffee cultivation first appeared on

Most Different Desserts on Display

The Guinness Book of Records reports that Dubai, of the United Arab Emirates, holds the record for the most different desserts on display: 2,232 from over 30 countries, on February 13, 2009. The record-breaking event was part of a festival sponsored by the Emirates Culinary Guild and the Dubai Shopping Festival.

Guinness World Records. Accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>.

the southern Arabian Peninsula, and coffee-drinking as an infusion began most likely among the mystical Islamic Sufis in what is modern-day Yemen. Coffee beans over 1,000 years old have been found in the area. Coffee is served black, in tiny cups without handles, without sugar, and is usually flavored with a few crushed cardamom seeds or cloves. *Mocha sanani*, the smooth yet sharp-tasting sweet-fragranced Arabian coffee beans from the hills of Mocha, Yemen, are still prized for their unique flavor.

According to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad converted most of the Bedouins to Islam before he died in Medina in AD 632. Medina, 270 miles north of Makkah, is the location of the Prophet Muhammad's tomb. Along with Makkah, the Prophet's birthplace and place of the first revelation of the *Qur'an*—the sacred book of Islam—Medina is one of the two holiest places for Muslims. One of the five Pillars of Islam, the Hajj, requires faithful and able-bodied Muslims to visit Makkah at a prescribed time at least once in their lifetime, resulting in the largest annually occurring pilgrimage in the world. Beginning with the Hajj pilgrimages to Makkah in the seventh century, increasing numbers of foreigners have regularly visited Arabia, and the pilgrims exchange ideas and foods, including sweet treats, with others of the Muslim world.

One of two major worldwide Islamic religious celebrations, *Eid ul-Adha*, the Festival of Sacrifice, takes place at the end of Hajj. The second, *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival—ends the month of Ramadan fasting. Sweet dishes and desserts are especially important in the observances of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During Ramadan and *Eid*, Arabs bake plentifully, offering treats such as *ma'amoul* (a small crumbly semolina cookie filled with dates or ground walnuts, often made with rose water), *karabeej halab* (a smaller special-occasion version of *ma'amoul*), *Om 'Ali* (puff pastry cooked in milk, with nuts, coconut, and sugar, topped with cream and cheese and then baked), and *kunafeh* (a favorite soft white cheesy dessert topped with crispy orange-colored baked semolina). Two well-known Ramadan sweets in all Arab countries are *katayef* and *baklava*. *Katayef* is a small sweet pancake-like pastry cooked on one side, filled with heavy cream, unsalted cheese or sweetened goat cheese, or nuts (pistachios, walnuts, or cashews). Each pastry is then folded in half and baked or deep-fried. *Baklava* is a rich, sweet pastry featured in the cuisines of the former Ottoman Empire. (Most of the coastal areas of Saudi Arabia, Aden and other parts of Yemen, and the modern-day territory of Kuwait were part of the Ottoman Empire from 1517 to 1918, but not the central region known as *Najd* ["highland"].) Multiple layers of *phyllo* are filled with chopped walnuts or pistachios and are sweetened with syrup or honey. Popular Ramadan drinks include *gamaradeen* (apricot juice), orange juice, and the slightly salty tasting water of the 4,000-year-old well of Zamzam in Makkah. *Subya*, a nutritious mixture of sugar, warm water, barley, cinnamon, cardamom, and yeast, is also popular.



Katayef, a traditional Muslim Ramadan sweet, is a small pastry cooked on one side, filled with heavy cream, unsalted cheese, or sweetened goat cheese, or nuts, then folded in half and baked or deep-fried. (Paul Cowan/Dreamstime.com)

Throughout the Arabian Peninsula, few foods are as significant as dates, often associated with Arabs and Muslims. The holy *Qur'an* promises dates as one of the blessings in paradise. As a bonus, dates serve in this world both as an antidote to poison and as an effective defense against sorcery: “Whoever takes seven ‘*Ajwa* dates in the morning will not be effected by magic or poison on that day” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, bk. 71, no. 671). The soft black ‘*ajwa* dates from Madina are said to have been the Prophet Muhammad’s favorite. His preferred sweets were honey, dates, and *hais*, which is a mixture of curds, dates, and *smen*. According to the Prophet Muhammad, a house without dates has no food. Apart from being energy-bestowing sweet treats, dates were essential for survival in the deserts. Moreover, dates were readily available in every oasis, where they grew prolifically.

Today Arabia is the major producer of dates. Dates, besides being sweet delights, are readily preserved (drying easily in the desert sun), easy to eat (both fresh and dried), nutritious (providing excellent nutritional balance with milk products), curative (and preventative) of many illnesses, cheap (when they need to be purchased), ideal for transport (being relatively lightweight, easy to pack, and virtually indestructible), and edible to both humans and camels. As few as 15 dates satisfy the body’s alimentary daily requirements. There are hundreds of types of dates in Saudi Arabia, with each having its own taste and texture. Different species of dates have

different properties when dried; some dried dates have sugar concentrations of up to 70–80 percent—higher than their fresh fruit counterparts—helping preserve the fruit through the year. Dates, being of central importance since prehistoric times, continue to be a staple food throughout the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East, finding their way, with the *dibis*, into numerous recipes. And, of course, there are numerous date-centered treats: one finds sweet dates stuffed with almonds, walnuts, or marzipan; dates rolled in shavings of Omani and Yemeni coconut; classic Qatar *al rangina* (dates in sweetened butter sauce flavored with cinnamon); *al-harrisah* (a coarse-wheat date cookie, with *smen*, flour, walnuts or other nuts, and ground cardamom); and the list goes on, with seemingly endless variations on a theme.

Perhaps from dates overload, or maybe just because Arabians are drawn to the succulent flavors of regional fruits, most Arabians generally have fresh fruit after a big meal—the month of Ramadan being an exception. Fruits commonly consumed include figs, melons, mangoes, oranges, bananas, pomegranates, and grapes.

A third major historic change in the food culture of the peninsula—after the arrival of Islam in the seventh century and the arrival of the Ottoman Turks in the 16th century—happened with the discovery of oil in Bahrain in 1932. With production of oil beginning during World War II, the culturally conservative Arab countries were drawn into a world strongly influenced by international geopolitical events. Because of oil, most of the labor force now on the peninsula is foreign. Employees of the oil industry of the 20th and 21st centuries arrive from around the world, like their religious pilgrim counterparts, and have come to know and love the classic Arabian sweet treats that now have no borders.

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Argentina

Spanish explorer Juan Díaz de Solís was the first-known European to visit the lands now recognized as Argentina when in 1516 he and 70 men arrived in three

ships at an estuary he named *mar dulce*—“sweet sea.” Up until the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century, the Sweet Sea area, as with most of Argentina, was sparsely inhabited by dispersed, nomadic, hunter/gatherer/foragers, with some, like the nomadic Atacama Amerindian people, following herds of llama-like animals. As far as we know, for sweet treats these early hunting-gathering and herd-following peoples had but ripe fruits and honey, as did most hunting-gathering groups worldwide.

In general, not until the Inca began extending their empire into northwestern Argentina in the late 15th century did higher concentrations of people inhabit Argentina. Even then, most of the indigenous peoples remained independent of the Incas. Some remained hunter-gatherers, while some adapted their simple horticultural practices to the varied climatic and ecological conditions of the Andes and the central plains. The Guarani peoples of the northwest developed a culture based on cassava, sweet potato, and *yerba maté*—a caffeinated earthy herbal “tea” still used today—while others subsisted on quinoa, maize, and llama husbandry, all also important today. *Dulce de batata* (“sweet potato candy”), a traditional Argentine jelly-like sweet often eaten with cheese, is still made from sweet potatoes. Traditional Andean peoples prepared a potato-like tuber called *oca* in such a way as to reduce its acid content to the point where *oca* served as a sweet, and most likely, as in Peru, they also used it as a sweetener before cane sugar was available. The nomadic and famed Mapuche dominated the central and southern areas (Pampas and Patagonia). Their sweets, as usual, included a wide variety of readily available ripe fruits and “opportunistically gathered” wild honey.

Asado—the world-famous “Argentine barbecue”—defines Argentine national identity. Beef barbecue *is* the national dish. In the Argentine sweets world, *dulce de leche* reigns supreme, from one end of the long country to the other, almost singlehandedly defining the Argentine sweet treat identity and sometimes Argentine identity itself. Argentines sometimes use the saying “she [or he] is more Argentine than *dulce de leche*.” Some Argentines boldly claim that they mistakenly invented the super-sweet, caramelized, condensed cow’s milk pudding-like filling spread in the town of Cañuelas, on June 24, 1829. Today in Cañuelas they hold a festival, *Fiesta de Dulce de Leche*, on June 24, and the *Dulce de Leche* 10-kilometer marathon in its honor. It is said in Cañuelas that the Argentine National Secretary of Culture in 2003 requested that UNESCO have *dulce de leche* carry the seal of “Argentine Cultural, Food and Gastronomic Patrimony,” recognizing *dulce de leche* as one of Argentina’s unique national products—a move that reportedly irked folks in the other “birthplaces” of *dulce de leche*, neighboring Uruguay in particular. *Dulce de leche* is eaten at almost every meal of the day and as snacks in between. It turns up at all times of the day in or on—sometimes in *and* on—almost every kind of dessert: crêpes, cakes, pancakes, cookies, tarts, pastries of all sizes and shapes, on *flans* and

toast, and in Italian-style *gelato*. *Dulce de leche*, far and away Argentina's number-one favorite gelato flavor, is also recognized far and wide in their famed *alfajores*, sweet buttery cookies sandwiched together with *dulce de leche* in the middle, or a local fruit preserve paste, and dipped in chocolate.

The Europeanness of Argentine sweet treats can, along with their Italian-inspired *gelato*, be seen in their prided *alfajores* in German/Austrian Blue Danube guise, *alfajore Danubio*, along with their "Berliner" bismarks, *bola de fraile*, and their French "vennoiserie" *medialunas*—the latter being a buttery, crescent-shaped, flaky, croissant-like "half-moon" pastry localized with an added Argentine sweet glaze and served for breakfast or for afternoon *merienda*. One might also enjoy *vigilantes* for breakfast or lunch; they are delicious, not dangerous, being basically straightened and elongated *medialunas* brushed with a sugar glaze and eaten plain. Not surprisingly, sweet treats in Argentina are quite often of European origin, as are the Argentines themselves, with regional variations, as with the *medialunas* and *vigilantes*. And all with a delightfully sweet Argentine flavor.

In Buenos Aires, today, one finds *asado* steak and *dulce de leche* and *alfajores* with *dulce de leche*, topped off with some *dulce de leche*-flavored gelato. And for breakfast and in-between snacks, there are *dulce de leche* treats to enjoy.

What could be more Argentine?



Famed Argentine *alfajores*, are sweet buttery cookies sandwiched together with *dulce de leche* and often garnished with coconut. (Dinoforlena/Dreamstime.com)

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Armenia

About three million people live in the small craggy mountainous country of Armenia on forested lands ruled by more than a dozen great empires since its settlement in the Bronze Age, including Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Persian, Mongol, Ottoman, and the Soviet Union. Armenians call their land Hayastan, but it has been known by different names over the centuries. Armenia has, over the ages, been a fulcrum of cultural exchange; it is a strategically placed country on the crossroads between East and West on the former Great Silk Road in the South Caucasus—lying between Georgia (to the north), Turkey (to the west), Iran (to the south), and Azerbaijan (for the most part, to the east). Although now a landlocked country, Christian tradition has it that Noah’s Ark—an image of which is centered on Armenia’s official national coat-of-arms and federal seal—came to rest there after the biblical Great Flood. Marco Polo had visited the country many times. Today, the ethnic Armenians who make up most of the population (98 percent) speak their own official Armenian language (which has its own alphabet), and 94 percent profess to the Armenian Apostolic Church, the world’s oldest national church. The Armenian Church has been an important part of Armenians’ identity since the fourth century. Armenia gained its modern-day independence from the Soviet Union, upon the latter’s dissolution in 1991.

Sweet treats of Armenia have, as in all ancient places, been influenced by their history, by their neighbors’ cuisines, and by the ingredients available locally. And probably more than most groups, they have influenced the cuisines of others. Armenians have long been important merchants and traders in the Middle East, and thus have had a long history of access to a broader array of regional sweet treats and the peoples who made them. In Armenia, today, one thus finds sweets shared

by Greece, Turkey, Iran, and other cultures of the Middle East. Some traditional desserts are, in fact, much like their counterparts in those other countries, and many sweet treats even share common names. Because of significant emigration out of Armenia over the years, mostly for political reasons, the huge Armenian diaspora's influence can be seen in neighboring countries' foods, and in the foods of areas having significant immigrant Armenian populations, as their foods became part of the cuisines of host countries. Armenians have tended to influence rather than be influenced by others' cuisines, in part, because of their strong cultural and religious traditions.

As members of the oldest state Christian church in the world, and a culture that has kept its language and traditions alive—some say for 2,500 years—Armenians have kept their cherished traditional sweet treats. One can behold their history and culture embodied in their Lenten and Easter foods. For their Easter holidays, Armenians make *choereg*, Armenian Easter bread, a traditional slightly sweet bread seasoned with aromatic powdered cherry-seed kernels, the soft interior of the fruit stone of the St. Lucie, or rock cherry. Another pastry appearing for the Eastertide is *nazook* (*nazouk*), a traditional layered yeasted dough “crisp, but soft, and buttery, sweet, but not too sweet” pastry filled with a mixture of flour, butter, sugar, vanilla, and *mahlab* (Menayan 2013). The filling is rolled up, jellyroll style, and is cut into small pieces before baking. *Mahlab* is a common spice used in breads and pastries elsewhere in the region on various occasions, and it imparts a slightly bitter almond taste. It is also a signature spice used in Greek Easter breads.

In general, “cakes and pastries do not form part of an everyday meal in the Middle East but are served with afternoon or late evening tea or coffee, on special occasions, and during holidays” (Uvezian 2001). Typically, it is only on special occasions that “the richer pastries like *baklava*, *kurabia*, or *kadayif* make their appearance” (Uvezian 2001). *Baklava* is one of the well-known sweet butter-drenched *phyllo* pastry and spiced-nut honey-sopped treats popular in Greece and throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. Part of Easter, Christmas, and wedding traditions, *kurabias* are famous melt-in-your-mouth Armenian butter cookies, simply made with butter, sugar, flour, and vanilla. They are similar to shortbread and are often topped with a pistachio nut or blanched almond. They are also popular throughout the Middle East, often adorned with walnuts, almonds, or pine nuts. *Kadayif*—a dessert that resembles shredded wheat—is a shredded *phyllo* rose water-flavored pastry traditionally stuffed with finely chopped walnuts, drenched with a sweet syrup, and served with clotted cream. For Candlemas (The Feast of the Presentation), Armenians traditionally bake round *gata* (*kata*), which also serves as the most important decoration of the festival table and as part of a special ceremony. *Gata* is a shiny glaze-crusting pastry made of flour, butter, sugar, egg, and “the love and warmth that they feel towards their family members . . . so that peace and success are present at their home the whole year,” and often with

a coin, bead, or button inside to bring good fortune to the one who finds it (Mkrtchyan 2010). For Christmastide, sweet, fruity, nutty Armenian Christmas pudding (*anoushabour*) is a must, which is served with a delicate Armenian Christmas cookie (*kurabia*). *Anoushabour* is an ancient treat, made simply with boiled-down wheat berries, sugar, dried fruits, and rose water, and served with almonds or pistachios as part of Christmas ceremonies. A favorite and popular cake year-round is its famous fragrant crunchy-bottomed Armenian nutmeg cake, a moist, sweet, spicy cake calling for traditional homemade yoghurt.

Fruits have been abundant and cultivated in Armenia since ancient times, and Armenia is especially well known for its apricots, peaches, apples, and pears. Cherries, lemons, melons, nectarines, oranges, pomegranates, berries, and quinces are also plentiful. “Fresh fruit is the usual dessert as well as the most common snack next to cheese, olives, and bread,” notes Sonia Uvezian, the highly respected author of *The Cuisine of Armenia* and James Beard Award winner (Uvezian 2001, 7). Popular desserts also include fruit compotes, made of fresh or dried fruits, and puddings.

Grapes and apricots, major Armenian crops, often find their way into *bastegh* (*pastegh*), a fruit leather sweet that may go back to the Persian Empire of which Armenia was once a part. Today, Armenians specialize in the making of *bastegh* (a sweet known as *pestil* in neighboring Turkey and as *qamar al deen* in regional Arab countries). Fruit leathers were an ancient way of preserving fruits, as they do not require refrigeration and thus became a practical way to incorporate fruits into children’s diets and to provide travelers and traders with snacks. Fruit leather was a good way to make use of leftover ripe fruits, and it could be stored almost indefinitely. To make *bastegh*, “the grapes were pressed and the juice boiled with sugar and thickened with flour or cornstarch. This was poured over heavy muslin sheets to an even 1/8-inch thickness and left to dry overnight. The following day the sheets were hung outdoors to finish drying” (Uvezian 2001). When the purées were dry, they were sprayed with water so the dried fruit leather could be easily peeled from the muslin.

Over the centuries and through the rise and fall of various great empires, some humble sweet treats remained steadfastly Armenian favorites. In these classic treats, honey (and in later centuries sugar), regional fruits, dried fruits, local nuts, yoghurt, and sesame have persisted as fundamental ingredients through the ages, and in the lengthy history of Armenia they have probably been combined in as many ways as is possible. Armenian syrupy walnuts, confections made by threading fruits and nuts on a string and dipping them into mulberry or grape juice and hanging them in the sun to dry, and simple honey-sweetened nuts and yoghurt come to mind as modern examples. Sesame and honey, we know from archaeology, have been around in Armenia since the early Iron Age. One can only guess, but it is probably a good bet, that classic Armenian sweet treats will endure for another two-and-a-half millennia.

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Australia

A love of traditional sweet treats is alive and well in Australia, from one coast to the other, from one season to another, and from one cultural tradition to another. In the native traditions, the current consumption and appreciation of fruits, honeys, nectars, and nuts date back to the indigenous diets of the Aboriginals. In another tradition, European influences were a result of relatively recent colonization in the late 1700s. A third, Asian traditions, focuses on food preparation, portions, and dessert bars. Today, the amalgamation of tastes and preferences reflect the multi-cultural population of this vast, diverse country.

Equally diverse is the landscape of this Australasian country, which has mountains, temperate zones, tropical rainforests, and deserts. The south has hot dry summers and rainy winters. Most of the nearly 23 million people live in the eastern and southeastern coastal areas that boast large, urban, diverse populations; on the west coast, in and near the city of Perth; and in Darwin, on the north coast.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Aboriginal peoples had healthy diets of meat, fish, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and honeys. They led a nomadic, foraging life of hunting and gathering, and they often gathered nuts near beautiful trees with sweetly scented blossoms called *kindal kindal*. The fruits of *kindal kindal* later became known to the world as macadamia nuts. Aboriginals enjoyed eating the nuts after they painstakingly and laboriously removed the “seeds” from the hard, difficult-to-crack shells (McConachie 2014). Today, macadamia nuts, known locally as Queensland nuts, come mainly from the northeast region of Australia and remain a valued source of nutrition and a treat mixed with dried fruits or as an ingredient in tasty desserts and cookies, such as the world famous macadamia nut

cookies. Western societies' fondness for macadamia nuts is one example of the contribution of Aboriginal tastes to our diets today.

Centuries passed and diets changed with the arrival of European immigrants. Much of Australian contemporary taste dates back to the 18th century, when meals were improvised, basic, and substantial—and cooked to feed hungry men of European descent who were building railways, ranches, and cities, and who expected a hearty meal to satisfy their hunger after hours of hard physical labor. They were concerned with substance, not how the meals looked, nor were they interested in “delicate” desserts (Davidson 2006).

While the men labored, the women of European descent developed their baking skills. Old recipe books have pages dedicated to pies, biscuits, puddings, and cakes. Many of the traditional sweet treat recipes date back to the time of immigration from Europe, and, as time passed, several became signature delights. Of course, there are regional variations in the classic sweets, probably due mostly to the availability of ingredients across the vast continent. Today, if you ask Australians what the classic sweet treats are, some indulgences consistently top their lists. Those treats include Anzac biscuits, pavlova, lemon delicious, lamington, and a few commercially produced sweets.

Anzac biscuits (biscuits are called “cookies” in the United States) are a symbol of national pride across Australia. During World War I, wives, mothers, sisters, and girlfriends of the men in the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) created a nutritious, tasty biscuit made with oats, flour, sugar, coconut, golden syrup, butter, soda, water, and, very importantly, no eggs (which would hasten spoilage on long shipments to deployed soldiers). Although Anzac biscuits are now eaten year-round, they are always associated with April 25, Anzac Day—the day the ANZAC landed at Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915—and they always still commemorate the members of the ANZAC forces who fought in World War I.

It is no surprise that there is a good-natured controversy about whether the Kiwis (New Zealanders) or the Aussies (Australians) “invented” the extolled dessert pavlova. The dessert, properly prepared, consists of a light and delicate meringue base, topped with whipped cream, strawberries, passion fruit seeds, or other fruits of the season.

According to Brisbane resident and local pavlova expert, Anne-Louise Vidgen, there is no dispute that pavlova is a delicate confection named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova. The dancer visited Australia and New Zealand in 1926 and Australia in 1929 and, in both countries, captivated audiences with her stellar performances (Vidgen, personal communication, 2012). According to food historian Doug Muster, the first and original recorded recipe for pavlova belonged to Chef Herbert Sachse at the Hotel Esplanade in Perth, Australia, in 1935. Whether the meringue base represents the tutu and “light as air” style of Anna Pavlova is anyone's guess.



Pavlova, a popular dessert in Australia and New Zealand, is a delicate "light as air" confection named in honor of the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova who performed in both countries in the 1920s. (Janet Hastings/Dreamstime.com)

Muster raises a fascinating thought, however, about the origin of pavlova. He wrote that Chef Sachse was able to create the pavlova only because he was, as well as other chefs of the time, acquainted with the wonders of meringue. Muster argues that because Chef Sachse did not "invent" meringue (his recipe for pavlova was a result of his comfort with meringue), to discover the true origin of pavlova (and perhaps end the Kiwi/Aussie squabble), one needs to trace the history of the original baked-beaten-egg-white-and-sugar confection that we call meringue.

Just as the Australians named a dessert after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, about 25 years earlier, in London, the distinguished French chef Georges Auguste Escoffier created an elegant preparation of vanilla ice cream, peaches, and raspberry purée and named the dessert after Australian soprano Nellie Melba. The story goes that in 1894 Escoffier was a guest of the singer at her performance at Covent Garden. He was so moved by her invitation and her concert that he created, in her honor, peach Melba. Apparently, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was common for famous chefs to flatter their distinguished patrons and favorite artists with dessert creations named after them. Certainly, Anna Pavlova and Nellie Melba benefitted from the practice—as did the lovers of fine desserts worldwide.

In Pretty Beach, Australia, Carolyn Molloy is famous for her lemon delicious pudding, a childhood memory for Australian adults; it is a well-loved dessert for

Australians who enjoy traditional “afters.” (“Puddings” are the dessert courses of a meal; “pud” is used informally, as are “sweets,” “desserts,” and “afters.” These descriptive words suggest the extent of the British influence, where desserts are often referred to as “puddings,” “puds,” or “afters.”) Lemon delicious is a classic Australian pudding, frequently served right out of the oven and after the Sunday roast. It is a light, delicate, simply lovely lemon-colored dessert steamed in the oven. As it bakes, according to Molloy, a properly prepared pudding separates into a delicate lemon sponge over a lovely lemon sauce, thus, frequently described as a “self-saucing” dessert that is typically presented hot or warm, with heavy cream (Molloy, personal communication, 2012).

On a side note, research suggests that in Australia only a few varieties of lemon trees produce fruits suitable for eating, cooking, and baking, and most of those have southern European origins. It is no wonder, then, that lemon delicious has regional variations, not only in Europe but also in Australia. The juiciness of the lemons and the bitterness of their taste affect the sweetness or tartness of lemon delicious.

In September 2006, the National Trust of Queensland pronounced lamington as one of Queensland’s favorite and iconic desserts, and declared July 21 National Lamington Day. Lamington was first created in Queensland in 1901 and is revered because of its longevity and historical significance as well as its taste. The individual cakes are named after Lord Lamington, who was born in London in 1860 and who was the eighth governor of Queensland, from 1896 to 1901. According to Paul Tully—a city councilor in Queensland, a fanatic devotee of lamington, and creator of the Australian Lamington official website—one of the more common stories about the birth of lamington is that, in 1901, a member of the Government House kitchen staff accidentally dropped a piece of Lord Lamington’s favorite sponge cake into some melted chocolate. Ever the pragmatist and not wanting to either waste the piece of cake or dirty his fingers with sticky chocolate icing, Lord Lamington suggested giving the chocolate-covered sponge a generous roll on all six sides in desiccated coconut—coconut that has been dried and finely shredded, but not sweetened. Or so at least the story goes; some say the cakes are named after the well-loved Lady Lamington—no one knows for sure.

As the commercial production of lamingtons grew, they became popular in fundraising projects. Commercially produced cakes were, and continue to be, ordered and delivered already cut into cubes about two inches in height, width, and depth, and ready to be sold on National Lamington Day.

Lamington, like most artisanal sweet treats, has regional variations. Some regions put a jelly or cream filling in their lamingtons, adding an extra layer in the middle. Today, the lamington is still being reinvented; lamingtons of different shapes, sizes, flavors, and methods of presentation appear around Australia. Peter Hallsworth (2011) touts flavors ranging from white chocolate gingerbread

lamingtons to peanut butter chocolate fudge lamingtons on his blog as, “Delicious, Delicious, Delicious.” So lamingtons, like other sweet treats, continue to evolve to please the tastes and conform to the regional variations of those who savor each morsel.

Family values are strong in Australia, and Aussie parents enjoy doting on their children. They serve fun colorful treats at birthday parties for children; Australian children of all ages look forward to “fairy bread.” Famous for its total lack of nutritional value and excessive dazzling array of color, it is no wonder that fairy bread is a birthday party staple. Fairy bread is crunchy, sugary, and colorful. The advice is to get the freshest white bread possible, butter (no margarine allowed!) each slice to the edges, and then dip the buttered side in multicolored round (*not* oblong, not chocolate) sprinkles. What child could resist?

Tasmania is the southernmost state in the country of Australia, and any discussion of Australian sweet treats must include the “Apple Isle.” In 1788, Captain William Bligh, of *Mutiny on the Bounty* fame, set his boat in Adventure Bay, Tasmania, and planted three apple seedlings—the first apple trees planted in Australia. From those seedlings grew an apple industry that resulted in apple exports, famous apple ciders, and, of course, apple desserts. One of the most famous desserts is Tasmanian apple cake, of which there are many varieties. Also, there are apple tarts, apple pies, apple turnovers, and apple dumplings.

Apples are not the only fruits produced in Tasmania. Cherries and berries are abundant; so one finds compotes, jams, jellies, fruit scones, and other sweet treats, including honey.

In the western parts of Tasmania, in the valleys of the rainforests, leatherwood trees originated over 65,000 million years ago. Today, members of the Tasmanian Beekeepers Association are busy gathering the famous leatherwood honey, the Tasmanian “gift to the world.” In late summer, the blossoms of the trees attract bees that produce leatherwood honey, which is so precious that it is protected by the “Ark of Taste,” an effort of the International Slow Food Movement to catalog and ensure the preservation and protection of foods that are threatened (and since rainforests are threatened, so too, leatherwood honey is “endangered”). The honey is known for its creaminess, amber color, and a distinctive flavor and aroma that is not quite as sweet tasting as many other honeys. It is popular as a sweetener throughout Tasmania and is considered a luxury sweetener in other parts of the world.

Besides European immigrants, Australia has Asian immigrants who have influenced not only the preparation styles and portion sizes of Australian food but also Australian tastes. Asian dessert bars are recent finds in larger urban areas where young professionals and international students gather to enjoy desserts like sago—a dessert recently described as being “cool,” by Christina Soong-Kroeger, a writer for the *Australia/New Zealand Food Guide*. Sago is tapioca beads cooked with water,

coconut milk, palm sugar, and vanilla and served with healthy garnishes like mango and toasted coconut (Soong-Kroeger 2013).

Finally, Australia is abundant with commercially produced signature sweet treats, seemingly loved by all, and it would be derelict not to mention at least some of the favorites. Violet Crumble is a chocolate-covered honeycomb bar found in nearly every supermarket with an easily identifiable purple wrapper; Cherry Ripe is Australia's oldest chocolate bar, filled with cherries and coconut; and Jaffas are an old-fashioned candy with a chocolate center and a hard orange-flavored shell. A Tim Tam has two layers of chocolate malted biscuit, separated by a light chocolate cream filling, covered with chocolate; it was named after the winning horse in the 1958 Kentucky Derby, an event that Mr. Ross Arnott, the Australian manufacturer of Tim Tams, attended. Multinational companies now own most of the production rights to these confections. There are hundreds more prepackaged goodies and it goes without saying that Australians still thoroughly enjoy eating and identifying with their own special purchased national commercial confections.

Apart from the “wrapped” commercial sweets, Australians have a vision of sweets that contains the elements of quality seasonal produce, tradition balanced with passion and innovation, appreciation for global tastes, and delightful attitudes about the ownership, origins, and names of their signature sweet treats.

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Austria

Austria is known for the Alps, world-class skiing, *The Sound of Music*, Mozart, the Danube, and Vienna. It is equally well known for its schnitzel, wursts, sauerkraut, and visually stunning and delicious sweets like *Sachertorte*, *Linzertorte*, *Apfel Strudel*, and Mozart chocolates. Austria is also a landlocked country, the cuisine of which carries the influence of its history, Jewish cuisine, and the many countries it borders: Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein.

Austria is a country that has had a tumultuous and exhaustive history. It was once a political powerhouse in Europe and had much control over the countries it now borders. In prehistoric times, the Celts, Vandals, and Romans invaded Austria. It was part of the Roman Empire until the fifth century. Then, Austria endured the rule of Charles the Great, the House of Babenberg, and geographical expansion under the Habsburgs. In the mid-19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire included German, Serbian, Czech, and other lands that made it a powerful political force of the time. After World War I, the borders of Austria became what we know as the central European country of Austria; it was subsequently annexed by Germany in 1938, occupied by the Allies in 1945, and unoccupied in 1955, when a treaty was signed recognizing Austria's independence. Now an independent republic, Austria clearly claims a full and rich history, as do many of its iconic sweet treats.

Take *Sachertorte*, for example. It is the famous layered Austrian cake—rich chocolate with apricot jam between the layers and iced with a bittersweet chocolate glaze. The story of the world-famous original *Sachertorte* began in 1832 when Prince Klemens Wenzel von Metternich ordered his chef to create a spectacular dessert for some high-ranking guests. On the day the dessert was to be created, the chef was unavailable, and the request was given to a 16-year-old apprentice, Franz Sacher, who received accolades from the guests for his creation.

Bakers and Confectioners Guilds: Flourless Sweet Treats

The guild of the *Zuckerbäcker* (confectioners) in Vienna, Austria, was officially recognized in 1744, and was authorized by law to make “biscuits [*Pisquiten*], *zwieback*, almond and other sweetmeats, white and colored confections, candy and other [things] made with sugar, and both candied fruit and preserves, and ice cream, jellies and other refreshments” (Kronndl 2011, 255–56). The confectioners were legally restricted to making sweets with no more than 50 percent flour.

Zuckerbäcker at the time were perennially in dispute with the “fine bakers,” who made fruit tarts, croissants, enriched yeast breads, and the like, but were not allowed to use jams, preserved fruit, or chocolate, and were to limit their sugar use to the exterior, for sprinkling and dusting, and for what was needed for fermentation or color.

Food historian Michael Kronndl speculates that these legal flour and sugar limit rules of the Royal House of Hapsburg led to the nut-based pastries and the “dozens of almost flourless *Torten* that were invented in the second half of the 19th century,” which led to today’s flourless sweet treats.

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Sachertorte is probably the only cake in the world that was the subject of a lengthy court battle over the rights to the production of the genuine pastry. The conflict was between the Sacher family (who owned the Sacher Hotel, which housed the original Sacher Café that served the torte) and Vienna’s very famous pastry shop, Demel’s, which apparently bought the right to produce the original version from the grandson of Franz Sacher. After seven years, the courts ruled in favor of the Sacher family and Demel’s developed a stylized variation of the original recipe. A genuine *Sachertorte* has a chocolate stamp with the name “Sacher” on it. The Viennese consider unsweetened whipped cream as a proper adornment to *Sachertorte*.

When one travels to Linz, Austria, one must indulge in a piece of *Linzertorte*, one of the oldest known cakes in the world (with a documented recipe dating back to 1653). More of a pastry, it has a ground almond, crumbly, shortbread crust, a red currant jelly filling, and is topped with a distinctive lattice pattern crust. As with many recipes, *Linzertorte* might have different nuts in the pastry, different spices, and different jams or jellies for the filling, but the true, signature, *Linzertorte* uses only ground almonds and red currant jelly.

Besides currants, the Austrians use locally produced apples in their baking. Apples, in Europe, date back to Roman times and, like Austria, have had an occasionally tumultuous history but have survived with dignity. One favorite sweet treat,

the classic Austrian *Apfel Strudel*, or apple strudel, dates back to the Habsburg Empire (1278–1780). Ever the traditionally elegant pastry, the essential ingredients are apples, ground nuts, raisins, lemon juice and zest, cinnamon, and sugar. Purists place the apple mixture on a sheet of thin, stretched, unleavened dough and roll it, similar to a jellyroll. The “non-purists, or perhaps the more practical bakers, use prepared *phyllo* dough” (McGavin 2013). The proper Viennese strudel is served warm with a dusting of powdered sugar and, usually, with a cup of Viennese coffee.

Strudel gained popularity toward the end of the Habsburg Empire. It is related to the Greek pastry *baklava*, which is no surprise given the interrelationships of countries during the 600-year period of the Ottoman dynasty. As Austria evolved as a country, the cuisine also evolved; regional variations of strudel include fillings of cream cheese (*Topfen*), sour cherries (*Weichselstrudel*), or sweet cherry and poppy seed strudel (*Mohnstrudel*). To save time at home, as mentioned earlier, some make their strudels with commercially produced *phyllo* dough, and, of course, there are varieties of commercially produced strudels.

Although there is no definitive history of the famous Austrian crescent-shaped sugar cookies, *Vanillekipferl*, the shape and accompanying legend suggest the influence of the Ottoman Empire, as the Turks used the crescent-shaped symbol extensively. Legend suggests that when the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s army defeated the Turkish army in Vienna in 1683 (the Battle of Vienna), the bakers created the cookies in the half-moon shape that was found on the Turkish flag, suggesting, symbolically, “to devour the enemy.” The legend continues that the Turks fled, and serendipitously left behind Vienna’s first sack of coffee beans, from whence the Viennese coffeehouses were born. *Vanillekipferl*, also known as Viennese crescent cookies, are traditionally enjoyed at Christmas but are made all year round. Associated with Vienna, they are savored not only in Austria but also in neighboring countries, most notably Switzerland, Hungary, and Germany.

Another crescent-shaped sweet treat that historical speculation associates with the 1683 Battle of Vienna is the Jewish delicacy, *rugelach*, Yiddish for “little twists.” The little, delicate, filled, crescent rolls, identified with European Jewish cuisine, are made with dough ingredients similar to those in *Vanillekipferl*, with the more modern addition of sour cream or cream cheese, or a combination of the two, which results in a lighter, richer pastry. (Sour cream is the more traditional ingredient.) Most often, *rugelach* are filled with fruits or fruit jams, chocolate, raisins, cinnamon, marzipan, poppy seeds, chopped or ground nuts, or any combination thereof. With *rugelach*, there does not appear to be one original recipe; rather, multiple variations are celebrated on the Jewish holidays of Hanukkah, Shabbat, and Rosh Hashanah, depending on available ingredients. Besides savoring this delicious delicacy on Jewish holidays, people of all creeds enjoy it year-round.

One of the sweet treats in Austria that is neither a dessert nor a confection, but referred to as a cake, is *Kugelhopf*—more bread-like, similar to French *brioche*,

because it is made with yeast rather than baking soda or baking powder. As with many Austrian sweet treats, *Kugelhopf* has a story attached to it, and the story is that Viennese-born Marie Antoinette was very fond of *Kugelhopf*. So fond, in fact, that at the age of 14, she took the recipe with her when she went to France to marry Louis XVI in 1799. Historians believe that Marie Antoinette never did utter, in French, “Let them eat cake,” when told about the starving French peasants. If she did utter, “*Qu’ils mangent de la brioche*,” her words were probably misinterpreted. *Brioche*—like *Kugelhopf*—is referred to as cake but is more like bread. We will never really know if the Austrian-born queen said any such phrase at all. It is unlikely, but it makes for a good story.

Typically, *Kugelhopf* contains raisins, lemon zest, and a garnish of slivered almonds. Austrians most often serve it as sweet bread at breakfast or brunch, similar to a coffee cake. They bake the *Kugelhopf* in tall, fluted, tube pans, so the characteristic shapes and swirls are obvious, and when turned out of the pan, the bakers dust them with powdered sugar.

Finally, no discourse on Austrian sweets is complete without some attention paid to Mozart chocolates. In Austria, one finds Mozart chocolate, Mozart pralines, Mozart balls, Mozart cake, Amadeus cake, Wolfgang cake, and the list goes on. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, in 1756. The prolific and prominent composer moved to Vienna, where he spent much of his adult life. Mozart is the pride of Salzburg, and anyone who visits this beautiful city will be overwhelmed by the variety of opportunities to hear Mozart music in concerts and recitals. Equally plentiful are selections of sweet chocolate candies—*Mozartkugeln*. Mozart chocolates are known and available all over the world, but there are two brands that stand apart from the rest—Mirabell and Hofbauer.

In Salzburg, Mirabell *Mozartkugeln* date back to the original Mozart chocolates, which were handmade in 1890 by confectioner Paul Fürst. He created the chocolate-covered hazelnut nougats to honor Salzburg’s famous musician, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The Mirabell confectioners still make the chocolates by hand and without any chemical stabilizers, so they have a limited shelf life. This high standard results in very fine chocolates at some very high prices.

Meanwhile, in Vienna, Hofbauer, one of the finest Viennese confectionaries for well over a century, makes one of the best *Mozartkugeln*. Hofbauer also makes exquisite Mozart pralines. The mass-produced Mozart chocolates—those sold in the United States, for example—are not at all similar to “the real thing.” In the world of sweet treats, as in the world of music, Mozart imitators are just that, imitators. Although the imposter manufacturers wrap them to look like the originals, do not be fooled—there is no comparison in taste or price, and, in this case, you get what you pay for.

To be sure, there is a genuine sweet side to the Austrian Alps and that is in their traditional sweet treats. The legendary history, the devoted detail, the exquisite



Confectioner Paul Fürst created the renowned Salzburg chocolate-covered hazelnut nougats known as *Mozartkugeln* in 1890 to honor the city's famous musician, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. (Walter Geiersperger/Corbis)

presentation, and the charming beauty of their creations reflect an ardent cultural appreciation for their desserts, cookies, and candies. For the Austrians, preparation is a ritual to be enjoyed, the presentation is as important as taste, and the savoring of each morsel, each taste, and each small bite is an example to all of us how to celebrate and enjoy not only sweet creations but also life.

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B

The Balkans

(Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia)

Is there a common Balkan cuisine? The answer is yes and no. Centered between the Adriatic and Black Seas, the Balkan countries are located on the southeastern-most peninsula of continental Europe. But it is a challenge to discover *which countries* are referred to as “The Balkans,” as several nations make up the region and opinions vary on which ones make the list. It is even a bit of a challenge to determine which areas are actually countries, as politically and culturally the region continues to re-define itself. Kosovo, for example, became an independent country recognized by the United States as recently as 2008—but as of February 2014, its independence is recognized only by 56% of the member states of the United Nations. Countries geographically located entirely or almost entirely within the Balkan Peninsula include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

The history of the Balkans, as is the modern-day political situation, is complicated, with multiple twists and turns. From prehistoric days until today, there have been successive attempts at control and power among ethnicities and religious groups, along with concomitant divisiveness. Muslim–Christian divisions, for example, continue to be a historical wound that will not heal. The Balkans have a common recent history of being former Communist countries; some now show signs of wealth and are in the European Union, while others remain very poor and struggle toward a free-market economy.

Balkan cuisine most likely descended from Persian cuisine, evidenced in the use of yoghurt in meat dishes, as well as by the Persian-Turkish derivation of the name “Balkan.” Ignoring clear geographical borders and distinct linguistic patterns and languages, the borders of Balkan cuisine go north toward mid-Europe, where chocolate, cakes, and sweet confections are common, and south toward Turkey, where the cuisine becomes Mediterranean—seafood, honeyed sweets, and pastas. However one defines Balkan cuisine, the borders are fuzzy, the cultural habits overlap, and tastes merge; it is a cuisine common to the region, but different ethnicities create their own variations of ingredients, flavorings, and food preparations. The Balkan states claim disparate ethnic provinces; there are differences in

language, economics, politics, religion, clothing style, country of origin, and food preparation.

In previous centuries, the Balkan peasants labored physically, as serfs to the Ottomans, and when they were not laboring, they spent a good deal of time growing and raising their own food; they were peoples tied to the land. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that the Romani, or Roma, historically not tied to the land, were some of the first to travel the countryside looking for ways to earn food and money, and with that, they also became some of the first “professional cooks” of the nobility. The Roma in the Balkans were also some of the first to make and line copper pots. Later, their wood-carving skills resulted in wooden spoons and bowls. The Roma were comfortable in the kitchens of the regions and brought with them their nomadic cooking skills. While the Roma were in the kitchens of the nobles, the kitchens of the Byzantine Orthodox monasteries were beehives of activity preparing food for the hundreds of monks; since the monks were traditionally trained in Greek monasteries, their tastes for Mediterranean foods returned with them to their Balkan monasteries. They became skilled at using figs, olive oil, and lemons to add flavor, variety, and aroma to local produce. These monks receive credit, also, for developing vegetarian cuisine to new levels, all in an effort to make the meals on days of required religious fasting more interesting and more delicious.

Add to this history the practice of making brandy from fruit and the entrepreneurial ambulant food vendor, also known as the street food seller. The street food vendors specialized in a certain food or drink, often based on ethnic preference. Take, for example, the sweet, lightly alcoholic drink *braga*, which dates back to 17th-century Turkey. The fermented lactic acid beverage was born out of necessity: it was healthy, contained fat, protein, and carbohydrates, so, even as a sweeter treat, it provided essential nutrients to the peasants. Today, in the Balkans, *braga* takes on many levels of sweetness and tastes depending on local preferences. In some areas maize and in other areas wheat, rice, or millet combine with yeast, resulting in multiple variations of the staple beverage. The Macedonian version is thinner, lighter, and sweeter than most. In areas where there are Turkish people, *braga* contains cinnamon and roasted chickpeas. *Braga* is sold in the ice cream and sweet shops in Tirana, the capital of Albania, and further north, but is less popular in the southern areas of Albania. It is produced and sold all over Bosnia; some varieties are sweeter and thicker and lighter or darker than other varieties, and some are flavored with cocoa powder—it all depends on who is selling the *braga*, who is buying it, and where the transaction occurs. The classic Bulgarian dessert is creamy rice pudding, flavored with their famed rose water, and, for a touch of elegance, garnished with rose petals.

As far as sweets go, if one examines what is in the kitchens, gardens, coffee-houses, and restaurants of the Balkan region—countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire—they will most likely find a number of common items on the grounds

and in cabinets and refrigerators: fruit, flour, eggs, dairy products, a few characteristic spices, honey, and sugar. And the common threads end there, with each ethnicity eating and identifying with its own version and style of the same desserts. Take *baklava*, for example. All over the world, the celebrated sweet *baklava*, generally believed by food historians to be of eighth-century Syrian origin, is a multilayered very sweet confection made with layers of *phyllo* and ground nuts and sweetened with syrup or honey. The regional variations give testimony to ethnic pride. In the Balkans, Muslims enjoy *baklava* traditionally for *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival—the celebration marking the end of Ramadan. Christians enjoy *baklava* at Easter and Christmas. In Albania, it is part of the New Year’s celebration; their 90-layered sweet brings good luck to families and friends, as long as *everyone* at the gathering eats a piece. The Serbian recipes for *baklava* contain cinnamon. Some use walnuts, while others use pistachios. Croatian *baklava* is puffier and contains fewer nuts. Others treat *baklava* as a dessert, making it very moist with honey and served in larger pieces, demonstrating a Turkish influence. Others make it drier and cut in smaller pieces, served more like a cookie, suggesting a Syrian influence.

The sweet tooth of the Balkan residents is well developed. Each ethnicity is rightfully proud of its sweet yeast bread *kozunak*, simple dough made with yeast, flour, eggs, sugar, butter, and vanilla, with optional additions of rum, lemon zest, raisins, and chopped nuts. Cake shops, coffeehouses, and cafes all offer their variations of *kozunak*. Some varieties are filled with walnuts, or poppy seeds, and some even contain bits of Turkish delight—a starchy, gelatin-like, confectioners’ sugar-coated sweet. *Kozunak*, when baked, produces light, sweet, very versatile bread—it makes delicious *potica* or holiday bread similar to the Italian *panettone*. Bulgarian bakers make *kozunak* to celebrate the end of Lent. Three sections of dough, each filled with jam and nuts, make beautiful holiday braided bread. In Serbia, a variation of the same dough is *slavski kolac* or *slavi* bread, served on the day of the family patron saint, the day that the familial ancestors converted to Christianity. Traditionally, the local priest blesses the *slavi* before the celebratory meal begins.

Easter festival cakes are also variations of *kozunak*. Traditionally, Balkan Christians attend a midnight service at their churches. After they return home, the celebration of the end of Lent and the beginning of the Easter season begins. In the wee hours after the midnight services, children crack open and eat the artistically dyed and colored Easter eggs. They share Easter cake, *pasca*, made from dough similar to *kozunak*, filled with creamy cheese or sour cream, which nests in the middle of the round sweet bread. Croatians make an Easter bread called *pinca*, another variation on the *kozunak* dough, made in a round loaf, and sometimes sprinkled with sugar. Following the Balkan Easter tradition, churchgoers place a smaller loaf in the Easter basket that the family takes to church on Holy Saturday for the blessing. The Croatians use the same dough to make little bread dolls, *primorski*

uskrsne bebe, also an Easter tradition, where the dyed egg is the head of the baby peeking through the bread dough bunting.

The pleasure of fruit lives throughout the Balkans. From fruit dumplings to dried fruits in sweet bread dough, the people in the Balkans appreciate and savor their fresh or dried, homemade or handpicked sweet treats. In Montenegro, a succulent, seasonal fruit is the perfect treat with which to end a meal. The Montenegrins enjoy quince relish, plum jam, or sundried figs with honey and walnuts. Pomegranates grow nearly everywhere in the area, so pomegranate syrup is a common embellishment to cakes and puddings. In Bosnia, apples, peaches, mandarin oranges, cherries, and watermelons grow abundantly. Originally from Persia, the recipe for poaching apples was brought to the Balkans by the Ottomans. The Ottoman elite had hundreds of sweets cooks doing the work for them in their famed Topkapi Palace kitchens; the Ottoman recipe for poaching apples requires time and

diligence but the Bosnians are quite willing themselves to take time to make the apples properly. First, the cores are carefully removed from the apples, then the apples are poached in a mixture of sugar, lemon, and water, where they must be weighted down to remain completely submerged. When the apples are tender, but still firm, the cook gently removes the apples, allowing them to cool. A mixture of ground nuts, cinnamon, crème fraîche or yoghurt, and sugar is put into the center of the cooled apples, which the fastidious cooks then put in individual dishes, pouring the reserved poaching liquid over the apples and resting a dollop of whipped cream on the top. Of course, different ethnicities have their own adaptations of poaching apples, but they all take the time and exert the effort necessary to execute the not-so-simple process of making a proper poached apple.

Potica, *povitca*, or *kolachki*, no matter what the locals call it, is a universal Balkan treat. *Potica* is enjoyed throughout the Balkans with ethnic variations, but it is



Bulgarian traditional Easter would not be complete without sweet *kozunak* and colored eggs; here, it is shown along with shortbread cookies. Sweetbread made with raisins, often twisted or braided, is an important part of Easter celebrations in many countries of Europe. (George Tsartsianidis/Dreamstime.com)

the signature Balkan indulgence—sweet yeast bread, rolled out, spread with a rich walnut, butter, creamy filling or ground poppy seeds, or other dried fruits, and then rolled up in a jellyroll fashion. *Potica*, which has a much finer, non-yeast pastry, *phyllo*-like dough, is not to be confused with strudel. Strudel is also common in the Balkans and is made often with an apple and raisin filling.

Romani cross all the Balkan geographical boundaries, tracing their ancestry and wanderings back to 14th-century India. Commonly referred to as “Gypsies,” “Travelers,” or “Tinkers,” their preferred name is Roma. Roma migrated through Persia and Armenia into Europe. No one knows how many Roma there are in Europe because of their nomadic lifestyles and suspicion of government documentation, but the largest European concentration of Roma, totaling hundreds of thousands, if not millions, live in the Balkans, and they, besides making copper and wooden cooking utensils, have their own sweet traditions.

Roma traditions of living on and with the land began centuries ago with fruit and berries. Honey was, and continues to be, a sweetener of choice; the love of honey led many Roma into beekeeping. They developed a reputation for their caramel-colored, smooth, heather honey, and sale of the fine honey brought income. Roma were creative in using what they had to make their treats. Roma created a “sweet” potato, for example—and a treat indeed—by making a hole in a potato, filling the hole with jam, replacing the “plug,” and baking the potato in the burning embers of the daily cooking fire used for food preparation.

Roma adapted to the faiths of the people where they were living. There are Muslim Roma, Orthodox Roma, and Catholic and Protestant Roma. For many of the Christian Roma, Christmas Day calls for gatherings of the clans, eating, drinking, singing, and extending good wishes, each in their own ways. Some Roma, in making *szaloncukor*, fastidiously mixed flour and sugar (*szaloncukor* could also be made only with sugar, which in the past was cost-prohibitive for many), and made the dough into shapes (rather like sugar cookies), then baked, wrapped, and hung them on a tree until January 6, the feast of the Epiphany. The Romani people also had their version of a nutritious Christmas wheat pudding, made and consumed in the Balkans by nearly everyone. After husking wheat, soaking the berries in water, warming them in an oven until they burst, and smashing the softened hulls with whatever tools were available, Roma cooks put the pudding through a sieve, then mixed the remaining gelatinous substance with milk, flour, and eggs, and finally, they sweetened it with honey, sugar, or molasses—molasses being more affordable than sugar. If one was fortunate, one could also add dried fruits, cream, butter, and homemade rum or brandy to the pudding.

All over Europe, and especially in Romani communities, bakers placed a token of good luck—often a silver coin—in a loaf of sweet Christmas bread or cake. Tradition has it that whoever gets the coin in his or her piece will have a good year. The dough for the cake was often similar to the Balkan *kozunak*. Roma peoples

also enjoyed their versions of poppy seed moon cake, which predated Christianity to the time when the poppy flower was dedicated to the moon goddess. Poppy seed moon cakes are also holiday treats, enjoyed not only by the Romani people but also by anyone celebrating the holy holidays of the Christian church. Plum dumplings are sweet holiday fares that demonstrate the practicality of the Romani who were doing the cooking. They made dough of mashed potatoes, eggs, butter, and salt, which they rolled out and cut into small circles. They carefully placed a plum, topped with a bit of cinnamon and sugar, on the dough just before they folded, sealed, and boiled the dumplings in salt water. When the dumplings were finished cooking, the cooks rolled them in buttered breadcrumbs and sprinkled them with more cinnamon and sugar. The Romani people transformed potatoes, cherries, and dried bread into a delicious treat.

Forgiveness, reconciliation, and remembrance of those who died are Romani Christmas traditions. Forgiveness and reconciliation were born out of necessity—the isolation of the Roma communities made interdependence of each member on the others critical, and removal or separation of an individual from the group for whatever reason is generally not a viable option. The Romani people have strict codes of cleanliness and honor. They work hard and value family. They have learned how to survive and fend for themselves. And, they know how to celebrate with family and food.

So, is there a Balkan cuisine? On the one hand, each ethnicity has its own cuisine and strongly defends its ways of preparing, flavoring, and baking or cooking food. On the other hand, there are common threads woven through each cuisine—from sweet yeast dough and *braga* to sweets like *baklava* and *potica*, even though there is little admission of goodness, authenticity, creativity, origin, credit, or compliment given to any cuisine other than one's own. In the end, one's ethnicity is as important as the individual pride with which the sweet treat is made and served, and each will be different from all the others. It is a complicated question with a complicated answer. Perhaps “yes and no” is the correct answer. But “yes” is the correct answer when offered any of their sweet treats.

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The Baltic States

(Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)

Three countries border the Baltic Sea: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. At first glance, one might conclude that cold climates and limited arable land limits the cuisine of the people who live in the Baltic countries, but nothing could be further from the truth. Practicality, innovation, and the culinary influences of nearby Poland, Russia, and Scandinavia have amalgamated to create nutritious, delicious cuisines.

These three countries are similar in their food production of potatoes, mushrooms, beets, cabbages, dill, cucumbers, barley, rye, rhubarb, apples, and berries, and their inhabitants enjoy fish, pork, and dairy products. The apples, rhubarb, and berries combine nicely with the dairy—yoghurt, sour cream, and cottage cheese—to make some delicious sweet treats.

Latvia has fertile lowlands with lakes, and modest hills in the east. Latvians speak a rare language with ties to ancient Sanskrit; Latvian is considered a Baltic language, most closely related to Lithuanian, but the two languages are not mutually intelligible. Perhaps because of the uniqueness of the language group, the Latvian cuisine also has some qualities that distinguish it from other cuisines. Historically, from about 1230, when the German Knights of the Teutonic Order conquered Latvia, to the end of the 19th century, German landowners kept the indigenous Latvians as serfs. Latvia became independent from Russia in 1991. Today, Latvia remains a culturally rich, predominantly Christian country with a diverse, mostly European, population.

Because of the history of most citizens being poor laborers doing backbreaking work, the cuisine evolved from practical cuts of meat (pork raised in the backyard), with few seasonings (spices were expensive and not available to rural citizens) and calorie-rich starches (to provide energy for physical labor), to the delicious, more sophisticated and varied food Latvians enjoy today. The favorable climate and soil

give Latvians access to locally grown fresh fruit—apples, rhubarb, cherries, currants, plums, and berries, including cranberries, lingonberries, and blueberries—and today, other ingredients are imported and more readily available to make delicious and healthy sweet treats and desserts.

One such dessert, *buberts*, is a light, delicate, creamy pudding made with cream of wheat (commonly known as non-durum semolina porridge or farina). The mixture of whipped egg whites, egg yolks, cream of wheat, milk, sugar, and vanilla is also called *manna* and is often served with a cranberry sauce made with sugar, water, and perhaps a thickening agent such as cornstarch. Both the *buberts* and the cranberry sauce require only small amounts of sugar, which, for centuries, was a luxury item that most Latvians used sparingly. Besides cranberry sauce, fruit sauces and compotes (fruit sauces made with dried fruit instead of fresh fruit) are popular with *buberts* and other desserts.

Because rye successfully grows in Latvia, it should be no surprise that black rye bread is a staple in the life of Latvians. And when the rye bread gets old and dry, the dessert *rupjmaizes kārtojums*, layered Latvian rye bread dessert, calls for the bread to be grated into crumbs that are then toasted with cinnamon and sugar and layered with mascarpone cheese or whipped cream and sweetened, smashed cranberries.

Ever the creative chefs, Latvians make variations of this dessert, which include soaking the bread in brandy and varying the types of fruit layers.

Most Latvian desserts tend to be modest, made with locally produced dairy, eggs, and fresh produce. Their pastries, often served in coffeehouses, are tasty morsels, usually served in small portions that beg to be savored. Of course, there are fruit pastries, shortbreads, cakes, and bread puddings that are all simply made, beautiful to look at, and heavenly to eat.

Lithuania, Latvia's neighbor to the south, shares a complicated history, which began long before the birth of Christ when the pagan Liths settled in the area of what is now Lithuania. The Lithuanians established an independent state in 1236 and remained a powerful and large European state until 1795, when Tsarist Russia claimed Lithuania as its own. More than a century later, in 1918, independence was restored to Lithuania (and the other Baltic States) but not for long. Russia invaded Lithuania, annexed it, and in 1944 declared it as the 14th Republic of the USSR. After nearly five tumultuous decades, in 1990, Lithuania again became independent. In the meantime, Lithuanian cuisine was exposed to many outside influences, especially the tastes of Poland, Germany, and Russia.

Today, Lithuanian cuisine features produce suited to its cool and moist northern climate: locally grown barley, potatoes, rye, beets, greens, mushrooms, and dairy products. Lithuanian cuisine, however, does have some distinguishing characteristics—one of which is the popularity and use of potatoes in breads, dumplings, vegetable dishes, puddings, and sausages, but rarely desserts.

Because of the historical scarcity of sugar, many Lithuanians do not have a “sweet tooth,” and sweet treats are not part of their daily experience. Holidays and special occasions, however, do call for special treats, usually cakes, cookies, and sweet yeast breads made at home. For wedding receptions, the *karvojus*, matron of honor cake, is the essential highlight of the meal; it is a large wedding cake, with figures of plants and animals made of pasta dough, which are believed to have magical powers. Not to be outdone by the *karvojus*, *raguolis* (spiked) or *sakotis* (branched) is a tree-shaped cake that is not only served at weddings but also at Christmas and Easter. An experienced baker dribbles an egg-rich batter onto a spit that rotates over heat. As the speed of the rotation increases, the batter drips faster, and the heat bakes the spikes that resemble the branches of a tree. *Raguolis* or *sakotis* come in all sizes; some are large and stand alone, others are smaller and stacked or lined up side by side, like a row of trees.

Honey is one of the earliest known sweeteners, and Lithuanian honey cakes date back to at least the 13th century when German nuns began making honey biscuits. Traditionally, multilayered (8 or 10 layers is not unusual) honey cake is another confection on the Lithuanian holiday table. The classic recipe calls for many layers of a combination of sweet and sour cream, or a crème fraîche mixture, between the layers of the delicate honey cake. It is customary for Lithuanians to store the cake in a cool place for a day or two to allow its layers to absorb the cream and enhance all the flavors.

In Lithuanian cuisine, poppy seeds are mixed into or sprinkled on breads, pastries, and cookies. Lithuanian *oragunu sausainiukai*, poppy seed cookies, are popular dropped cookies made with sour cream, butter, eggs, vanilla, poppy seed paste, and dusted with confectioners’ sugar. Besides poppy seeds, wild berries are abundant and eaten fresh or dried. *Brugnės*, or lingonberries, thrive in the northern climate and *spanguolės*, or cranberries, are plentiful in the bogs. Lithuanians spread cranberry, lingonberry, and other berry jams on pancakes, use them as fillings in pastries, or use them as sweet condiments with pork or chicken. *Pyragas* (cakes) are usually a single-layer cake baked in a rectangular pan, often having fruit or poppy seed paste added to the batter before baking. In contrast to the American palate, the Lithuanians see no need to add extra sweeteners such as icing to their cakes.

A Roman writer referenced Estonia, the country to the north of Latvia, in the first century AD, as the region that was exporting amber to other parts of Europe. For centuries, Estonians remained isolated from other cultures and countries, but in the early 13th century, as they converted to Christianity, the Germans conquered southern Estonia, and the Danes successfully invaded the north. For about seven centuries, the Germans were the privileged class in Estonia. In 1940, the Soviet Union claimed Estonia and held it for over 50 years, until 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed. These events gave Estonia a chance to claim its independence, which makes it one of the younger countries in Europe.

Estonians make their enduring desserts with local fruit, grain, and dairy. As in other northern regions, rhubarb grows easily—and Estonians use it in pies, tarts, and cakes. Whipped fruit desserts are common, and Estonians share a fondness with Latvians for *buberts*. Like other Baltic countries, the Estonian sweet tooth is not as demanding as the American sweet tooth, so Estonian cheesecakes, although considered sweet by the natives, are more cheesy than sweet, and are often topped with a spoonful of locally made jam to complement the cheese flavor. Milk soups and fruit soups are common; a favorite is *piimasupp ounaklimpidega*, sweetened milk soup with cardamom-flavored apple dumplings.

Other than fruit, a sentimental Estonian sweet treat is chocolate. For over 200 years, a confectionary named Kalev has produced handmade marzipan figures and chocolates. Kalev endured the same political and power struggles as the country, but when Estonia became independent, Kalev privatized, and today Kalev continues to make its famous marzipan figures and chocolates, using the original recipes and many of the original molds. A “by-product” of the fondness for chocolate was created in the 1970s, when cocoa became scarce and prices were unreasonably high. An innovative employee of Kalev substituted most of the cocoa used in its chocolate with *kamaflour*, traditional Estonian flour made from roasted rye, barley, wheat, and peas. The result was a confection with a hint of chocolate that became very popular because it was tasty and affordable. Today, Kalev produces *kamatahvel* as a nostalgic sweet treat.

Nowadays, as locals and tourists alike enjoy the beauty and culture of the Baltic countries, the cuisines now benefit from imported spices, multicultural flavors, and young chefs who fuse the centuries-old traditional sweets with contemporary flair and tastes. Each of the countries celebrates its recent independence by valuing past culinary preferences in the creation of new and exciting desserts. Although many of the basic ingredients are common among the Baltic countries, the cultural and culinary milieu in which they make their sweet treats and desserts are distinct and different from each other, resulting in wonderful taste treat variations well worth testing.

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Bangladesh

Bangladesh shares a common culture, language, and history with West Bengal, its Indian neighbor to the west. Because Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim society and West Bengal is a Hindu society, there are differences in dietary preferences.

A common, sweet, mild, compliment to spicier main Bangladeshi courses is *mishti doi*, a centuries-old, simple, sweet, fermented custard-like dessert made from



Bangladeshi vendors prepare sweets on the first day of Ramadan in Dhaka. (AP Photo/Pavel Rahman)

reduced milk, caramelized sugar, and yoghurt. Bangladeshis enjoy *mishti doi*. Traditional cooks make the *mishti doi* in earthenware vessels—the porosity of the dishes enhances the evaporation of water, thickens the yoghurt, and encourages the growth of the appropriate probiotic cultures. Bangladeshis sometimes flavor *mishti doi* with a touch of cardamom for an enhanced delicate aroma or garnish it with pistachios and a thread of saffron.

Bangladeshis enjoy all types of *haluas (halva)*—sweet puddings made from finely grated fruits, grains, or nuts, mixed with sugar, milk, and fried in ghee. Carrot *halua* is a popular Bangladeshi thick pudding-like sweet, made with finely grated carrots, ghee, milk, a pinch of cardamom, sugar, and garnished with pistachios, cashews, or almonds. Bangladeshis serve *halua* at celebratory meals—births, weddings, and at the Muslim Eid celebrations

marking the end of both Ramadan and the Hajj, and at the Hindu festivals of Holi (the festival of colors and spring) and Diwali (festival of lights).

Ghee is the “fat of choice” in Bangladeshi households, as it is in Indian households. All Bengali cooks, usually women, make ghee by heating butter until the water evaporates and the fat solids caramelize. Bangladeshis and Indians use ghee for frying because it tolerates higher temperatures than butter and it stores well at room temperature. For most households, ghee is also more available than oil; cow and buffalo milk provide the rich cream that produces ghee. In Bangladesh, most ghee comes from cow milk. In Hindu areas, where cows are sacred, ghee made with cow’s milk is also sacred, with Hindus using it in their offerings to the gods, while they sometimes use ghee from buffalo milk for daily fare.

Bangladeshi sweet treats do not define geographical borders or cultural differences. And Bangladeshi people enjoy and make beautiful, practical, and aromatic sweet treats in all six seasons: spring, summer, monsoon, early and late autumn, and winter.

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Belarus

Early Neolithic food-producing cultures of what is now Belarus historically gave way to various people, including the Slavs, the Mongols, and Lithuanians, who later inhabited and ruled the area. Centuries later, Poland and Russia alternately ruled Belarus. Russia controlled the Eastern European country until World War I, when Germany claimed it. The next several decades were dark and difficult historical times, as they were in many other parts of Europe. Belarus became independent from the Soviet Union in 1990, forming the Republic of Belarus in 1991.

Belarus has absorbed many culinary tastes from its neighbors, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, and the Ukraine, but until independence its cuisine remained much like that of its 19th-century agricultural ancestors. The main crops in Belarus are grains, potatoes, and other root crops; local fruits include regionally grown apples, and occasional crops of wild berries, strawberries, bilberries, and cranberries. Most of the fruit consumed today is imported from neighboring countries. Belarus, in fact, is one of the top 10 global importers of apples. Sweet treats and desserts are not daily fare in Belarus, but Belarusians enjoy fresh and dried fruits with their basic meat-and-potato cuisine, a cuisine born out of necessity and practicality.

Belarusian apple pie, one of their main sweet treats, is different from the Western concept of apple pie; it is more akin to a cobbler. Traditionally, Belarusian apple pie contains a local variety of apple known as *antonovka*, a winter apple highly valued for its tart flavor and versatility. The same tart apples are enjoyed cored and baked with a little sugar, then topped with honey. For the pies, bakers slice the apples, place them in oiled baking pans, pour a batter of flour, sugar, and eggs over them, and set the apple pies aside to let the batter seep to the bottom of the pan before baking. Traditionally embellished with soft, fresh cheese or sour cream, apple pie with whipped cream or even ice cream is increasingly enjoyed by Belarusians.

Eighty percent of Belarusians are Eastern Orthodox; the remaining 20 percent are predominantly Catholic and Protestant, with a small percentage of Jews and Muslims. Belarus is a Christian country where Christmas comes second to Easter, as is typical of Eastern Orthodox cultures; Christian holidays prominently include both church services and celebratory meals.

Desserts and sweet treats are not priority items in the Belarusian diet, but, of course, Easter is celebrated with *kulich*, sweet Eastern Orthodox Easter bread. Baked in a mold that is shaped like a two-pound coffee can, the raisin- and nut-filled yeast dough is scented with cardamom, similar to the Balkan *pască*. After glazing with white icing, the baker makes an Orthodox cross or Christian symbol, using raisins, candied fruit, or nuts, on the top. Typically, *paskha* accompanies *kulich*. *Paskha* is an uncooked, molded cheesecake made from farmer's cheese, butter, sugar, eggs, cream, and flavoring, and, like *kulich*, it has Orthodox Christian symbols embedded in the surface. Easter celebrants take both items to church services for Holy Saturday blessings as part of the preparation for Easter Sunday's meal.

Some Christmas traditions, such as feeding the farm animals first on Christmas Eve because they were present at Christ's birth, are fading, but other traditions remain. There are often no sharp utensils at the Christmas table, for example, because sharp instruments were used to crucify Christ. A lighted candle reminds the diners that Christ is the light of the world. A round loaf of *pagach* is always on the table, symbolizing Jesus as the Bread of Life. *Pagach* is not itself sweet, but dipping it in garlic and honey reminds the participants of the bitterness and sweetness of life.

Uzvar is a very old national drink, made from dried fruit. Like most traditional foods, there are many varieties of *uzvar*, often made from dried apples, pears, plums (or any other dried fruit that is available), and rosehips, boiled in water and, if necessary, sweetened with honey. When the mixture is cool, the liquid is strained and served either chilled or at room temperature. Belarusians are also traditionally refreshed with boiled and cooled honey drinks, one of which includes a bit of citric acid and birch syrup. Other honey drinks are fermented.

Overall, Belarusian sweet treats are practical, made with local ingredients, delicious, and not overly sweet or demanding in the preparation. Belarusians dry fruits and make jam for winter use. They use honey when available. They use fresh dairy products such as whipped cream and ice cream sparingly but use fermented dairy products such as sour cream and yoghurt liberally. Belarusians make do on the limited produce that grows in poor soil and under poor growing conditions, and with whatever nature delivers, they always serve their precious down-to-earth sweets with pride and graciousness.

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Belgium

Sweet treats in Belgium generally fall into three categories: chocolates, sweet breads and cookies, and cakes and tarts. Belgian chocolates, say the Belgians, are the finest in the world—and most of the world wholeheartedly agrees. The Belgian connection with chocolate goes back to the early 16th century, when the region was controlled by the Spanish Empire as part of the Spanish Netherlands, when Spain introduced Europe to what became scientifically classified as *Theobroma cacao*—“the food of the gods.” Early on, however, chocolate was expensive and was consumed only as a luxury item or as medicine prescribed by an apothecary.

Early in the 20th century, chocolate became popular and affordable for most, and by World War II, chocolate was included in the Belgian official cost-of-living index. Today Belgians enjoy chocolate frequently and regularly and particularly on special occasions.

Chocolates form part of Belgium's national identity. Brussels, the capital of Belgium and the capital of the European Union, is also "The World Capital of Chocolate." Brussels alone has over 500 chocolatiers—about one for every 2,000 people. Belgians consume almost 22 pounds per person per year. First-class chocolates are found everywhere, appearing in seemingly endless forms and varieties in more than 2,000 Belgian chocolate shops, but pralines—the world's first filled chocolates—are characteristically Belgian and the signature chocolate most often found in and identified with Belgium.

The Belgian praline—not to be confused with the French, American, or other sweet treats by the same name—was the world's very first buttercream-filled bite-sized chocolate bonbon. Today, one can find pralines made of milk, white, or dark chocolate, filled with numerous varieties and combinations of flavored creams, nougats, fruits, and nuts (such as hazelnut), coffee cream, buttercream, caramel, ganache, or simply *more* high-quality dark chocolate. Created in Brussels in 1912 by Jean Neuhaus (of the legendary chocolatier family Neuhaus), the grandson of a Swiss immigrant who first opened an apothecary shop in Brussels in 1857, the artistic Belgian pralines are often known to outsiders simply as "Belgian chocolates" or "chocolate bonbons." The elegant praline chocolates can still be readily identified by their traditional characteristically deep decorative rectangular box known as a *ballotin*, French for "small package of goods," originally a protective carton created by Louise Agostini, the wife of Jean Neuhaus. Whether made in one of the 2,000-plus boutique ateliers preferred by the Belgians or by the largest and most famous quality chocolatiers loved throughout the world—Godiva, Guylian, Leonidas, or Neuhaus—luxury Belgian chocolates maintain their world-class reputation with highest-quality ingredients processed and crafted with a resolute dedication to tradition. Nevertheless, in a modern country forming the very heart of the European Union, innovation and modernization is a way of life, and creative Belgian chocolatiers also continually provide the chocolate-eating world with valiantly inventive 21st-century high-quality chocolate delights.

Next to chocolates—and beer—Belgium is famed for its so-called Belgian waffles, at least in the United States. Walter Cleyman, a native of Belgium, publically introduced America to the Belgian waffle at the "Century 21" Seattle World's Fair, where it instantly became the Expo's sweet treat sensation, piled high with whipped cream and fresh strawberries. The treat that became widely known as the Belgian waffle gained enduring national fame when Maurice Vermersch and his wife brought their version of a yeasted waffle—the "Bel Gem Waffle"—from their home in Brussels to the 1964 New York World's Fair where the whipped-cream-and-strawberry-topped

treat was again a memorable splendid success. Fifty years later people still fondly reminisce about eating their first World's Fair Belgian waffles.

In Belgium, each region has its own specialty waffle, in some cases going back as far as the 16th century, and although all types are basically made with flour, milk, sugar, and eggs, and in modern times most typically leavened with yeast, within regions family secret recipes have been passed on from generation to generation. What Belgians know in their French-speaking world as *gaufre de Bruxelles* (“Brussels waffle”) looks like its American counterpart, but, due to folded-in beaten egg whites, yeast leavening, and a special waffle iron, the rectangular waffles are light and fluffy with high sides and larger deeper pockets, complimented by a crunchy and crispy outside. The all-important yeast leavening not only adds fluffiness but also imparts a tangy flavorful sweetness due to the fermentation of the yeast. American waffles, by contrast, are more like flatter baking powder-leavened pancakes in the shape of a waffle. Brussels waffles are usually eaten as a handheld casual snack or dessert food, often as a street food, similar to the ways Americans enjoy their donuts. Brussels waffles are most often dusted liberally with confectioners’ sugar, occasionally topped with chocolate sauce, but they are also served on a plate with whipped cream, ice cream, and/or fruit. Unlike the American variety, they are not often eaten for breakfast, except, of course, by American tourists. In Flanders, if one gets invited to eat Belgian “pancakes” (*pannenkoeken*), often served as a child’s birthday treat, one will most likely enjoy a large, thin, crêpe-like treat with treacle or powdered sugar, traditionally made with wheat and buckwheat flour, milk, eggs, and salt, occasionally rolled up and eaten by hand—with a choice of an assortment of fillings like sliced apples or candied ginger, or toppings like honey, treacle, or *stroop*, a dark, thick sugar syrup.

The popular Liège waffles come from the economic and cultural center of the Walloon Region of southern Belgium. *Gaufre de Liège* in French and *Luikse wafel* in Flemish, a Liège waffle is a smaller, thinner, denser ovalesque golden-yellow treat made with vanilla or vanilla sugar, with small nuggets of sugar (*parelsuiker* or “pearl sugar”) added to the batter just before baking. The *parelsuiker* caramelizes and forms a rich, crispy, crunchy, chewy sugary crust, giving the Liège waffle its popular name, *suikerwaffel* (“sugar waffle”).

While Liège waffles and Brussels waffles are the best known and most popular in and of Belgium, other regions pride themselves on their own local versions, which vary in texture and taste. Regional varieties include, for example, *gaufre à la Flamande*, the Flemish waffle specialty of the Lille municipality from the northern Flanders region, which are basically thin biscuits filled with a mixture of sugar and vanilla and other flavors. And, of course, the Belgians, like the Dutch, love their *stroopwafels* (“syrup waffles”), basically a round waffle-like iron-baked fairly stiff cookie-dough wafer filled with a warm sweet caramel mixture of molasses or treacle, brown sugar, butter, vanilla, and cinnamon.



The popular Liège-style waffles, *gaufre de Liège*, of the Walloon region of southern Belgium. (Neil Farrin/Robert Harding World Imagery/Corbis)

One cannot, of course, live on chocolate, waffles, and chocolate-covered waffles alone, and thus Belgians treasure their sweet breads and cookies, including such signature classics as *cramique*, *craquelin*, *pain à la Grécque*, *couques de Dinant*, *speculoos*, and the like.

Sugar as Medicine

For centuries Europeans considered sugar primarily a medicine, with sucrose used in dozens of medications. Sugar was introduced to Europe through the apothecary shops. Sugarcane's official binomial scientific name, *Saccharum officinarum*, reflects its medicinal past, with *officinarum* referring to "of the apothecaries." The expression of French origin "like an apothecary without sugar"—meaning a person with an essential lack, something totally useless, or a situation utterly hopeless—was a popular expression in Europe from the 13th to the 18th centuries. In the 13th century, the great theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas considered sugar a medicine, addressing the liturgical debate in the Roman Catholic Church of sugar's role in ecclesiastical fasting.

Cramique (*kramique* in Flemish) is a rich slightly sweet *koekebrood* (“cake bread”), a crispy-crustated buttery *brioche* with its fluffy interior stuffed full of raisins, found throughout Belgium and usually eaten at breakfast—toasted, buttered, and dipped in hot chocolate—or as a snack or with afternoon tea or coffee. Some consider *cramique* a national dish. *Craquelin*, another typically Belgian crispy-crustated eggy and buttery *brioche* bread, has hard sugar cubes or sugar chunks baked in the center of its light and airy already-sweet dough. The sugar cubes or chunks are often flavored with orange or lemon or a liqueur, or with almond or vanilla, and wrapped in small pieces of dough and inserted within the *brioche* itself. The *brioche* bundle is then sprinkled with pearl sugar and baked in small cupcake-like cups. As the *craquelin* bakes, the sugar melts and then recrystallizes upon cooling, creating small caverns of crispy crunchy rich-flavored sweetness. *Craquelins* are typically served as a midday treat or dessert.

Not so fluffy, but equally sweet and rich, are the more cookie-like classics, *pain à la Grécque*, *couques de Dinant*, and *speculoos*. *Pain à la Grécque*, literally “Greek-style bread,” popular in Brussels, is a thick, chewy, and sometimes crumbly sweet cinnamony pastry delight having nothing to do with Greek bread. The word *Grécque* (“Greek” in French) in the modern-day Belgian sweet treat derives from the Dutch word for a canal or channel, *gracht*. In the 16th century Augustinian priests from a nearby abbey distributed bread to the poor close to the Brussels’ city walls, near a place called *Wolvengracht* (“Wolves Ditch”). Popular legend has it that a French Augustinian baker in later years, when sugar was cheaper, rolled a stale baguette in big sugar crystals to make it more pleasant. The sweet treat became known to the Flemish in their Brusseleir dialect as *Bruut van de Wolf-Grecht* (“Wolves Ditch Bread”), a name which later morphed into the French *pain à la Grécque*—as *Grécque* sounded like *Grecht*?—literally resulting in today’s “Greek-style bread.” A one-inch level bar of sweetened bread, it is made simply from flour, sugar, milk, butter, baking powder, salt, and spices, with the dough rolled in pearl sugar, and the hot freshly baked pastry pieces brushed liberally with a sugar syrup as they come out of the oven to create a caramelized top.

From the picturesque Wallonian river city of Dinant come the *couques de Dinant*, one of the finest and most famous molded cookies in Europe, and one of the world’s hardest. They are so solid that they are often sucked rather than chewed. Legend has it that *couques de Dinant* are so hard that in days of old they were used as throwing weapons in clashes with a rival neighboring town. Made since medieval times (1466) with only two ingredients, honey and flour, they are hardened in 575°F ovens for 10–15 minutes, a process that caramelizes the honey. Made in hundreds of shapes and sizes, they can be stored, without preservatives, for months. A softer version, *la couque de Rins*, named after the local baker who created the confection, is made by adding sugar.

Belgium's most famous cookie, the molded light-brown *speculoos*—cousin to the Dutch *speculaas* “windmill cookie” and the German *speculatius*—is a hard, crispy, crunchy spiced caramelized treat, which for centuries was traditionally baked for *Sinterklaas* festivities of the feast day of Sint Nikolaas (St. Nicholas; *la Saint-Nicolas* in French), celebrated in Belgium on December 6, much as it is in the Netherlands and southern Germany. Traditionally baked for the children's activities of *Sinterklaas* season in hand-carved wooden molds in the shape of St. Nicholas himself, today's *speculoos* appear in many shapes and sizes and are enjoyed year-round by people of all ages. Made with flour, butter, brown sugar, baking soda, and salt, flavored with cinnamon, pepper, and nutmeg, along with vanilla, cloves, and sometimes cardamom, and ginger, they taste a bit like mild hard gingerbread or gingersnaps.

In addition to *speculoos*, the Belgians enjoy a number of special Christmas cakes and other baked holiday treats, including treats such as the small light and sweet waffle-like pressed cookies called *gaulettes*, which are similar to some versions of the Italian *pizzelle*. Belgians enjoy a variety of related pastry treats all year long. These include tarts—usually as single servings with a shortcrust pastry or a puff pastry—made following the French *pâte feuilletée* method. And they include cakes, usually made with buttercream—such as the sponge cake-based light and fluffy almond-flavored *javanais* with its alternating layers of mocha and coffee buttercream, topped with a dark Belgian chocolate glaze. Above all, they love *la dame blanche*—“the white lady”—Belgium's classic dessert, and they enjoy it frequently, with a classic Belgian dessert beer. With or without beer, the hot fudge vanilla ice cream sundae treat with its generous mound of whipped cream topping is one sweet lovely lady adored by all, Belgian or not.

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Bolivia

Sucre is the constitutional capital of Bolivia. *Sucre* can be translated as “sugar,” that very same sweet “spice” that in the 16th century came to Bolivia from Andalusia in southern Spain, along with its cuisine. Bolivian national cuisine reflects the Spanish influence overlaying the native cultures, with a touch of Basque, German, Italian, and other immigrant flavors. Compared with other Latin American countries,

however, total immigration to Bolivia has been small, with immigrants making up just over 1 percent of the population. Bolivian cuisine has also been influenced by neighboring countries, especially Brazil and Argentina. Geographically, Bolivia is an ecologically diverse landlocked country, bounded by Brazil on the northeast, Argentina and Paraguay on the south, and Chile and Peru on the west. Rugged Andean mountains define the southwest, with a highland plateau (*Altiplano*) on the western Chilean-Peruvian border sharing Lake Titicaca, the largest lake in South America.

The sweet treats of Bolivia tend to be based on classic ingredients—sugar, sugarcane, honey, and a variety of sweet fruits—but, as usual, with regional variations. Bolivia enjoys the more common fruits—guavas, passion fruit, bananas, lemons, limes, oranges, apples, raisins, and coconut—as well as fruits typical of and indigenous to Bolivia itself.

Especially typical of Bolivia is the popular small orange-like native Amazonian fruit *achacha* or *achachairú*, the “honey kiss” fruit named by the local Guaraní-speaking Amerindian peoples and cultivated in the eastern lowland region. “The *achacha* has a wonderful balance between sweet and tart, with a delicate sorbet



Bolivian dead return for *El Día de los Muertos* (“The Day of the Dead”) celebration, held on November 2, enjoying colorful biscuits and special candies provided by living family members, such as those shown here on sale at a market in Bolivia’s Oruro Department. In a tradition common to Latin American countries, the dead are called back to the homes of their families, and people gather in cemeteries to celebrate and pay homage to their deceased. (Anders Ryman/Corbis)

finish which makes it quite different to all other fruit and very refreshing” (*Achacha* 2012). Fruit treats, like the many made with the *achacha*, are especially popular in the northern and eastern hot tropical regions.

“Cold seeds” characterize the *cherimoya* fruit, or so thought the Quechua when they named it, as the seeds germinate well even at high, cold altitudes. The *cherimoya* are another small fruit popular in both Bolivia and regionally in the Andes. *Cherimoya*, or “custard apple,” as it is now more commonly known outside of Bolivia because of its custard-like flesh, is a soft, sweet, and delicious fruit commonly eaten plain or used to make ice cream and other sweet treats. Mark Twain called the *cherimoya* “the most delicious fruit known to men. . . . It has a soft pulp, like a pawpaw, and is eaten with a spoon” (Twain 1866). To Twain it was “deliciousness itself” (Twain 1872). Some characterize the flavor as a blend of bananas, pineapples, papaya, peaches, and strawberries. Others suggest it tastes like bubblegum, and some simply describe it as “pear-like.”

Disagreeing with Twain would likely be the many Bolivian and worldwide fans of the *tamarillo*, another small high-altitude egg-shaped fruit native to the Andes and popular in Bolivia. This firm-textured fruit comes in various colors—red, orange, yellow, and purpleish—with the sweetest types being the yellow varieties, the flesh of which is commonly used in compotes, or lightly sugared as breakfast treats. In the morning with their *tamarillos*, or with *buñuelos* pastries, Bolivians also enjoy heavily sugared *api*, a very sweet usually hot drink made of an ancient Bolivian white (*moroch*) corn, milk, sugar, and cinnamon. Bolivians also blend *tamarillos* with water and sugar to make a refreshing juice enjoyed cold for its bold complex fruity flavor, which has been compared variously to kiwi, mango, guava, apricot, and passion fruit. Peoples in the Andes also use *tamarillos* in marmalades and many desserts, and, of course, they also enjoy *tamarillos* fresh. Elsewhere in the world *tamarillos* are now being used in classic sweet treats such as *bavarois*, “Bavarian cream.”

As common throughout the tropical areas of the world, Bolivians also love fried plantains, originally from Southeast Asia, with a little salt or *chankaka* (brown sugar), although they do not generally consider fried plantains a dessert in the North American sense.

Bolivians traditionally use sugarcane, honey, and coconut in desserts, like their famous *tawa tawa*—sweet fritters made with *miel de caña* (“honey of the [sugar] cane”) or their celebrated *helado de canela*, a sherbet-like sweet cinnamon treat made with cane sugar. Regular bee honey substitutes well, outside of Bolivia especially, for the *miel de caña*. With sugarcane honey, bee honey, or just plain sugar or sweetened milk, Bolivians love their coconut sweets, like their well-known *cocadas*, coconut cookies and candies—such as Bolivian *pastelitos de coco* (coconut tarts) and *budin de coco* (coconut pudding). As in most South and Central American countries they also love the popular *manjar blanco*, the thick sweetened

milk—thickened additionally with rice flour in Bolivia—commonly known elsewhere as *dulce de leche* and used as a filling in many sweets such as their version of the famed *alfajores*, the sweet treat that arrived with the Spanish in the 16th century along with cane sugar.

Alfajores contain the classic traditional sweet treat ingredients—flour; bee or cane honey and/or sugar; almonds; cinnamon, vanilla, and other spices; and occasionally rum—symbolizing the sweet soul of Bolivia.

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Brazil

Brazil’s Law Ordinate No. 379 of 2007 recognizes *bolo de rolo*, a roll cake, “as a cultural and immaterial patrimony” of the Brazilian state of Pernambuco—a national sweet treat, the descendent of an almond-filled Portuguese cake known as *colchão de noiva* (bride’s mattress). Brazilians quickly started substituting local native ingredients in the Portuguese bride’s mattress, particularly guava fruit, plentiful in northeastern Brazil, and after the arrival of sugar factories in the region in the 1530s began dousing the sweet with local cane sugars. And thus the official jellyroll of Pernambuco was born.

Brazil is the largest country in South America both in population (203 million, July 2014 estimate) and in territory (8.5 million square kilometers), and it is the fifth largest country in the world. Brazil occupies almost half of the South American continent; it is the only Portuguese-speaking nation in the Americas. Portuguese—the “sweet language”—is the official language and almost all Brazilians speak it, although over 200 other languages are spoken in various parts of Brazil.

When Pedro Álvares Cabral and his fleet of 13 ships landed on the northeast coast of South America on their way to India in 1500, and claimed it for the Portuguese Crown, they met with stone-tool-using semi-nomadic Tupi–Guarani peoples who subsisted on hunting, fishing, gathering, and migrant agriculture. Although the many Tupinambá groups spoke a common Tupi–Guarani language, they remained fiercely independent, often bellicose, and were said to be inclined to eat



Bolo de rolo, recognized by law as a traditional Brazilian national sweet treat, is a delectable descendent of an almond-filled Portuguese cake known as *colchão de noiva* (bride's mattress). (Carlanichiata/Dreamstime.com)

individuals captured in small-scale warfare. For sweet treats accompanying their victory feasts, the Tupinambá, as virtually all hunting-gathering peoples, could only have relied primarily on wild honey and ripe fruits—and being in tropical and subtropical locations, there were more ripe fruits year-round than in many other places in the world.

Colonization of Brazil began in earnest in the 1530s, since Portugal's early maritime exploration efforts focused on obtaining spices and other goods from India, especially the much-sought-after gold and silver. Sugar and the orange-red brazilwood, after which the country was eventually named, became Brazil's main exports during early colonization. As a result of the commercialization of brazilwood and sugarcane, plantation owners imported many slaves from Africa. Their efforts early on made sugar Brazil's most important colonial product through the early 18th century, at which time Dutch and French sugar competition in the Caribbean Antilles, located much closer to Europe, essentially brought an end to the "Sugarcane Cycle" (1530–ca. 1700) in Brazilian history. The effects of the African population on Brazilian sweet treats, however, are still seen and tasted today.

Sugar remained a key part of Brazil's non-fruit-and-honey sweet treat offerings and was Brazil's major export for almost 200 years. In the 21st century sugar

again became Brazil's leading export, with Brazil producing twice as much sugar as the second-largest producer, India (USDA 2014). Brazil currently accounts for about 22 percent of world sugar production. Brazil also currently has the highest annual per-capita consumption of sugar, at about 106 pounds—far exceeding the estimated 42 pounds per person in India. Americans rank second in sugar consumption at about 60 or more pounds per person—in addition to corn-derived sweeteners, honey, and sweet syrups.

Most Latin American countries gained their independence through civil wars in the 19th century. Not Brazil. Brazil became an independent empire ruled by a descendant of the Portuguese-ruling Braganza family “through political arrangements” (Lovera 2005). The new nation's immigration policy quickly aimed at encouraging European immigrants to come to Brazil, and starting in the 1830s, immigration became fundamental to the settlement of modern-day Brazil, hence, the more modern European look and taste of some of Brazil's contemporary sweet treat offerings.

Brazil is a country of mixture and variety—in its people, in its lands, and in its sweet treats. These, as so many things in Brazil, vary by region, and the regions in Brazil are vast. But some treats are loved by all throughout the expansive land, and some have been loved in Brazil since almost the beginning of time. These include, as is the case with most countries prior to the arrival of sugarcane, sweet fruits and native wild honey.

When the sweet-toothed Portuguese explorers arrived, they were used to their famous 15th-century Arab-influenced sweet almond confections, like the bride's mattress mentioned earlier, and they generally did not think too much of the natives' sweet fruits. Avocados were a major exception—*abacate* in the Quechua language, a loanword from the Aztec Nahuatl *ahuácatl*, meaning “testicle.” Explorers used and praised avocados from the earliest days of the conquest. Brazilians today especially enjoy *creme de abacate*, “avocado cream,” a simple puréed blend of avocado, heavy cream, lime juice, and sugar.

The Christian proselytizing Portuguese conquistadors also found the fruit of a climbing Brazilian herb to their liking and named it “passion fruit,” referring to the Passion of Christ, “because, for pious Christians, the style of the flower was similar to the nails with which Jesus was crucified, while the five petals surrounded by a reddish crown stood for the five wounds of Jesus and the crown of thorns that was put on his head” (Lovera 2005). Brazilians know its dozens of edible varieties collectively as *maracujá* and love it in sweets like passion fruit mousse and in *aipifruta de maracujá*, the passion fruit version of their signature national drink *caipirinha*.

Brazilians make their beloved *caipirinha* with *cachaça*, a liquor derived from fermented sugarcane juice first made in the first decades of colonization in the area around modern-day São Paulo. Much of the highly alcoholic beverage was made in

secret by slaves, as their Christian colonial masters did not like to see them drink alcohol. Today, it would be difficult *not* to find it. Brazil's Decree No. 4.800 of 2003 officially declared *caipirinha* a "typical Brazilian beverage." So throughout Brazil today one can enjoy official *bolo de rolo* roll cake as an edible cultural treasure with legally sanctioned and nationally certified *caipirinha*.

And if your hosts are ever out of the *bolo de rolo*, one can have sweet *caipirinha* with native cashews (named in the Tupí language as *acajú*, "nut that produces itself") and Brazil nuts (known as *castanhas-do-Pará*, "nuts from Pará" to all but the folks from Acre, where they are called "nuts from Acre," *castanhas-do-Acre*)—a gift of the Amazonian forest region from "time immemorial." Brazil nuts are technically seeds, not nuts, but most people still call them Brazil nuts.

Portuguese conquistadors also quickly noticed the papaya, one of the first fruits they found when they arrived in the Americas. It is known in Brazil as *mamdo*, and today it is one of the most-used sweet fruits in Brazil and throughout the world. The same can be said of guava, now made into a number of sweet treats in Brazil and abroad. The conquistadors also found "Brazilian pawpaw" (*soursop*), "Brazilian *cherimoya*," and "sugar apple." Sugar apples go by a number of names in Brazil, depending on the region you are in, and who is eating them.

And what do Brazilians do today with these prized fruits? Robério Braga, secretary of culture for the State of Amazonas suggests:

If your desire is to have a beautiful table filled with sweets, start imagining the several varieties you can gather: *cupaçu* in cakes, *flans*, sweets, marmalades, compotes, creams, mousses, salamis; peach palm fruit can be found in flours, cakes and *flans*; *buriti* and *arabu*, made with turtle's eggs, manioc flour and sugar to be accompanied by a hot cup of coffee. Here and there, everything is food for the people and with a flavor from the forest. (Braga 2008)

The conquistadors of course also brought their favorite fruits to Brazil, like citrus fruits. Conquistadors also introduced the coconut palm, at least to Brazil, resulting in "a number of delicious sweet and savory dishes, among which the most remarkable are especially those that make up the South American confectionery repertoire [including the] *Bom Bocado de Coco* (Coconut Delight Dessert) [from] Bahia, Brazil" (Lovera 2005). Brazilians love their *cocada*, coconut candy varying regionally, but usually containing egg yolks, coconut milk, condensed milk, fruit syrup, and sugar. *Quindins*—one of the most popular sweets at Brazil's annual National Sweets Fair—are a popular coconut custard or sticky coconut macaroon sweet, depending on the regional variety. And almost anywhere one can always have *cuscuz branco*, tapioca pudding cooked in coconut milk with sugar. Tapioca, named for

the Tupí word *tipi'óka*, which describes how they remove the poison from cassava roots, has been one of Brazil's main root crops since almost the beginning of time. Eventually, along with the conquistadors, came bananas, mangoes, and other fruits now commonly found in Brazilian markets.

One prominent feature of Brazilian sweet treats, and of Brazilian cuisine in general, is that its many immigrant populations maintained their cultural identities, in part, through food, while emerging within a national identity. Afro-Brazilian foods are a prominent and prideful example. An estimated five million Africans arrived between 1538 and the abolition of slavery in 1888. The first of those worked in the sugarcane plantations, while later arrivals worked in the mines and mining-related developments of the late 17th-century gold rush in the modern-day state of Minas Gerais. The images of black women carrying their baking trays selling homemade sweet treats in the markets and in the mines are well known. “The richest gold pans that are found in the mines,” it was once said, “belong to the black women of the trays” (Rocha 2008). *Quitandeira*, as they are known, sell cookies, cornbread, twisted bread, biscuits, and cakes of the *quitanda*, the home pastry shop. And from those trays sprang their Afro-Brazilian sweets fame:

From trays to groceries and small shops, our sweets became famous: milk sweet (the one rolled in corn husk is the most authentic from Minas Gerais); citron, lime and orange sweets, *brevidade*; quince, guava and banana sweets; *pé-de-moleque*; *pamonha* wrapped in banana leaf; *queadinha*; *mãe-benta*, *quebra-quebra*; cornbread or peanut bread; manioc starch biscuits; besides others from Portuguese-Brazilian confectionery, whose names reveal the tenderness and gentleness of the romantic century (18th): *suspiro* (meringues), *melindres*, *arrufado*, *esquecidos*, *beo-de-freira*; *papos-de-anjo*; *baba-de-moça*; *quindim-de-iaíá*. (Rocha 2008)

And then, as now, their sweet treats were irresistible. “The African and mulatto women who cooked could not, no matter how hard they worked, produce enough to satisfy the gluttony of the mine workers,” reports anthropologist and folklorist Tião Rocha (2008). The sweet treats of the Brazilian “black women with the trays” were so tempting and alluring that one of the first governors of the region passed a law to regulate them.

Sweet treats in Brazil are so irresistibly tasty as to be regulated by law—then and now. But the laws have come a long way since Pedro Álvares Cabral and his men landed—from the governor's forbidding the sale of the tempting pastries, cakes, sweets, and the like, to Brazil's Law Ordinate No. 379 of 2007 that recognizes *bolo de rolo* as a national treasure. Through it all, “the Portuguese Crown had never lost hope in finding precious metals in their lands in America” (Rocha 2008). Today

anyone can easily find their national treasures, in “the food of the gods,” for example, Brazilian ambrosia, a treat from Minas Gerais, home of the outlawed black women of the trays. Brazilian ambrosia is golden, and golden *bolos de rolos* are part of the national treasury, but any one of the sweets on the black women’s trays would qualify as a genuine sweet treat treasure.

One can find the mother lode of Brazilian sweets at *A Feira Nacional do Doce (FENADOCE)* Brazil’s annual National Sweets Fair held every year in May and June in the city of Pelotas, at the southern tip of Brazil in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. In this town residents historically made the *charque* (jerkey) to feed the slaves on sugar plantations, the same slaves who were secretly drinking their sweet *caipirinha* and eating their sugarcane candy.

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C

Canada

No one can miss the big red maple leaf on the Canadian flag or on any symbol identifying the country. In the sweet treats world, the Canadian red leaf signals sugar—world-famous maple sugar and maple sugar products, the “sweetest natural taste in all of Canada.” Part of Canada’s cultural heritage, maple syrup is one of the most delicate and sought-after products and natural sweeteners in the world. It is made from the sap of the sugar maple tree, collected in early spring at a “sugarbush” while the frost is still in the ground. On warm spring days with below-freezing temperatures at nights, for about six weeks each season, Canadians (similar to their prehistoric ancestors) collect the sucrose-rich maple sap and reduce it to syrup and sugar by heating it in an evaporating pan over a fire. Before boiling, maple sap contains between 2 and 5 percent sugar (at the height of the season), primarily sucrose, although with some maple species, and toward the end of a season, sap may contain as little as 1 percent sucrose. Forty gallons of sap yield one gallon of syrup, and if the syrup is further worked into a taffy or sugar, the yield from the 40 gallons of sap is quite small, about 10 pounds. In the olden days, maple sugar was especially sought after not only for its delicately sweet flavor but also because maple sugar can be stored for decades.

Indigenous legends of native peoples throughout “the maple belt”—the hardwood forest region of North America from the Canadian maritime provinces westward through southern Quebec and Ontario and onward into Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota—tell of their cultural heroes bringing the all-important maple sweets to Aboriginal First Nations and Métis peoples. And their calendars reflect its importance, with the sugaring season commonly known in Indian languages as “Sugar Moon” or “Sugar Making Moon,” signaling the end of what often was a long, hard winter and ushering in the beginnings of a new traditional annual cycle. Everyone looked forward with great anticipation to “sugarbush,” especially the children who eagerly awaited the customary taffy-like sweets made by pouring hot molasses-like thickened syrup into the snow. And for soon-to-be betrothed adolescents, the many family groups gathering from their dispersed small winter hunting camps for “sugaring” season ushered in an especially sweet time of the year.

Today more than 80 percent of the world’s maple syrup is produced in Canada, with its percentage of world production increasing annually with current warming trends. In a good year, the Province of Quebec alone accounts for 94 percent of Canadian maple production, more than three-fourths of the world’s supply of

pure maple syrup, about eight million gallons. (By contrast, the State of Vermont, the top producer in the United States, produces about 5.6 percent of the world's supply.) Canada's maple syrup production record was set in 2009 with nine million gallons. It is a valuable sweet. In August 2012, for example, thieves stole an estimated one-tenth of Quebec's maple syrup harvest from a cooperative, valued at about \$19.5 million (Canadian \$20 million). Real maple syrup, not to be confused with the many imitations, costs between \$60 and \$80 per gallon retail, and is even more expensive when purchased in smaller sizes and in boutique packaging; one pound of maple sugar costs about \$18. Maple yield varies dramatically from year to year due primarily to weather conditions. Sap yields are almost totally dependent on the weather and the freezing and thawing action brought on by cold nights combined with relatively warm days, which stimulates the flow or "run" of sap.

About 70 percent of Canadian maple syrup production is exported to more than 50 countries, with more than three-fourths of it going to the United States. Japan imports about 10 percent of Canadian maple syrup, while Germany imports about 5 percent. Maple syrup is graded according to color, flavor, and density, with standards prescribed by law. In Canada, there are three grades, 1 (light/medium), 2 (amber), and 3 (dark). (The United States has two grades: Grade A, normally for direct eating, and Grade B, for cooking and baking, with the State of Vermont having new standards in 2014 featuring Grade A only, but in four taste varieties [Delicate, Rich, Robust, and Strong]).

Elmira, Ontario, is home to the world's largest single-day maple syrup festival. Each year when the sap runs, the good folks of Elmira, with over 2,000 young and old volunteers, host over 70,000 maple-product-loving visitors. "The Elmira Maple Syrup Festival," suggests the *Ontario Event Review*, "not only makes for a great spring start but helps the winter blues fade into the past," which is exactly what has been happening in the eastern maple belt of Canada since the prehistoric indigenous peoples living there first tasted the sweet sap of spring.



World-famous maple sugar and maple sugar products are the "sweetest natural taste in all of Canada." (Mikeaubry/Dreamstime.com)

What does real maple syrup taste like? Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Quebec *Centre de recherche, de développement et de transfert technologique acéricole inc.* (ACER Centre) developed a maple syrup “flavor wheel” that describes 91 flavors. Maple syrup is not only incredibly tasty, it is also exceptionally nutritious, containing a half-dozen trace minerals essential for good nutrition, including calcium. And its low-sodium content is often noted by health-conscious devotees. Research, in part sponsored by the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers, promotes Canadian maple syrup as one of a “new” class of “superfoods,” a natural choice for a healthy lifestyle.

When you can find it, one can eat the pure taffy or suck on a small piece of rock-hard maple “sugar-cake” candy. Most often, however, maple syrup is served over pancakes, although increasingly it is being used as a sweet flavoring in baked goods and other dishes. Try some real maple syrup or maple sugar on a big stack of *ployes*—a thin crêpe-like buckwheat pancake often cooked on one side only, an Acadian tradition typical of New Brunswick since the 18th century, similar to *galettes de sarrasin* of the Brittany Region of France. Be sure to try them with plenty of butter. Acadians also enjoy them with sweet jams.

Not all maple syrup ends up on pancakes. Early European explorers reported that Canadian aboriginal peoples mixed it with their corn, for food in camps, and considered it as an important provision on journeys. And from then until today maple products end up in the full lineup of Canadian and worldwide sweetened treats: bannocks, breads, donuts, muffins, bread puddings, puddings, cakes, cookies, pies, tarts, bars, scones, strudels, popovers, and the list goes on. And it goes on nowadays to include the virtual full range of foreign delights, such as *tiramisù*, *mousse*, *millefeuille*, *biscotti*, *panettone*, *gelatos*, and ice creams. Today, increasingly, in Canada and throughout the world, maple sugar products are marketed as a flavoring and a sweet condiment in fine cuisines, foods for special occasions, and specialty desserts. On the other end of the sweets spectrum, one can also find the likes of maple-bacon donuts, maple popcorn, maple cotton candy, and even maple vinegar.

While Canadians sometimes use white and yellow birch sap for syrup, its yield of sugar is only about one-third of that of the maple sap. Concentrated a hundred times, white and yellow birch sap appears and tastes similar to commercial corn syrup. Thus birch sap is of limited commercial value, and generally not worth the great effort it takes to tap trees and convert the sap to syrup.

Canada is a diverse land with a large variety of cultural and natural resources. Eastern Canada, with its signature maple syrup products, also shows an obvious French influence in its sweet treats, especially in the French-speaking province of Quebec. Often these cultural elements combine, with Quebec City sugar pie being one of the best-known regional sweet treats, made with maple sugar to produce *tarte au sucre* (“maple sugar pie”) or with brown sugar to produce *tarte au sucre brun* (“brown sugar pie”). In Quebec, one also finds well-known traditional *poudings*

(“puddings”) like the syrupy French-Canadian classic *pouding chomeur* (“poor man’s pudding”), made with brown or maple sugar syrup, and *pouding aux bleuets* (“blueberry pudding”). Quebec puddings are baked rather than steamed in the traditional “English pudding” fashion, so they resemble cakes more than their English namesakes. One also finds very traditional Quebecois “maple grandfathers” (*grands-pères à l’érable*)—gooey dumplings cooked in maple syrup and served warm. Unmarried Quebecois women over age 25—*Catherinettes*—traditionally made and pulled gooey taffy on November 25, the day of St. Catherine of Alexandria, the Roman Catholic patron saint of unmarried women, to give to eligible young men to show off their cooking skills. Widely known simply as “taffy day,” this November 25 custom is attributed to the recently sainted Marguerite Bourgeois, C.N.D., a teaching sister who opened the first public school in Ft. Ville-Marie, New France (now Montreal), on that day in 1658, and who would make taffy to attract the attention of her First Nations’ pupils. Folklore in French Canada has it that in English Canada and the United States their “taffy day” sweets became known as “kisses.”

The huge Province of Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, seems to stretch halfway across the North American continent; in fact, it is about 1,700 miles wide. Twenty percent of the Canadian population lives in Canada’s two largest cities—the national capital of Ottawa and the Provincial capital of Toronto, both in Ontario. Sweet treats of all sizes and flavors thus abound in Ontario and are even showcased at the new-traditional The Desserts of the World Festival in Ottawa held on Mother’s Day. BeaverTails (*queues de castor*), commercial whole-wheat pastries hand stretched to resemble the south end of the Canadian mammal more famed for its fur than for its pastry tail, are relative newcomers to the Canadian sweet treats world, originating in Killaloe, Ontario, in 1978. The “iconic” sugar-coated deep-fried pastry gained instant across-the-border fame during President Barack Obama’s 2009 trip to Ottawa, when he asked for one of the hot pastries during his surprise visit to the historic ByWard Market (*Marché By*), Canada’s oldest farmers’ market. The special treat for the president, dubbed the “ObamaTail,” was a version of the now-classic Canadian deep-fried pastry dessert coated with cinnamon and sugar, topped with whipped cream, and drizzled with chocolate sauce and maple butter. The president bought maple leaf-shaped sugar cookies for his daughters.

Not typical are mysteriously pink-frosted sweet treats from northwestern Ontario known as “Persians,” which can be found only in Thunder Bay. The iconic Persians are fall-apart-fresh holeless cinnamony deep-fried *brioche*-like donuts originally topped with a thick slathering of pink ultra-sweet and slightly tart icing. The recipes for both the pastry and the frosting are commonly said to be a secret, and the origin of the name is unknown (in spite of what the local residents might say). The pink icing is said to be cherry by some, strawberry by others, raspberry by many, or cherry-strawberry or raspberry-strawberry, and is said to contain or not contain

crushed bits of one or all of the above. Although the original Persians were pink, and always and only pink, they are now offered with blueberry icing and with chocolate icing. One online reviewer from Toronto suggests, however, that without the pink frosting, it is not a Persian. “Go pink or go home,” she advises. As they down their Persian—one is most often sufficient for the day—life-long residents of Thunder Bay fondly remember “Persian Day” at school, every Thursday, when kids would line up and get a delicious Persian as a morning treat. Thunder Bay is also home to Robin’s Donuts, which opened there in 1975 and is now a large national chain. Thunder Bayans proudly guard their Persians, some say out of fear that their beloved Persians might “go the way of Robin’s Donuts.”

Arti Patel and Claire Sibonney, writing for *The Huffington Post Canada*, discussed “The Most ‘Canadian’ Foods” (Patel and Sibonney 2013). The sweet treats on the list of 42 national foods were headed, of course, by maple syrup, followed by butter tarts, a classic Canadian dessert made with butter, sugar, syrup, and eggs and filled in a buttery pastry shell, often including raisins or nuts. Next came the now-famous BeaverTails, followed by Nanaimo Bars, a no-bake treat typically made with graham-cracker crumbs, coconut, walnuts, vanilla custard, and chocolate, with common variations including peanut butter and mint chocolate. Named after the west coast city on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Nanaimo Bars were voted “Canada’s Favourite Confection” in the Great Canadian Confection Election of 2006—thanks to lobbying efforts by the readers of *The Nanaimo Daily News*. Canada, Patel and Sibonney point out, is the world’s largest producer and exporter of wild blueberries, mostly grown in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. Canadians are heavy users of “lowbush blueberries.” Blueberry grunt, for example—a dessert basically like a blueberry pie without the crust—is a well-known and popular Nova Scotia dessert made from blueberries and flour dumplings. Similar to blueberries are the small sweet purple nutty-tasting Saskatoon berries (the fruit giving its name to the largest city of the Province of Saskatchewan), native to the Canadian Prairies, British Columbia, and Northern Canada, a fruit so rich in antioxidants that it is now considered as one of the world’s new “superfruits,” albeit that Saskatoon berries have been used in native pemmican for flavor and as a preservative for centuries. They are now used in snacks and breakfast cereals and in jams and pies. Apples, the authors go on to add, are “quintessentially Canadian.” Apple pies, cakes, crisps, strudels, and tarts, of course, are favorites everywhere. Sugar pie (*tarte au sucre*), another of “The Most ‘Canadian’ Foods,” is a common dish found in Quebec. These single-crust desserts, similar to hyper-sticky shoofly pie, are made with a flour piecrust and are often filled with butter, flour, cream, and maple syrup. They can also be topped with fresh fruits and *crème anglaise*. Finally, Patel and Sibonney remind readers that Canadian commercial candy is always near: Smarties, Coffee Crisp, Mr. Big, Aero Bar, Crunchie, and Halifax, Nova Scotia’s own Mackintosh “MACK” Toffee.

Toffee or taffy, maple syrup or maple sugar, Persians or Robin's, French or English, native or immigrant, city sophisticated or backwoods local, homemade or commercial, Canada and its many visitors year after year embrace and enjoy the full panoramic world of sweet treats. And they return again and again for more.

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Central Africa

(Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, São Tomé and Príncipe)

Central Africa is primarily a land of equatorial rainforests, widely inhabited by Bantu-speaking people who over the past several thousand years migrated in stages from the west coast areas of modern-day Cameroon and eastern Nigeria and pushed out or absorbed most of the Neolithic hunter-foragers who formerly lived in the region. Bantu and non-Bantu sweet treats were sweet fruits and many different kinds of honey. One of the hunting-foraging peoples displaced, a nomadic “pygmy” group known as the Aka, now speak Bantu but retain much of a non-Bantu vocabulary. Almost one-third of the Aka people’s dialect is not Bantu, with the non-Bantu words mostly relating to hunting and foraging in their tropical rainforest environment. Hunting and honey-gathering make up the bulk of their non-Bantu words. Serge Bahuchet, the author of a linguistic study of neighboring groups, suggests that the non-Bantu vocabulary reflects the principle characteristics of their past way of life, and that from the vocabulary one can attempt to reconstruct important aspects of their prehistoric way of life (Bahuchet 1993). “Collecting honey from several bee species was an activity of prime importance,” he concludes, “involving very accurate observations of bee behavior (for instance, wild hives were located by looking for the dead bees on an ant hill . . .) and using specific tools, the elbow-shafted axe . . . and several bark containers” (Bahuchet 1993). The Aka distinguished two species of bees, bee social structure, bee behavior, and more than a dozen items relating to honey-gathering tools and techniques. They also have non-Bantu words for both a honey drink and a hangover due to honey drink. Today, Aka people utilize the honey from eight species of bees.

Traditional sweets for all of the Central African groups were primarily honey and ripe fruits, as they are in tropical regions throughout the world. But for Central Africans, honey was critical. For example, during the honey season from June to August, honey makes up as much as 70 percent of the food by weight of the Mbuti peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Ichikawa 1993). And fruits are always important. But even with many varieties of fruits available, Aka people

regularly eat only nine different fruits in their forest camps, four from native fruit trees, three from fruit-bearing vines, and plantains, and lemons.

The region of Central Africa, the core of the African continent, has various definitions. The United Nations, referring to the continental subregion as “Middle Africa,” includes the countries of Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo (different from the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Today, Central Africa is home to over 160 million people, of which the Democratic Republic of Congo with 75.5 million and Cameroon with 20.5 million are the two largest and most diverse. The Democratic Republic of Congo alone has over 200 ethnic groups, most of which are Bantu-speaking groups. The smallest country of Central Africa, the Portuguese-speaking equatorial islands off the coast of Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, today have only 187,000 inhabitants, but historically played a vital role in the European settlement of Africa, being then uninhabited locations that were discovered, claimed, and settled by Portuguese in the late 15th century. The islands were the key to the development and spread of both sugarcane and its African slave labor–based plantation system. Using slave labor largely imported from the African mainland, by the mid-16th century São Tomé and Príncipe had become Africa’s main exporter of sugar, playing an important role in the spread of cane sugar production to the New World. Since the arrival of the Portuguese in São Tomé and Príncipe with their sugarcane plantations in the 15th century, sugarcane has been an important sweet in the region, both socially and economically. Today, sugarcane-based sweets appear throughout Central Africa, especially in the urban areas of the countries colonized by France, Belgium, England, Portugal, and Spain.

Central African countries’ languages echo the historical flavors of especially their urban sweet treat offerings. Today, French is a main official language of 9 of the 11 Central African countries. And in these countries, one finds French-inspired sweet pastries and custards. Portuguese is the official language of São Tomé and Príncipe, as it is in Angola, and here one finds the legendary Portuguese-inspired egg-based desserts. English is an official language of Cameroon and the English here, as elsewhere, left a legacy of afternoon teas and teatime treats. Most countries of Central Africa, other than São Tomé and Príncipe, officially speak one or more languages, usually Bantu and English and up to several dozen native languages. Chad includes Arabic as an official language among the more than 120 languages spoken in that country. Cameroon includes English as an official language, while Equatorial Guinea includes Spanish.

The sweet treats world of the Central African countries reflects the food customs of their former colonial powers, especially in the larger towns and urban areas.

Sweet treats in the urban areas of these countries include modified versions of those found in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, and the Arabic countries of the Middle East. In the rest of Central Africa, and especially throughout the rural areas, sweet treats are the classic time-honored fresh fruits and honey. And, in general, people often like chewing on sugarcane.

Religion in Central Africa influences sweets choices, as it does elsewhere. Christianity is the primary religion of the Central African region. Christmas and Easter treats, and treats celebrating saints' days, are special for Christians. Throughout the region, indigenous animistic and syncretic belief systems (usually a synthesis of Christian and indigenous) remain important, especially in the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, and Central African Republic. In these areas, fruit trees, for example, besides providing the major sweets, often take on special spiritual meaning among those practicing indigenous and syncretic religions. Islam is important in parts of Central Africa; over half of the population of Chad, one-fifth of the population of Cameroon, and 15 percent of the Central African Republic, for example, are Muslim. Ramadan and the food regulations of Islam promote ritual sweet treat consumption, as they do globally. Muslims following *sunnah* (the way of life prescribed and modeled by the Prophet Muhammad) break their Ramadan fasting with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with sweet dates in commemoration of the Prophet's breaking of the fast. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals. The country of Chad, whose majority population is Muslim, is among the top 20 producers of dates in the world. Apart from their religious significance, dates are, in general, a mainstay sweet treat in much of Central Africa.

Bananas, originally native to southern and Southeast Asia, are a main food crop and sweet treat of Central Africa. The word *matoke* in the region is used interchangeably for both "food" and "banana." Bananas reached Africa likely arriving in four waves, spread over thousands of years. By the end of the 16th century, bananas were widespread throughout, with Central Africa and neighboring regions becoming what is generally considered the world's most important bananaland. Central Africans also eat bananas for special occasions and life events: weddings, the arrival of a newborn (especially the birth of twins), and funerals. In accordance with indigenous animistic and syncretic religious beliefs, for example, families are more likely to be confident of a child's prosperity if a mother buries her afterbirth under a banana tree. One variety, the Mpologoma banana, "represents the lion and is said to improve male potency." While many bananas are cooked, and taste less sweet than the Cavendish banana most familiar to Americans, other varieties remain a key sweet treat, both eaten fresh and prepared in dishes such as banana pudding and baked bananas with sugar, honey, and coconut—a classic treat throughout the region. In Burundi, most desserts are based on the banana, such as, for example, bananas Burundi, a banana treat made with cinnamon, orange juice, and orange or apricot liqueur, garnished with sweetened sour cream and brown sugar.

As in East Africa, the fruit of the baobab, Africa's most famous tree, is of central importance to the continental cultures of Central Africa. The fruit can be eaten fresh or cooked, and remains an important staple, especially in rural areas.

Other popular fruits for treats in Central Africa include coconuts, which arrived in ancient times via ocean dispersal along the coast of East Africa, spreading from there across much of the tropics. The Portuguese, in the late 1400s, introduced pineapple, a tropical fruit native to South America, and, at about the same time, guava and papaya arrived from tropical America. The Portuguese also introduced sweet and bitter oranges to the coastal zone, but the Arabs, early on, likely introduced limes and lemons to the interior regions. Coconut, pineapple, guava, papaya, and citrus fruits are all favored for Central African sweet treats.

Throughout Central Africa, desserts are generally not part of traditional meals, with Central Africans preferring fresh fruits or fruit salad after a meal—including fruit salads with various spices and sweet sauces. But former colonial countries have had their influence. In Angola, for example, a former Portuguese colony, one finds Portuguese-inspired dishes like the very sweet and heavy *cocada amarela* (yellow coconut), the best-known Angolan dessert, made from grated coconut, sugar, water, whole cloves, ground cinnamon, and *lots* of egg yolks (hence the color)—as is typical of Portuguese baked sweet desserts. Other coconut desserts are also popular. In the Congo, one of the relatively few Congolese common desserts is *caakiri*, a simple sweetened snack or dessert pudding made with millet, maize, or couscous, and cream, yoghurt, or other fermented milk products—a sweet also popular in other parts of Africa. Cameroonian desserts, like *soufflet* fritters, reflect their former French colonial influences. Cameroon is also noted for its rice cake, made with ground rice, flour, milk, butter, eggs, sugar, citrus essences, and yeast or baking powder. Cakes are generally popular among those who like European-style desserts. For example, *moelleux au chocolat amande* (chocolate cake with almond topping)—baked chocolate sponge with flaked almonds—is another popular Cameroonian dessert. Some people enjoy puddings, like sweet sago pudding, a popular dish made according to various local customs, with sago palm starch, milk, eggs, sugar, and flavoring.

Even with great sweet treats inspired by their former colonial cuisines, in the end, as in the beginning, people of Central Africa most often select fresh fruits as their sweet treats of choice—both Bantu and non-Bantu alike.

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Central America

(Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama)

Seven nations occupy the mountainous tropical isthmus connecting North and South America: Belize (formerly British Honduras), Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. Coastal lowlands, valleys, and highlands define the volcanically active and earthquake-prone region. This twister-shaped region located between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean features a variety of ecological zones, including many fertile and not-so-fertile microenvironments. This ecological variety along with a historical assortment of cultures yields a mixture of cuisines, each contributing to the Central American sweet treats cart. Major regions consist of the central highlands; the lowlands and arid, densely populated Pacific; and the humid, tropical, sparsely populated Caribbean coasts.

Along the Caribbean coast from Belize to Honduras live a unique people known as the “Black Carib” or Garifuna. The Garifuna are descendants of the African survivors of two sunken Spanish slave-trading ships and the West Indies Carib and Arawak Amerindian people who gave them refuge in 1635. The Garifuna are known for their unusual language, which has terms used only by men or only by women, the men’s terms coming from the Caribs and those used by women originating from the Arawaks. This male–female division in language does not affect the entire vocabulary, and when they are talking sweet treats they all speak the same language. And that is about coconut bread, chocolate (in season), a unique sweet coconut dessert known as *tableta*, and their celebrated sweet potato *pone*, the “Holy Grail” of sweet treats throughout Belize, generally made from grated sweet potatoes, eggs, butter, brown sugar, coconut milk, evaporated milk, cinnamon, ginger, and vanilla extract—optionally served with a little sweetened condensed milk and extra brown sugar sprinkled on top.

The sweets of the ancient Mayans, as with their descencents today, highlighted the domesticated and wild ripe fruits especially abundant in the tropical and

semitropical regions, and the celebrated honey of small stingless *jicote* bees native to the tropical forests of the Yucatán Peninsula. Honey was both a main sweetener and an important long-distance trade commodity of the ancient Mayans of coastal Belize. And the early Spaniards took careful note. The expedition of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba—the first European generally credited both with discovering the Yucatán Peninsula in 1517 and having the first European encounter with “advanced civilization in the Americas”—observed that the island of Cozumel up the coast from Belize and the mainland areas in-between were excellent places for honey production, with bee yards having thousands of hives.

Ancient portraits and even sculptures of *jicote* bees survive in many parts of Central and Mesoamerica. Mayans called the bee *xunan kab*, “the Royal Lady.” For indigenous people, the bee traditionally symbolized sunlight—and the sun in ancient Central and Mesoamerica was at the center of their beliefs. Bees linked the Mayans to the spirit world. The bee god, *Ah Mucen Kab*, was celebrated in both daily life and rituals. In the sacred book of the Quiché Maya of Guatemala, the *Popol Vuh*, the first four men who were created took honeycombs to their women, the first food that sustained them. Maya shamans used honey to sweeten the herbal ceremonial fermented drink *balché*. Traditionally brewed in a canoe, Mayans made the sacred drink from the bark and fermented honey from the flowers of the *balché* tree—both said to have given hallucinogenic properties to the beverage. The Spanish early on banned *balché* but later reversed their decision. The Spanish conquistadors introduced anise and took away the tree bark and corn, resulting in today’s popular fermented dessert liqueur, *Xtabentun*. Modern sweet drinks also include *boj*, a fermented sugarcane drink, and the traditional *atol* (*atole*), often mentioned by the 16th-century Spanish, a hot maize-based drink made with honey or *panela* (solid unrefined cane sugar), cinnamon, and their native vanilla, which is pollinated only by the *Melipona* bee or by hand—local fruits and chocolate are optional. Moderns likewise mix maize, milk, honey or sugar, cinnamon, and salt to make the popular *atol de elote*, sweet corn *atol*. Chocolate with cinnamon and vanilla, and honey or *panela*, of course, continues to be one of today’s favorite beverages throughout Central America.

The Mayans were the first beekeepers in the Americas, and as Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo pointed out in 1535 in his *General History of the Indies*, Mayan beekeeping was much more extensive at that time than apiary practices in Europe. The Mayan efforts were likely characteristic of the transition from “opportunistic honey gathering” to early honey production in many parts of the world.

The Yucatán Peninsula continues to be one of the principal honey producers in the world. The Mayans maintained their traditional honey-producing ways well into the 20th century, but with the arrival of “Africanized” honeybees in the 1980s, they began more modern apiary management. In Central America, in places like Managua, Nicaragua, street hawkers still often offer two types of honey, one from

the Africanized bees and “white honey” from native *jicote* hives—the latter honey being much preferred even though it is more costly. *Jicote* “white honey” has a lower sugar content than European-type honey, but many consider it better tasting, and it is thought to have more medicinal properties. But the sweet treat native honey traditions talked about by the Spanish explorers and enjoyed for thousands of years may soon end; the aggressive Africanized honeybees, widespread deforestation, and an increase in the use of pesticides are all serious modern-day threats to the survival of the ancient stingless *jicote* “Royal Ladies.”

Modern-day Mayans in Guatemala, as did their ancient ancestors, use honey to sweeten cornmeal and other common drinks, including chocolate—but nowadays they prefer their beverages much sweeter. Like their ancestors, they also like their many fruits topped with honey—especially fried plantains—and in sweet treats like their version of honey-flavored custard-like *flan*. In more recent times, they use honey to flavor breads and cakes, like banana bread (*pan de banano*), banana cake (*pastel de banano*), and *buñuelos*, a fritter-like deep-fried pastry covered with honey and cinnamon, popular especially for holidays. Also popular for holidays throughout upper Central America are *torritas de yuca* (cassava fritters), made with a base of cassava, eggs, flour, and *jicote* “white honey.”

Mayans prized squash seeds, with both a large variety and small variety being edible either as they were or ground, and either raw or toasted. They make a type of praline by pouring cooked sugar over roasted squash seeds. All seven Central American countries nowadays feature this praline-like candy, *nogada*, made with honey or sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, sometimes evaporated milk, and pecans or pumpkin seeds.

All seven Central American countries, of course, also have sweet treats featuring native and now European honey, sugarcane, white and brown sugar—used on and in such things as baked or fried bananas and plantains; custards and rice puddings; cakes and fritters, often flavored with coconut or rum; ices made with fruit syrups and ice creams; and the praline-like candy *nogada*, mentioned earlier. Guatemala features coconut candies, while Panamanians especially enjoy plum-like *roselle* fruit jam and beverages (*aguas frescas*).

The predominantly Mayan native influence on the diets and sweet treats of Central American countries diminishes as one travels south from Guatemala and Belize to Panama, where the customs and cuisines acquire a Caribbean Spanish and international flavor. All modern-day countries, of course, have small immigrant minority groups, and some like the Garifuno strongly maintain their cultural identity through their language, customs, and cuisines.

About three-fourths of the population of Belize—formerly British Honduras—are either “mestizo” or *kriol* (creole). *Kriols* in Belize—generally descendants of the mixed English/Scottish and black African slaves—speak a Belizean Creole English (*Kriol*). Belizean *Kriols* are known for their cassava *pone* flour cake and for small fried cassava cakes dipped in coconut, adapted from the Garifuna. English

is the official language of Belize, albeit that they generally speak the Creole English dialect. Belize is the only country in Central America with English as the official language, being the only country in Central America with a British Colonial heritage and currently part of the British Commonwealth. Many sweet treats of Belize take on a British flavor, added, of course to the Mayan, Garifuna, and mestizo base. More generally, Belizeans are known more for their fried plantains and coconut-based sweet treats like coconut cake, chewy coconut fudge, and coconut and coconut-banana ices or ice creams.

And Belizeans are known for eating seaweed. *Dulce*—“sweet”—is what Belizeans call their famous “sea moss” seaweed that they now use in their milkshake-like drink popular especially in northern Belize—made with milk, sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, vanilla, and dried red seaweed that has been soaked, boiled, and gelatinized (McDonald 2009). Belizeans have been eating seaweed since ancient Mayan times, although it is not known when the thick drink appeared or whether the “sea moss” reputation as an aphrodisiac has scientific or scientological merit.

About 40 percent of Guatemala’s 12.7 million people are Mayans and their sweet treats favor the traditional honey-based sweets and sweet fruits long enjoyed in the region. Spanish sweet traditions can be seen in their desserts common throughout Spanish-speaking countries, including *flan*, *torejas* (a French-toast-like sweet dessert traditionally popular at Christmas), *pastel tres leches* (three milks cake), and the classic sweet custard-filled Guatemalan muffins called *molletes*. And, of course, Guatemalans like their *buñuelos* and *platanos fritos* (fried plantains) all year-round.

About 90 percent of El Salvador’s six million people are classified as mestizo, with only 1 percent Amerindian. About two-thirds are urban. Sweet treats in El Salvador favor local variations of those delights common in Spanish-speaking countries, in general, and especially the inescapable *tres leches* cake. The smallest among the Central American countries, El Salvador is also the only one without a Caribbean coastline, and is thus less influenced by Caribbean cultures and cuisines. Special El Salvadorian sweets include *pastelitos*, pastry turnovers filled with sweets like custard, jam, or caramelized fruit, and *cemita*—a cake made with guava or pineapple, not to be confused with *cemita*-roll sandwiches popular in other Spanish-speaking countries. Sweet *cemita* is also popular in Nicaragua and in Honduras, where it is more like a light sweet bread, sometimes dusted with the ancient Andalusian favorites, sugar and cinnamon.

Honduras, like its neighbor El Salvador to the south, is 90 percent mestizo but has a larger Amerindian population (7 percent). Only about half of the population is urban. Historically dependent on the export of bananas, sugarcane, and coffee, it is the second poorest country in Central America. Some of the earliest evidence of the use of chocolate comes from the Caribbean coast of Honduras. Archaeologists date chocolate produced near modern-day Puerto Escondido to about



Special El Salvadorian sweets include *pastelitos*, which are pastry turnovers filled with sweets like custard, jam, or caramelized fruit. (The Marmot/Flickr.com)

1100 BC. Chocolate was originally a status drink by-product of beer production. Cacao, a major trade item, was likely exported from here to the American Southwest as early as AD 1000—1,200 miles away—where it was consumed by the elite and commoners alike. Today, coconut highlights the Honduran sweets table, even more than in Belize, as is seen in their popular *tableta de coco*, made with coconut, ginger, and molasses. But of course they also like their molasses with *calabaza* (pumpkin). Hondurans use more coconut than any of their Central American neighbors.

Hondurans take their drink, known elsewhere as *horchata*, as a beverage known as *semilla de jicaro*, a thick, sweet drink made from cold milk, ground rice, sugar, spices, and *jicaro* seeds—seeds from a hard round sweet fruit native to Central America and southern Mexico. Besides *jicaro*, Hondurans, as their Central American neighbors, make plentiful use of native fruits like papaya, pineapple, plums, zapotes, and passion fruit, but unlike their neighbors these fruits are sometimes prepared while they are still green. Hondurans are also partial especially to both *tres leches* cake and “Honduran rice pudding,” the latter being their version of *arroz con leche*.

Close to the Honduran border, on the Nicaragua side, the women of the small town of El Viejo in the sugar-producing Department (State) of Chinandega create

a now-favorite and typical treat of Nicaragua—*rosequillas*, a corn-based donut-shaped biscotti-like pastry designed to be floated in a hot, strong cup of the local coffee. They also pride themselves on their *gofios*—small cookie-like treats made from roasted corn, with brown sugar, ginger, anise, cinnamon, cloves, and vanilla (*pinol* spices)—another of the corn-based sweets popular in El Viejo and the region, especially on the December 8, Nicaraguan national holiday of *La Purísima* (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary). El Viejo’s cuisine, as those of the Pacific coast, in general, revolves around local fruits and corn, while across the country on the Caribbean coast residents’ sweet treat preferences lean toward the coconut. On the Caribbean side of Nicaragua, for example, on the opposite coast from El Viejo, one would find sweet treats like *cajeta de coco*, hard or soft caramelized coconut made with *dulce* (*panela/rapadura* hard-caked unrefined whole cane sugar), cinnamon, and clove, and sometimes colored a bright pink.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America, but it is still only about 7 percent the size of Mexico. Almost three-fourths of Nicaragua’s 5.7 million people are mestizo and about 5 percent are Amerindian. So while Pacific-Caribbean preferences are evident, Nicaraguans, like Hondurans, are also partial to the common desserts of Spanish-speaking countries, like the ever-so-popular must-have *pastel de tres leches* and Nicaraguan rice pudding (*arroz con leche*).

Costa Ricans, *Ticos* as they respectfully and warmly call themselves, join in the common desserts love fest of the ubiquitous *tres leches* cake, *arroz con leche*, *dulce de leche*, *suspiros* (meringues), *flans* of many flavors (especially *flan de caramelo* [caramel] and *flan de coco* [coconut]), and *cajetas* (sweet milk-base desserts of many flavors, including guava, papaya, and other fruits)—all part of their Spanish heritage. About 94 percent of Costa Rica’s population is white or mestizo; about 1 percent is Amerindian. And, of course, the Garifuna who live on the east coast of Costa Rica, as they do along the Caribbean coasts of Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras, provide an important cultural and cuisine flavoring to Costa Rican life. Coastal Caribbean Costa Rica favors coconut—coconut milk as a staple liquid in sweet treat recipes and grated coconut in many cakes and other desserts. *Ticos* countrywide pride themselves on their “typical dessert” *queque seco*, “Costa Rican pound cake,” a lighter and drier version than the pound cakes to which American tourists are generally accustomed. Costa Rican *queque seco*, comes in rum-and-raisin, orange, lemon, and other flavors, with sweet syrup, of course.

Traditionally *Ticos* eat lots of honey-based sweets during Easter Week, the most important holiday week of the year, as it is in most Central American countries. Unlike Roman Catholic America, where people traditionally “gave up candy” and cut out or cut down on sweets during the 40-day Lenten period leading up to and including Holy Week, consumption of sweet treats in predominantly Roman Catholic Central America actually *increases*.

For the Easter holidays, a week-long family oriented religious celebration observed since 1526, *Ticos* enjoy *miel de chiverre*, a sweet honey paste made from circular blocks of hard brown sugar and the watermelon-sized *chiverre* (a squash-like fruit in season at Eastertide). *Miel de chiverre*, used like jam or jelly, can be mixed with coconut, tamarind seeds, cinnamon, cloves (*clavos de olor*), lemon or orange peel, or whatever one thinks goes well with it. The special Easter treats called *empanadas de chiverre* are small sweet baked wheat pastries filled with *miel de chiverre*. At other times of the year, these favorite little pastries are filled with *miel de coco* (coconut honey), *dulce de leche*, or guava or pineapple jams, or the preserves of the many other local fruits.

Local fruits in Panama, the southernmost of the Central American countries, have been popular since before Vasco Núñez de Balboa with his dog Leoncico ventured across the isthmus from the Atlantic to “discover,” name, and claim the *Mar del Sur* (“South Sea”) in 1513—later renamed the “Pacific Ocean” by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. Balboa, Columbus, and other explorers found what is now Panama inhabited by a variety of peoples said to be speaking mutually unintelligible languages. Today Panama, most famous in the modern era for the Panama Canal, is likewise inhabited by a variety of peoples from a number of ethnic groups, and although most speak Spanish, the official language, many Panamanians are bilingual. Afro-Panamanians have been an important part of Panama’s history and culture, due to their presence in the early slave trade, later railroad building, and canal construction in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

When it comes to sweet treats, Panamanians, as others in Central America, enjoy their Spanish-heritage sweets and at the same time enjoy feasting on international fare. In Panama, one finds the ever-popular standards of *tres leches* cakes (*pastel de tres leches*), *empanadas* filled with sweets, *flan* and other custards, baked and fried bananas and plantains, rice puddings, a long list of cakes and fritters, fruit-flavored ices and ice creams, and, of course, sugarcane, honey, and white and brown sugar. In Panama City, the capital, one can also find *raspadas*, Panamanian sweet fruit syrup-flavored shaved ice beverages—pineapple, mango, tamarind, and the like—often topped off with sweetened condensed milk.

Panamanian culture today reflects a predominantly Caribbean Spanish influence, but their cuisine is more international than in other Central American countries largely due to the presence of the Panama Canal with its extended history of foreign involvement, long-standing international trade, and associated continuing worldwide tourism. The Panama Canal dominates many aspects of life, with activities like agriculture playing a relatively minor part in the economy. Largely as a result of the canal development, and the country’s diverse prehistoric and colonial history, Panamanian cuisine ranges from the native and Spanish-colonial familiar cuisine to the “ultra-exotic” (Hubbard 2012).

The origin of the name “Panama” is much disputed, but all parties agree that the name means an abundance *of something*—butterflies, fish, trees, or all of the above. One could argue that it might also mean “for always and forever an abundance of sweet treats, familiar and exotic.”

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Central Asia

(Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan)

Five independent republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, make up Central Asia, the landmass east of the Caspian Sea, which shares long borders with Iran, Afghanistan, Siberia, and China. Central Asia includes some of the most sparsely populated regions in the world and yet claims over 100 separate ethnicities—from Western Europeans to Tibetans, Uzbeks, and

Koreans. In the early 1990s, nearly 11 million Russians lived in Central Asia, but that number has diminished significantly because of violence among ethnicities and between ethnicities and Islamic fundamentals. Recently, the ethnic and religious tensions within and among the republics have been coupled with pervasive poverty and few economic opportunities.

The 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union gave birth to a new stage in the evolution of each of the predominantly Muslim Central Asian republics. The identity of Central Asians is now shaped by each country's and each person's cultural and political narratives, and for the Muslims that includes daily prayer rituals, Ramadan and other religious annual observances, and participation in the Hajj (the sacred pilgrimage to Makkah, one of the Five Pillars of Islam).

Muslims in Central Asia are moderate and accommodating in their practices. (It is interesting to note, for example, that nomadic Kazakh and Kyrgyz Muslim women ride horses and work alongside the men, free of the traditional Islamic dress worn by the Uzbek and Tajik women, who live less physically demanding lives.) The traditional culinary habits of Central Asians resulted from early exposure to the spice trade and multiple invasions, which brought different foods and cooking styles to the region. Dining practices still include recognizing the host with a gift, handshakes between men, and sitting on the floor and eating with the right hand—practices rooted in Muslim traditions.

It is as challenging to define each country's unique sweet cuisine as it is easy to define common elements because preferences in Central Asia are not delineated so much by country or political borders, as they are by local availability of ingredients, religious affiliation, and other influences, which include urban or rural location; nomadic and sedentary lifestyles; and Russian, Turkic, European Chinese, and Iranian backgrounds—all of which come together to create the Central Asian cuisine. Sweets, as the West knows them, are simply not part of the culinary culture. Evidence reveals that most Central Asians do not eat sweets. Food historians even suggest that for many Central Asians, no “manly man” would embarrass himself by eating sweets, so it is easy to understand why the male heads of households relegated sweets to the very bottom of the food chain.

Although visual images of industrialized areas in Central Asian countries are grim, beautiful and bountiful areas support hundreds of varieties of sweet melons, along with cherries, berries, pears, plums, apples, and apricots. Other fruits are imported to supplement the locally grown choices—peaches, apples, persimmons, pomegranates, and figs. Meals traditionally begin with sweets and fruits, and desserts are commonly fresh and dried fruits slowly stewed into a *kompot*, and nuts. *Halva* and sweets made from sugared fruit are common. *Paklama*, the Central Asian version of *baklava*, is popular, as are balls of roasted ground nuts. For the Muslim celebrations of *Eid*, *chak chak*, deep-fried pieces of dough held together with a honey

syrup, shaped into a mound or circle, and *urama*, fried spirals of dough dusted with powdered sugar, are included in the ceremonial meals.

Many Central Asians typically enjoy four meals a day; the fourth meal is an afternoon snack. Breakfast is tea with bread. Lunch and dinner begin with a sweet—for those who eat sweets—and a piece fruit, and they end with tea and dessert, which can be fruits, nuts, *halva*, and, more recently, layered cakes and pastries, which reflect European influence. In the winter, the Uzbeks eat more nuts and honey, separately or together. Fruits of summer, when they are properly stored under straw, are available as treats for the winter months. Uzbek sweets also include *khalva*, a sweet made from flour, sugar, and nuts, and *navat*, which is crystalized sugar made from grapes with additional flavors and colors added for variety.

In Kazakhstan, as in the other Central Asian countries, hospitality is paramount. Whenever guests arrive, the women readily prepare a *daskartan*, a table of beautifully presented food. All guests, no matter the time of day, sit down and enjoy a cup of tea with bread, fruits, nuts, and sweets, including *boursaki*. During *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival—Kazakh Muslims visit one another and share the sometimes leavened, sometimes not, deep-fried dough twists as a form of celebration. *Boursaki*, by Western standards, are not especially sweet, with no more than two tablespoons of sugar in a recipe, but to the Kazaks, they are, indeed a treat. And, of course, there are regional variations. In Turkmenistan, *bogursak* are deep-fried pieces of dough, sometimes sprinkled with sugar. In Kyrgyzstan, they are called *boorsok*, and the more *boorsok* on the table, the greater the feelings of hospitality. Usually, no matter the country, they are served with a meaty broth soup. The same is true in Tajikistan, where Tajiks do not recognize “dessert” as the end of the meal, but rather, they serve sweets, usually fruits, before, during, or as the last part of meal.

Although the conditions for honey production are varied, there are beautiful areas with abundant fruit and flowering plants that promote good beekeeping, especially in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and southern Kazakhstan, and the apiarists continue the tradition of sophisticated beekeeping previously supported by Soviet state rule. Some beekeepers, besides breeding queens, maintain over 4,000 hives. There are also individuals who keep a hive for their personal sweet needs, and, of course, others, who maintain a few hundred hives. Clearly, in Central Asia, honey is the sweetener of choice.

Central Asians adapt their eating patterns to accommodate their changing lifestyles. Restaurant fare, access to a greater variety of ingredients, more exposure to European sweets and packaged sweets and treats, Iranian and Turkish food, and inexpensive cookware from China, all influence Central Asian food choices and culinary tastes today. More contemporary tastes for sweet treats are evident in today’s restaurants. In Russian restaurants of the past era, for example, desserts were

available, but they remained more or less an afterthought, because, as food historians suggest, during the years of Soviet influence, desserts were viewed as unnecessary and decadent, coupled with minimal availability of sugar. Only time will tell if “sweet treats” and “desserts” will go beyond fruits; nuts; and ever-so-slightly sweetened *boursaki*, *bogursak*, or *boorsok*.

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Chile

The earliest inhabitants of Chile arrived almost 15,000 years ago, most likely traveling along the coast and eating seaweed—a key ingredient in today’s sweet treats. Archaeologists point to the remains of a number of seaweed varieties in the ancients’ broad spectrum diet. They have identified some 42 edible species of plants at Monte Verde, about 800 miles south of the present-day capital of Santiago, including berries from various plants, and fruits, creating a picture of maritime-adapted hunter-gatherer-fishermen radically different from the time-honored prehistoric Clovis migratory *macho* big-game hunters who arrived more than a 1,000 years later. Fruits and berries of the ancients’ sweet treats found at the Monte Verde site came from plants that ripened year-round, which, along with a number of grinding stones, suggest a more permanent year-round settlement pattern than was formerly thought. *Dulce*—“sweet”—is what Chile’s neighbors call a common beverage they make today with edible seaweeds mixed with milk, nutmeg, cinnamon, and vanilla. Today, seaweed is widely harvested for key gelatinous ingredients in modern sweet treats. Agar (also known as “agar-agar”), a “vegetarian gelatin,” is an important ingredient now used worldwide in confections and desserts—jellies, jelly bars, puddings, custards, soufflés, and ice creams—baked goods—such as the jelly layer in a cake, cake filling, and chocolate glazing—beverages, and fruit preservatives.

The Chilean sweet treats reflect their prehistoric and historic past, their exceptionally varied ecological setting (usually featuring the central area), and the demographic composition of the population. Today one can see and taste the culinary history of Chile at the famed La Vega Central de Santiago, a gigantic, colorful, bustling traditional food centerpiece of the historic city. There, in the market, one can enjoy a *mote con huesillo*, a traditional summertime drink made of husked wheat, stewed dried peaches with a lot of sugar and/or honey, and a little cinnamon, or one can warm up in the winter with a mulled Chilean red wine-based drink called *navegado* (“navigated” from the boat-like oranges floating in the mixture), a sweet mixture of red wine, orange juice and orange slices, lemon, sugar, and cinnamon. In the fruits section of La Vega Central, one can find *jugos naturales*, liquefied delights of whatever fruits are in season, including *cherimoyas* (custard apples), bananas, raspberries, and the historic grand Chilean strawberries.

Large “beach strawberries” scientifically named after Chile, *Fragaria chiloensis*, are indigenous to Chile and are ancestral to today’s modern strawberries. The famed explorer Francisco Pizarro González “counted the strawberry among the spoils of conquest” and, in 1709, Father Louis Éconches Feuillée, a French natural historian and botanist visiting Chile, enjoyed “strawberries of a marvellous taste, whose size equalled that of our largest nuts. Their color is a pale white. They are prepared in the



A woman selling cakes at a market stand, Puerto Montt, Los Lagos, Patagonia, Chile. (Holger Leue/Getty Images)

same manner as we fix them in Europe” (Darrow 1966). Amédée-François Frézier, a French spy on assignment in Chile, who ironically came from an ancient French family named after the strawberry, brought the new, large strawberry to France in 1714. Frézier’s bringing the Chilean strawberry back to France is said to have been “the most important event in the history of the modern strawberry” (Darrow 1966), and hence one of the most important historical events of today’s strawberry sweet treats. Crossed with the North American *Fragaria virginiana*, the grand Chilean strawberry has become the ancestor of today’s popular fruit.

At the La Vega Central market, one can also taste history in a *lúcima* ice cream, one of the most popular flavors in Chile. *Lúcima*, a small elongated bright yellow ovoid subtropical fruit of Andean origin, was so important to the ancient Moche Amerindians that they sculpted it into ceramic vessels and included them as burial offerings. *Lúcima*’s maply sweet potato flavor makes it a favorite today at the market and throughout Chile, and increasingly throughout the world, where it is sometimes better known as “eggfruit.” *Lúcima* was first mentioned by the conquistadors in 1531 and has been known as a popular sweet treat ever since.

One can taste history also in the market’s *ugni molinae* jam and marmalade. A native of Chile known also as “Chilean guava,” Mapuche Amerindians used the small berries before the arrival of the Spaniards who came to know the fruit as *murta*. Introduced in England in 1844, *murta* became a favorite fruit of Queen Victoria. Today, it is used in southern Chile to make *murta con membrillo*, a dessert made by boiling quince and Chilean guava with sugar. Others prefer their *murta* in the classic Chilean liquor *murtado*, a drink made with Chilean guava soaked in highly alcoholic *aguardiente* and mixed with sweet syrup.

Even if it is winter at La Vega Central market one can still buy *pepinos dulces*—“sweet cucumbers” to the conquistadors—a sweet juicy honeydew-like fruit domesticated in the Andes. Mochica and Quechua ceramic *pepino* fruits appear in the archeological record by 500 BC. Francisco Pizarro described them as, “ripe fruit so soft and sweet that one could not speak more highly of anything” (Stuart, *Pepinos Dulces* 2009).

At the La Vega Central market one can, of course, feast on South American classic festival food with a Chilean twist, such as *chilenitos*—“the Chilean *alfajores*,” a smaller version of the *manjar* (*dulce de leche*)-filled flour honey almonds cinnamon cookies sandwiched as a sweet. Inspired by the Arabs in southern Spain, *alfajores* in their original form have been enjoyed in Chile since the days of the conquistadors. According to local custom, if it is raining at La Vega Central, one can have the classic *sopaipillas*, deep-fried pastry with the central Chilean version using pumpkin dough, with *manjar*, or alternately with *chancaca*, a sweet sauce made of raw unrefined sugar crystallized with honey.

After a tour of just the sweet spots of a Chilean market nothing goes better than a siesta, although that is getting increasingly difficult to do as in large cities like Santiago

the siesta tradition is fading away. Not likely to fade away, however, is the Chileans' perpetual love for ripe fruits and timeless enjoyment of their wondrous sweet treats.

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China

Chinese cuisine, one of the truly great cuisines of the world, is regionally divided into four areas, according to an ancient tradition based on the belief that each region is represented by its foods and other natural products. It was perhaps the world's original *terroir* locavorism. The divisions correspond to the four cardinal coordinates: the northern Mandarin style (identified with Beijing), the southern style (identified with Canton), the eastern coastal style (identified with Shanghai), and the western interior style (identified with Sichuan). Some moderns would rather divide culinary traditions according to eight predominating flavors. Food writers, in general, divide China along the Yangtze River into the wheat-eating north and the rice-eating south, but, as the Scottish food historian Alan Davidson points out, this two-dimensional partition fails to account for important starches other than wheat and rice, such as maize and millet in the poor rural areas in the north and center. Davidson also notes that regional references are nowadays blurred in certain areas by the rising Chinese standard of living. And Taoism and Buddhism play important roles in modern-day China. One might add that sweet treats consumption varies widely between rural and urban locations, as in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, geographical food regions and divisions in China reflect an important history of migrations, ethnic backgrounds, cultural intermixings, politics, economics,

climate, and availability of local ingredients—and, during certain historical epochs, Imperial Palace fashions.

Other food divisions reflect philosophy, with food playing a vital role in Chinese cultural symbolism—and vice versa. China has a culturally important all-pervasive philosophy of food. Chinese first philosophically divide the food world into two spheres according to their *fan-cai* principle, “eating to live” and “eating for pleasure”—seeing all foods as either what is necessary or what is ancillary. *Fan* foods are of central importance, and *cai* foods, basically things that flavor *fan*, are of secondary importance. *Fan* literally denotes but is not limited to rice. This food philosophy holds true in all Chinese regions and for all social classes, urban and rural, and for all meals. It has been operative over the millennia in good times and bad. It has been important historically, and it remains important today, retaining both a concern for health and good taste. While some sweet-toothed Westerners might argue that sweet treats fall into the “eating to live” category, Chinese beg to differ, seeing sweet treats rather as part of the peripheral pleasure sphere.

Chinese view choosing the right ingredients and combining them properly as the most reliable path to health and longevity. Food preparation has always been of great cultural importance in China, and cooking is a long-time skilled profession passed down from generation to generation since ancient times. All cooking methods were used, although ovens did not exist at the family level. Head chefs to the emperors of China were highly valued members of the Dynastic Imperial courts. By the time of Confucius (551–479 BC), the great philosopher and teacher from northeastern China, gastronomy was already becoming a high art. And for the connoisseurs of their high art, frugality, moderation, and balance were paramount, as they are today.

The Chinese also recognize the *yin* and *yang* of substances—the interdependent and interconnecting dual forces of the natural world. Foods need to balance the dualities of life, the *yin* and the *yang*, and it is one’s moral duty to achieve a balance in what they eat. Confucius said that for a meal experience to have the correct balance of *yin* and *yang*, it must also exhibit a balance of fragrance, color, taste, and texture, and these essences must be combined to make a harmonious whole. Indeed, Chinese still believe that the art of cooking lies in the ability to create this harmony, and that cooking defines humanness itself. Raw foods other than fruits are thought to be incomplete.

Five primary texture qualities define Chinese cuisine: tenderness, crunchiness, crispiness, smoothness, and softness—all characteristics of sweet treats. The Five Elements are important beliefs relating to many aspects of food and healing, all interacting and affecting each other. There are many Fives: five colors, five aromas, five fruits, five tastes, five textures, and others. The selection of contrasting but balancing complementary textures is as important as the selection of different flavors, fragrances, colors, and tastes. Nurturing one’s body by bringing about and

preserving the harmony of body and mind is just as important as intellectual and spiritual development itself. Paradoxically, deriving pleasure from eating is required as part of a total appreciation of foods' qualities. Sweet treats thus become fundamental in balancing the *fan* and *cai* of eating, and the *yin* and *yang* of what is eaten.

A website featuring the top seven popular treats in Confucius's home province of Shandong in eastern China, an outreach project of a non-profit cooperative cultural organization promoting cultural exchanges between China and other countries, features four cakes—clear oil coiled flour threads cake, sweet and crunchy fried cake, Yishui Feng cake, and the six-sister thin pancake—plus *guotie* (a lightly fried potsticker-type dumpling), eight-treasure fermented soy beans, and a Cooked Pear. In describing the seven selected treats, the authors emphasize the balance of color, texture, fragrance, taste, and flavor essence (“flavoring essence, such as peanuts, chestnuts, pineapple, bananas, roses and mint”), as well as inside and outside characteristics, historical importance, care in preparation, health benefits, and quality and source location characteristics of both recipes and ingredients. The simple *cooked* pears, for example, “prepared with a secret prescription handed down in the family from generation to generation . . . have a unique taste [and are] soft, mellow, sweet and richly fragrant . . . [which] can help get rid of heat, moisten the lung, stop coughing, and nourish the liver and heart” (Cultural China 2013). The pears, one should note, are prepared according to a secret *prescription*. Food is considered medicine for the body. The eight-treasure fermented soy beans, it is pointed out, first appeared in the Daoguang period of the Qing dynasty, and it is noted that the six-sister thin pancakes “from the Yimeng Mountain areas” have a time-honored history. Five of the seven treat descriptions include color, the sixth is “beautifully shaped” and, one must presume, the seventh, the pear, is both pear-colored and pear-shaped. Two of the seven treats are identified with a particular family. And, almost as an afterthought, two are said to be tasty.

The noted food historian Tim Richardson points out that while sugarcane was introduced to China early in the first millennium BC, China did not develop a sugar-based sweets culture, unlike, for example, neighboring countries such as India. “In fact,” he points out, “it developed hardly any sweets culture at all” (Richardson 2002). Maltose—a malt sugar extracted from sorghum grass or sprouted barley seeds—remained the sweetener of choice in ancient China. The sweet-tasting maltose, a compound that does not exist freely in nature, is mentioned in Chinese literature as early as 1100 BC. But by the seventh century AD sugar was being shipped from southern China, where it was grown, to elites in the north. During the eighth century, suggests Joanne Chen, sweet-eating habits were just beginning to develop in urban parts of China, their sweet treats inspired by those of visiting Persian and Arab foreign merchants. By the 13th century, urban night markets offered an array

of cakes, confections, and candied fruits. Preservation of exotic fruits may, in fact, have stimulated the original use of sugar in China.

And neither did the Chinese develop a honey-based sweets tradition early on. This is unusual in the sweet treats world. “There seems to be little to note about bees and honey in [ancient] China and Japan,” concludes Hilda M. Ransome in her well-known treatise on *The Sacred Bee in Ancient Times and Folklore* (Ransome 2004). In China, the honeybee is first mentioned in the 12th century BC. The first record of honey comes from a third or fourth century BC. poem known as “The Summoning of the Soul,” in which the soul of a person seeming to have died is lured back with both threats and the promise of fried honey-cakes made of rice flour, malt-sugar sweetmeats, and honey-flavored wine, and with “dishes of all flavors”—bitter, salty, acidic or sour, pungent, and sweet, the five primary flavors in China. By the mid-17th century, Chinese had plenty of bees and honey. And by then the Chinese liked both the honeybees and their honey. They consider swarming honeybees—which are thought to only understand the Chinese language—a good-luck omen. However, those who have heard about the mythological giant bees that reportedly live in the Kunlun Mountains on the Tibetan Plateau—with stings powerful enough to kill an elephant—fervently avoid them and their homeland.

When Chinese began to use sugar, they relied on Japanese imports of sugarcane juice and, later, sugar from India and Indochina. By the third century AD, Chinese were using solid “stone honey,” hard sugar cakes imported from Indochina. Eventually, by the mid-seventh century, Chinese, with the help of the Indians, were producing “sugar frost” refined sugar. But sugar, concludes Richardson, never entirely supplanted maltose and the other sweet alternatives in China, as it did with honey in the Western world. To this day, “all the tea in China” is generally drunk without sugar, in cups without handles. Adding sugar to high-quality Chinese tea offered to you would be offensive, as offensive, some point out, as would be adding sugar cubes to a glass of vintage estate-bottled French wine offered in Bordeaux.

Chinese philosophic preferences tend to be non-religious and family-oriented. About one-third of the population of over 1.3 billion people follows folk religions and Taoism (a philosophical-spiritual tradition emphasizing living in harmony with the underlying existence of nature). Although China is officially atheist, about one-fifth of the Chinese people practice Buddhism, introduced to China in the first century. For Buddhists, quite unlike most major religions—like Islam, Judaism, and Catholicism—food choices, in general, and sweet treat choices, in particular, are mostly affected by cultural and personal food preferences, and regional traditions and availability of ingredients, rather than by religious beliefs. Buddhist cuisine is basically an East Asian plant-based cuisine originally influenced to a large extent by India, where Buddhism began in the sixth century BC. Unlike most major religions, Buddhists do not have specific food prohibitions. Buddhist cuisine does,

however, emphasize its general nonviolence principle of *ahimsa*, doing no harm, in this case to animal life. Very strict Buddhists thus sometimes eschew not only meat but also dairy products. Animal ethics and widespread adult lactose intolerance diminished the popularity of milk, in general, although many Chinese enjoy yoghurt- and other milk-based desserts and sweet treats.

On feast days the classic Chinese food rules change. Chinese food-fare philosophies are provisionally suspended for celebrations—as they are for festivals in most places of the world—and the Chinese “eating for pleasure” principle temporarily trumps “eating to live.” Also, foods categorized as “small foods,” *xiaochi*—between-meal snacks and street foods—can be eaten anytime, day or night. And as “small foods,” sweet dishes—custards and puddings, jellies, donuts, cakes, candied fruits, candies, and the like—are eaten without ceremony, for the sweet pleasure of it.

Ceremonial foods appear on the holidays, the most important of which is the Chinese New Year, celebrated in accordance with the Chinese lunar calendar since the days of the Shang dynasty almost 4,000 years ago. The gala Chinese New Year’s *Nian* Festival (*Nian* being a mythical beast), now known as The Spring Festival, takes place over two weeks, beginning on the first day of the first month of a new lunar calendar. The Lantern Festival brings an end to the New Year season on the 15th day of the new lunar month. Spring Festival celebrations begin with a traditional large sumptuous family reunion dinner on the last day of the last month of the previous year. The family reunion dessert is traditionally always *Nian gao*, New Year cake—a usually steamed round sticky-and-chewy sugar cake made with pounded sticky rice flour, wheat starch, salt, and water or coconut milk. *Nian gao* is thought to bring good luck to all who eat it during the festival. Said to be one of the oldest food recipes in China, *Nian gao* brings good luck, as its Chinese name which literally means “New Year cake” sounds much like “higher year”—meaning a more prosperous year. *Nian gao* carries with it the sound-alike meaning of “higher year,” wishing one an increasingly prosperous life in the new year. It is a case of what Sir James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough* long ago (1889) called sympathetic or imitative magic—a belief based on the idea that like affects like. So if one eats something whose name *sounds like* “a prosperous year”—or so it is quasi-magically thought—then they are likely *to have* a more prosperous year. Homophones like this are common with Chinese sweet treats and Chinese foods in general. They play an important part in symbol- and omen-conscious China. Chinese often present each other with Mandarin oranges during the New Year’s festival, for example, for wishes of a sweet life, which is what the Chinese word for orange sounds like. The Chinese word for tangerine sounds like “gold,” and hence represents a wish for prosperity. With the *Nian gao*, to make extra sure that a prosperous New Year ensues for the eater, a Chinese character or auspicious

symbol depicting prosperity is placed on the caketop as decoration. For the rest of the year, *Nian gao* is known simply as rice cake, a version not thought to purvey any special good fortune.

In the south, Cantonese dip each slice of the *Nian gao* New Year's cake in egg, and pan fry it to produce a slightly crispy outside with a pasty inside—an excellent balance of *yin* and *yang*. In the Canton Spring Festival, *Nian gao* is served alongside the well-known soft-textured subtly sweet translucent pan-fried water chestnut cake, a treat generally served for the New Year. During the Spring Festival, people in the South send pieces of *Nian gao* New Year's cake to relatives and friends, as wishes for prosperity and good fortune in the New Year.

Buddhists offer *Nian gao* and other sweets, such as the maltose-based *zaotang* candy, to their kitchen god (also known as the stove god) who protects the home and watches over the family and its household affairs. Each year, just before the New Year begins, on the 23rd day of 12th lunar month, the kitchen god returns to heaven to report on the family to the Jade Emperor, the ruler of heaven and other realms. Sweet treat offerings, it is thought, sweeten the kitchen god's annual report. Just to make sure, perhaps fearing a bad report, some smear the lips of the kitchen god's paper effigies with honey, sticking them together to prevent a bad report or, at very least, to help sweeten his words.

The Spring Festival comes to an end with the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the new lunar month (not to be confused with the fall harvest Lantern Festival in Chinese Malaysia and other Asian countries). Families in every household eat *yuan xiao* (sweet dumplings) on that day—round white sticky rice balls in a sweet soup. Elsewhere in Asia the celebration is also known as the Moon Festival, as one of the main festival activities is appreciating the full moon while enjoying eating rice balls. *Yuan xiao* customs and recipes vary by region, but generally the rice balls contain sticky rice flour, sugar, sweetened bean paste or some other sweet filling, rose petals, sesame, and jujube paste. Their round shape represents—and causes one to reflect on—harmony, happiness, and family reunion, while at the same time enjoying the globular full moon. *Yuan xiao* can be stuffed or plain and boiled, fried, or steamed, but they are an essential part of the festival. The Lantern Festival ends the Chinese New Year celebrations.

But that is not the end of sweet rice balls. Eating *tangyuan* chewy sticky rice balls served in a usually fragrant sweet clear broth is also a principal part of the important winter solstice celebration, the *Dōng Zhì* Festival, a holiday reflecting the *yin* and *yang* philosophy where the wintery-est short days begin to lengthen and balance out, with increasing positive energy coming with the lengthening days. Once again the rice balls signify family reunion and togetherness, and at family festivals of various kinds, all members receive large and small brightly colored plain or stuffed sticky rice balls—of an odd number of colors: the favorites are red, white, green, and yellow, but some add blue, pink, purple, brown, and/or orange as well.

The well-loved *tangyuan* come in different sizes, to denote various family members, and everyone receives both large and small rice balls—a “family” of them. *Tangyuan* are often made with the help of children, as a family project to encourage family bonding. One may add sweet fillings, or other fillings of choice, or eat them plain. According to most traditions, after you welcome in the winter and eat the *tangyuan* rice balls, you are one year older, and eating them is a wish or prayer for a long, healthy, and prosperous life. Others age a year at the New Year Lantern Festival. *Tangyuan* can be eaten year-round, without gaining a year in age each time.

Eating leaf-wrapped sticky rice dumplings (*zongzi*) is one of the major activities during the famed *Duanwu* Dragon Boat Festival, the third largest festival of the Chinese year, traditionally held on the spiritually ominous fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, when the forces of *yin* and *yang* are out of balance. The steamed or boiled *zongzi* rice treats vary regionally and come in many shapes. Northern style *zongzi* tend to be sweet and dessert-like, often filled with a sweet mixture such as sweet bean paste, whereas the southern style tends to be more savory. Plain *zongzi* are meant to be eaten with honey or sugar. Legends about *zongzi* are, like the racers and dragon boats themselves, colorful and varied.

Many legends also surround the mid-autumn harvest moon celebration, the *Zhōngqiū Jié* Festival, another of the top three Chinese annual holidays, held on the 15th day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. Celebrated everywhere in the Chinese world with “mooncakes,” in honor of the brightest full moon of the year, the Mid-Autumn Festival is also popularly known as “The Mooncake Festival.” It has been a major Chinese festival for almost 700 years. The most common mooncakes are three or four inches round and an inch-and-a-half to two inches thick, although they can be of any size, and they are embossed or otherwise decorated with Chinese symbols—often representing the god of prosperity or happiness or longevity. The small round heavy mooncakes represent not only the shape of the moon but also the unity, harmony, and completeness of the Chinese family. Mooncakes traditionally had a dense filling made from lotus seed paste, and later red bean paste, with a creamy bright-orange salted duck’s egg yolk baked in the center to symbolize the full moon. Some sweet versions of the crunchy pastry now contain chocolate and cinnamon filling and dates, nuts, fruits, or mixed fillings, with or without the duck’s egg yolk. The salty center yolk is said to be an acquired taste. Mooncakes are meant to be cut and shared, as they are quite filling. Nowadays people often prefer to purchase their mooncakes rather than make their own time-consuming creations. As with the Spring Lantern Festival, family and friends gather to enjoy and appreciate the moonlight, and to enjoy their mooncakes, sweet rice balls, and each others’ company.

According to Mooncake Festival legend, happiness follows individuals married on the 15th day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, the day of the festival. So many mooncakes could also be seen as wedding cakes. But wedding cakes



Chinese mid-autumn harvest moon celebrations feature traditional mooncakes. The small, round, heavy mooncakes represent not only the shape of the moon but also the unity, harmony, and completeness of the Chinese family. (Szepei/Dreamstime.com)

in China are different. Traditionally they serve more like a wedding announcement, filled with allegory and symbolism. Prior to a wedding the groom's family presents a "double happiness" wedding cake to the bride's family as a proposal gift, a cake named for the auspicious "double happiness" universal decorative wedding symbol used at nuptials—a legacy of the days when most marriages were arranged by the families. Traditionally, the bride's family offers some of the cake to their ancestors and then sends pieces out to friends and relatives as part of a happy announcement of the wedding. They also send candies, sweetened fruits, nuts, and seeds. Today, modern couples serve the "double happiness" cake at their reception. A special traditional "dragon and phoenix cake" incorporates images of a dragon, symbolizing the groom, and a phoenix, symbolizing the bride—images associated with goodness and prosperity which also symbolize *yin* (feminine energy) and *yang* (masculine energy), here also representing harmony and a balanced relationship between male and female. Dragon and phoenix cakes are sometimes filled with sweet lotus seed paste or sweet red or green bean paste. The wedding banquet is the most important part of a Chinese nuptial, and sweets are a most important part of the connubial feast as they symbolically send the bride and groom off with a figurative wish for a sweet life together. Wedding cakes are traditionally red, the favorite wedding color, which is associated with happiness and prosperity, but wedding

cakes can be of many other colors and of many flavors. Other traditional Chinese wedding banquet desserts include a hot sweet red bean soup containing lotus seeds (*lian zi*) and lily bulbs (*bock hup*) to help ensure a long sweet life for the bride and groom. For snacks at weddings one finds the southern Chinese sweetheart cakes (*lou pho piang*), big round flaky pastries made from sticky rice flour, candied wintermelon, almond paste, sesame seeds, five-spice powder, pork lard, and sometimes coconut and vanilla. The “wife cakes,” as they are sometimes called, are glazed with an egg wash, eggs being a symbol of fertility. Steamed peach-shaped peach-colored buns, sweetened with lotus paste, are served as another sign of fertility and long life. Peach blossom petals are also thought by some to be part of love potions, and the wood of the peach tree to ward off evil. Peaches (*táozi*), the fruit of heaven, represent long life and immortality, and along with other fresh fruits often end the wedding banquet—as is generally the case for meals on non-festive occasions. Pomegranates, with their many seeds, symbolize fertility and numerous offspring—important items in traditional Chinese culture.

China is the world’s leading producer of fruits, especially sweet peaches, which are native to China. Ancient writings dating back to the 10th century BC report that peaches were a favorite fruit of emperors. Like most Asians—and Africans and Middle Eastern peoples—after a meal Chinese most commonly prefer seasonal fresh fruits. Food offerings to the gods and ancestors made at family altars are also often fruits, which today include—among many others—peaches, apples, bananas, melons, mangoes, citrus, pears, Chinese pears (apple pears), kumquats, jackfruit, kiwifruit, longans, loquats, and lychees. Lychees—a “gift for a joyful life”—popular in the ancient Imperial Court, are a small showy usually red thin-shelled fruit native to southern China, were cultivated as far back as 2000 BC and featured in Chinese art and literature since AD 1059. Its delicate, translucent, usually whitish, fragrant, sweet-tasting grape-like pulp is generally eaten fresh or included in a variety of desserts, as its flavor is largely lost if preserved, and lychees spoil after three to five days at room temperature. Although the fruit is sometimes known as “lychee nuts,” it is not a nut and its single seed is inedible. Chinese love stuffed lychees, lychee fruit cups, and lychee-flavored ice creams and sherbets, ices, and parfaits. Chinese people occasionally even use the dried lychee flesh in their tea as a sweetener. Today, lychee honeybee honey is also popular in China. Guangdong Province on the South China Sea is known as “the Kingdom of Lychee,” the ancient home of lychee known for its high-quality fruits.

Kumquats, the smallest of the citrus fruits, which look something like an oval-shaped olive-sized orange, are also native to China. The sweet-and-sour juicy fruits are eaten raw and whole, without removing the skin, which is sweeter than the sour inner pulp. Kumquats are used in candies, preserves, marmalades, and jellies and preserved in salt. Kumquats are a luck symbol in China, appearing in Chinese literature as early as the 12th century.

Kiwifruits are known by more than a half-dozen other and different regional names in China, having been rebranded “kiwi” by pavlova-loving New Zealanders because of its general appearance to their famed national flightless bird. Pavlova, a meringue confection featuring the renamed *Chinese gooseberry*, is listed on a popular website as one of the 40 foods the natives of Shanghai cannot live without. Shanghainese are not the least concerned with the question of whether pavlova was invented by the New Zealanders or the Australians. Kiwifruit by whatever name is the national fruit of China. In Chinese English, it is known as the Chinese gooseberry. The large oval often-fuzzy brownish berry with bright-green soft sweet pulp featuring dozens of small black edible seeds is eaten fresh and used as flavoring in desserts. Kiwis are not generally used in milk-based or gelatin-based desserts because their peculiar chemical makeup triggers undesirable chemical reactions after a few hours—but this is not a major inconvenience for the many who are lactose-intolerant in China.

Apple pears, another native Chinese fruit, are popular as fresh fruits. Contrary to popular belief, the large fragrant fruit is not a hybrid of its two namesakes; it is from a pear tree species. Apple pear tree flowers are a popular Chinese symbol of early spring. Commonly served fresh, peeled, the crisp grainy apple pears are not generally baked in pies or pastries, or made into jams, because of their high water content.

For a real treat Chinese assemble fruits in a dessert called something like a Chinese chilled melon bowl. More often than not it is a six-, or eight-, or ten-fruit melon bowl, with the title varying with the number of fruits included. Regardless of the number of fruits, the cooks hollow out a large melon, fill it with a variety of colorful fresh fruits lightly coated with sweet lemon-and-ginger-flavored syrup and chill them. The variations are endless.

Over half of the Chinese population is now urban. With urbanization, along with the general rise in income and standards of living in China, commercial and restaurant treats are available to a substantial number of people. China has always been at the forefront of public eating establishments. As early as the 12th century, farmers began producing surplus crops, cash crops that they sold at emerging farmers’ markets along with handcrafted goods—often even using money rather than bartering. Large and small markets and market centers developed, more foods as well as a greater variety of foods became available nationwide, and new wage-earning classes emerged in evolving urban centers. Market stalls selling street foods, tea houses, and large-scale restaurants arrived on the scene to serve a diversifying and increasingly market-based socially stratified society. The large-scale restaurants of the 12th century could serve hundreds of people at a time, with specialized restaurants developing to cater to regional tastes and special groups, like the Muslims, and to serve specialized dishes. The honey fritters from Zhou-Number Five in front of the Five-span Pavilion in Kaifeng, in west-central China, were extolled in prose by a reminiscing writer in AD 1275 and are still honored over 700 years later.

Chinese candied and caramel fruits today are another long popular sweet treat. One finds classic treats like toffee apples and toffee bananas. Chinese toffee apples are quite different from the caramel-coated toffee apples on a stick familiar to Americans and Europeans. Chinese toffee apples are basically apple fritters, with apple chunks deep-fried in batter, then soaked in honey syrup and topped with sesame seeds. The apples are soft and tender inside, with a hard caramelized sugar and honey coating, making for a classically balanced sweet treat. Crunchy toffee bananas with a soft inside are prepared in the same manner. Some restaurants serve a combination of apples and bananas. Confucius, it is said, was partial to toffee dates.

Children today are partial to *tanghulu*, a traditional Chinese snack of colorful candied fruits sold in urban areas on bamboo skewers, made by coating small fruits (traditionally the Chinese hawthorn fruit) with hard sugar syrup. Gbtimes, an international media company specializing in fostering communication and understanding between China and the rest of the world, selected *tanghulu* as one of 100 Chinese words “that represent the essence of traditional Chinese culture” (Gbtimes 2013).

And when they can find it, children love dragon’s beard candy. A Chinese invention said to go back to the Han dynasty in China (206 BC–AD 220), American and European children would recognize dragon’s beard candy as “candyfloss” or “cotton candy.” But it has only about one-fifth the sugar, and a little saturated fat, compared with American and European spun cotton candy versions which are fat-free but almost pure sugar and air. Australians would enjoy the dragon’s beard as “fairy floss.” To the Irish, English, and South Africans, it would be “candyfloss.” Persian (Iranian) children would see it as their wool-like *pashmark* candy, made for them with sesame. Children in Turkey would likely think it is their *pişmaniye* “wool-like” candy, with a Persian-derived name dating from at least the early 15th century in Turkey, although their sweet treat also contains oil and flour roasted in butter and is sometimes garnished with ground pistachios. The rich Italian children also had a spun sugar in the 15th century; sugar was too expensive in those days for the poor. In Bhutan in South Asia near the Himalayas, the children love their butter tea and chili pepper-flavored slightly salty *ngathrek golop lhakpa*, a treat enjoyed in that part of the world since at least the early 18th century, and one most likely a descendent of the dragon’s beard candy. In France, the dragon’s beard is “dad’s beard,” *barbe à papa*.

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Colombia

Colombians prefer fruits as their sweet treat of choice. Colombia and its environs are well known as home to a number of tropical sweet fruits and fruits used in sweet treats, including *chontaduro*, *borojoa patinoi*, *lulo* (*naranjilla*), *guanábana* (sour-sop) *mamoncillo*, *uchuva*, *curuba* (banana passion fruit), *feijoa* (pineapple guava), and *guayaba*. *Chontaduro*, a small heart-shaped palm fruit generally eaten with sweet flavorings, is native to the tropical areas of Colombia and its neighboring countries. Santiago de Cali in southwestern Colombia is “the *chontaduro* capital of the world.” Cali is also known as a place where “sugar runs through the veins of the people” and “the bodies of women dancing salsa look very much like sugarcane swaying in the wind,” where since the 18th century their Godchildren’s Days, the first days of May, have been celebrated with homemade sugar-candy trees (Proexport Colombia 2012). It is estimated that more than 2,000 women street vendors of Cali, a city of 2.5 million, earn their livelihoods by selling *chontaduro*.

Chontaduro, “peach palms,” grow in clusters on a species of palm tree native to Colombia and parts of Central America. They have other names, often given by local Amerindians in other areas. *Chontaduro* can be golden, orange, or red when ripe, depending on the variety. The oldest *chontaduro* seeds recovered archaeologically date between 2300 and 1700 BC, from neighboring Costa Rica, and archaeologists assume that by then the local Indian peoples were already cultivating it. Early accounts of European contact indicated that *chontaduro* was then the main crop and sustenance of the indigenous population of the regional humid tropics. Although they did not know it then, the *chontaduro* is one of the most nutritious of all tropical fruits.

Chontaduro are eaten raw—and are especially good with honey—or cooked in salted water, or made into jams, marmalades, and preserves, or used for its juices.

Chontaduro pits are cracked open and eaten. They are also processed into flour, and the pulp is used for cooking. *Chontaduro* are an all-round great fruit, albeit that North Americans may need to get used to its strange texture.

Named “head-shaped fruit” by the Chocó (Emberá) natives of the northwest, another Colombian fruit, *borojó*, is a large (“about the size of a grapefruit”) “head-shaped” fruit from a small evergreen tree, with a golden-brown, sometimes creamy-colored, inside. Colombians use it in juices, jams, preserves, marmalades, sauces, sweets, wine, ice creams, and in medicine, when golden-brownish and ripe. One can, of course, eat the pulp just as it is, or one can use it as a poultice medication. As Colombians and others prize *borojó* for its supposed aphrodisiac qualities, and use it often as a juice drink—its most *common* traditionally used form—it is sometimes known as *jugo de amor* (“love juice”). Aphrodisiac or not, Colombians love *borojó*, and its acidic sweet-sour, sweet-tart energizing exotic flavor—“imagine a plum with hints of vanilla,” suggests one source.

Quechua natives and most others call an attractive little red tangerine-tomato-like plant *lulo*; some in Colombia call it *naranjilla* or “little orange”; scientists call it *Solanum quitoense*; and still others have called it “the Golden Fruit of the Andes” producing the “nectar of the gods.” Moderns favor and often make the still-popular “nectar of the gods,” with or without sugar. Others eat the “little oranges” fresh or dried, although they report that they are a bit tart, with a bit of a citrus flavor, like rhubarb lime, and recommend a little salt. *Lulo* has been a favorite of the northern Andes for centuries, having been described early on by the Spanish conquerors in Ecuador and Colombia, where it is still the only place it is found today. Botanists describe it as “not a completely domesticated species” while ascertaining that Colombia is its home (Sánchez et al. 2010). Considered by some as “one of the tastiest juices in the world,” *lulo* would likely be better known and more often used outside of Colombia but for the difficulty of growing it commercially.

Guanábana is a Taino Amerindian word describing an odd-looking highly popular prickly green Colombian fruit, used mostly in drinks but which is also delicious in ice creams. *Guanábana*, better known by its less-sweet-sounding name *soursop*, is “a large spiny tropical fruit with tart pulp related to custard apples”—which is a good definition if you know what a “custard apple” is. The *guanábana* comes from a dark-green broadleaf, flowering evergreen tree, now common in many parts of the world, with a variety of names, but originally it was native to northern South America and surrounding regions. Natives of Colombia find its delicately sweet flavor especially refreshing in their classic juice drink of pure *guanábana*, or, alternately, in *guanábana* mixed with sweetened condensed milk to make a *cholado*. Its “slimy white, fibrous, pulpy inside” has been described by visitors to Colombia as “messy to eat.” But Colombians readily put up with the inconvenience for its sweet rewards. Strained, *guanábana* makes great custards, candies, fruit bars, and especially ice creams and frozen desserts. Some suggest its taste is reminiscent of flavors of mango and pineapple.

Mamoncillos suck, literally. They are little fruits that you suck, which come from tall trees. In fact, *mammon* comes from the Spanish *mamar*, “to suck.” Small green fruits, looking a bit like an ovate lime and tasting somewhat like a lychee, *mamoncillos* have a smooth thin leathery but brittle skin that one normally cracks open with their teeth to then suck out the creamy, glistening, translucent, gelatinous, juicy pulp. Once used by the Arawak Amerindians to dye cloth a dark brown, *momoncillos* are now a sweet juicy treat. *Momoncillos* can be used for jam, marmalade, or jelly, but most find that not worth the bother because of the work involved.

Berries, of course, crop up on Colombia’s native fresh fruits sweet treat table, notable among them are *uchuva*. *Uchuvas*, as they are generally known in Colombia, are sometimes also known, appropriately enough for Colombia, as a “golden berry.” They are small golden tomato-like fruits with a mildly tart flavor, resembling a cherry tomato or ground cherry, and hence yet another name for them, “giant ground cherries.” They are “casually eaten” fresh, and their little paper-like tan husks are popular in restaurants as exotic garnish for desserts; and they are used not-so-exotically in *uchuva* desserts made at home. They are also baked in cakes, and used in sauces, preserves, desserts, and salads, like *dulce de uchuvas*.

Guayabas are special sweet treats in Colombia, super sweet treats made from the fruit named in the Arawak language after the tree-bearing the fruit itself. Having been naturalized in tropical and subtropical countries throughout the world, the fruit—and especially its sweet jelly—is now part of dozens of world cuisines, appearing in various sizes, shapes, and colors and generally known to the world as *guava*, or a variant thereof. Colombian *guayaba* sweet treats are special—especially sweet and especially renowned.

A famous sweet specially from the Department (State) of Santander in north-central Colombia near the border of Venezuela is *bocadillo de guayaba* (“guava snack”), a guava-based sweet made by cooking guava pulp with sugarcane juice to form a firm slab of fruit candy, deep red in color. Locals know it as *bocadillo Veleño* after the town Vélez in the Santander Department. *Bocadillo de guayaba* and *bocadillo Veleño* are very much like the Spanish guava-based sweet treats *dulce de membrillo* and the Brazilian *goiabada*. These guava jellies illustrate important aspects of the adaptation process of sweet treats in various cultures as they travel from place to place around the world.

Sugarcane syrup, called *guarapo* in Colombia, is served cold, often with the juice of one or more of its many local fruits added, including more common fruits like lime and lemon. Another popular traditional Colombian sugarcane drink is *aguapanela*, literally meaning “*panela* water.” *Panela* is unrefined whole solid cane sugar obtained by boiling and evaporating *guarapo*. Colombia is the main producer of *panela* in the world, and Colombians consume more *panela* per capita than people of any other country in the world, over 75 pounds. *Panela* contains a number of

vitamins and minerals—making it more comparably nutritious to honey than to refined sugar, which virtually has none—thus making *panela* an excellent choice in the preparation of sweet treats. *Aguapanela* with bread can make a supper in large families with little cash, and *panela* pieces are an inexpensive energy source used widely by Andes bike riders paired with *queso campesino*, many of them working farmers, not just bike-riding sportsmen. People from all walks of life like the sweet taste of *panela* and *aguapanela*. The 100 percent organic commercially produced *panela* from the famous sugar-producing town of Villeta confidently proclaims itself to be *Mi Dulzura*—“My Sweetness.”

Sugarcane sweetness came early to Colombia. By the 1530s, colonists had introduced sugarcane and were following the usual South American pattern of colonial plantations being dependent on African slaves, for the usual reasons. Along with the African slaves, major immigration over the centuries included Basques in the 16th century, and many from North America, France, and the Mideast in the late 19th century, and Asians in the 20th century. Germans and Russians arrived in the early and mid-20th century, settling largely in the famous coffee-growing regions in the northwest. Spanish immigration, involving the largest group of immigrants from Europe, was, of course, early and continuous through the end of the 20th century. Immigration from neighboring Central and South American countries was also early and likewise continuous. Although Colombia is the third-most populated country in Latin America, after Mexico and Brazil, most immigrants settled or remained on the west coast and in the Andes.

The sweet treats of Colombia reflect this historical settlement pattern and ethnic mixture. And there has been a distinct coastal and inland split in Colombian cuisine. With historical exceptions, such as seen above, the Colombian cuisine largely developed from the food traditions of the Spanish colonialists, the African plantation workers, the other European immigrants, the South and Middle American and Caribbean neighboring peoples, and their own Amerindian groups.

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Cyprus

Since the invasion of the Ottoman Turks in 1570, the island of Cyprus has been divided between Greeks and Turks. Greeks claim to have been on Cyprus since antiquity, with “antiquity” starting at about 1100 BC during the Bronze Age. Before the arrival of the Greeks, the third-largest island in the Mediterranean had been inhabited by many others for about 8,000 years. Most recently, in 1974 the Turkish military invaded. Almost the entire world today recognizes the Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus as the legitimate government. Turkey alone recognizes the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,” a breakaway state that includes more than one-third of the area of the island.

Division is a fact of life on the island and a matter of contention in international relations. A recent focus of conflict is *baklava*, the famous rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multilayered honey-drenched paper-thin *phyllo* pastry with chopped nuts, carrying a name borrowed from the Ottoman Turks but thought by many in the world—if not most—to be Greek.

Greeks of the Greek Orthodox Church make up over three-fourths of the close to 1.25 million population of Cyprus, while Muslim Turks represent 18 percent. Both Greek and Turkish are official languages. Sweets on the island thus follow two

separate traditions and liturgical calendars, with the Greeks celebrating especially Easter, Christmas, and saints' days, and the Muslim Turks observing Ramadan, the *Eids*, and other Muslim religious holidays and traditions.

Cyprus has a long tradition of dessert-making that goes back at least to the days when it was one of the region's first major sugar producers. Arabs brought sugarcane, its cultivation, the art of sugar-making, and the taste for sugar to Mediterranean countries starting as early as the 8th century AD. They provided some sugar to North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe for several centuries before the Ottoman Turk's conquest of Cyprus in 1571, a takeover which allowed local autonomy. Cyprus sugar was reaching Winchester, England, by at least the 13th century. Following the Black Plague, which reached Cyprus in 1347, Cyprus, Crete, and Morocco connected slavery and the plantation system to sugar production, a system that lasted for centuries.

In 2006, Cyprus became involved in "The *Baklava War*" with Turkey. The initial salvo of the light-hearted war was a European Union poster showcasing "national desserts" of its member states that featured *baklava* for Cyprus. Cyprus has been a European Union member since 2004; Turkey is (in 2014) a European Union member candidate. Turkish *baklava* makers protested Greek Cypriot claims that the super-sweet dessert is their creation. Turkey's state minister and European Union chief negotiator protested. Public protests were scheduled in Istanbul's historic *Sultanahmet* district. Banners proclaimed, "*Baklava* is Turkish, we will not allow the Greek Cypriots to feed it to the world." A Turkish commercial *baklava* producer vowed, "We will go all the way to Brussels [the de facto capital of the European Union], and we will let the EU ministers taste real *baklava*." The president of the *Baklava* and Dessert Producers Foundation of Turkey announced that "it was time for Turkey to stand up and claim its national treasures." Overnight, the dessert, which had been the sweetest unifying treat among all the countries of the Mediterranean and Middle East, had suddenly become the most divisive.

Today, life goes on in Cyprus after "The *Baklava War*," but the nation is still divided. The European Union backed down, serving traditional *daktyla kyrion* ("ladies' fingers") at the official Cypriot functions of the poster event—a well-known Greek Cypriot deep-fried pastry dough encasing pounded almonds, cinnamon, and sugar, soaked in aromatic syrup, traditionally served during a 10-day pre-Lenten carnival and the Halloween-like *pellomaskes* holiday of the Mad Masks. Meanwhile, the Greeks continue to eat what they consider to be Greek sweet treats while the Turks relish their own, with both steadfastly enjoying their respective versions of the hallowed *baklava*. The noted Scottish food writer Alan Davidson suggests that the Greek Cypriots actually favor *loukoumades*, a round deep-fried donut-hole-like pastry soaked in honey syrup, commonly spiced with cinnamon and occasionally sprinkled with confectioners' sugar. Turks enjoy them as a treat they call *lokma tathisi*—a sugar-sweet *lokma*. Not surprisingly, the treats known to

Honey Will Not Spoil

Liquid honey is believed to be the only natural food that will not spoil, if sealed well and stored in a dry place. The highly concentrated sugars in natural honey do not contain much water (14–18%); they are hygroscopic crystals. Honey is also acidic, with a low pH (generally between 3.26 and 4.48; a neutral pH is 7.0). Few bacteria and microorganisms can live in the low-moisture, acidic environment. Bees deposit nectar into the honeycombs along with an enzyme glucose oxidase from their stomachs, producing gluconic acid and hydrogen peroxide that inhibit the growth of organisms that might spoil the honey. If honey is crystallized, it is not spoiled; you just need to heat it up to restore its normal state. Honey *can* contain spores of *Clostridium botulinum*, which are not harmful to adults and children over one year old as their gastrointestinal tracts are sufficiently developed to deal with the spores. Children under one year, however, are at risk of infant botulism. Thus, honey should not be given to children under one year. The oldest honey residue found comes from 4,700–5,500-year-old earthenware vessels in the Eurasian country of Georgia; it is over 2,000 years older than the honey found in King Tut's tomb.

the world as *lokum* or “Turkish delight”—corn starch and powdered-sugar-dusted gummy jellied sugar confections—are marketed in Greek Cyprus as “Cyprus delight,” and, since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the Greek Cypriots enjoy their “Cyprus delight” with their “Cyprus coffee.”

Close to three-fourths of the island's residents live in urban areas, more than 250,000 of them in the capital of Nicosia; hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, those who can afford it have international and commercial sweets available to them. Greek Cypriots also enjoy “spoon sweets” (*glika tou koutaliou*) sweet stewed fruit or fruit preserves, served with a spoon as a gesture of hospitality. Traditional Turkish Cypriot treats today are by and large treats of the Ottoman Empire, of which Greece was a part from the mid-15th century until 1821. Ottoman treats were themselves influenced by the pastry chefs of Greek-speaking Byzantium. Greek and Turkish sweets in Cyprus thus *appear* similar, are known by similar names, and may have common ancestry, and both Greeks and Turks enjoy them—separately, in both war and peace.

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Czech Republic

In January 1993, the country of Czechoslovakia peacefully separated into two countries: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic (Slovakia). The Czech Republic ranked, in 2006, as the third most peaceful country in Europe, the most democratic country in the region, and the healthiest, judged by rates of infant mortality. "Bohemia" defines the largest, westernmost state in the Czech Republic; it is a historic name that frequently refers to the entire landlocked country, made up of Bohemia, Moravia, and Czech Silesia. The Czech Republic sits in central Europe, bordered by Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Poland.

The Czech Republic is rich with culinary legends, partly because of its history and interactions with the surrounding countries and partly because of its agricultural lands. The province of Bohemia claims legendary cooking skills, so much so that in centuries gone by, the residents profess to have sent some of their finest cooks and chefs to Vienna and along with the chefs went some of their finest pastry recipes.

An abundance of coffeehouses gives Prague a reputation as a "café city." Of course, besides the newer Internet cafés, there are historic cafés with the brown, tobacco-stained ceilings that served the likes of Franz Kafka, Antonin Dvořák, Albert Einstein, and Václav Havel, and there are respite cafés for travelers, student "hang-outs," and pure, unadulterated, authentic, minimalist contemporary or elaborate traditional coffeehouses known for thick, strong coffee and wonderful pastries and sweets.

Nearly every coffeehouse has its own version of strudel, most commonly, apple strudel; some historians believe that a "strudel line" divides eastern and western Europe. Believed to have come to central Europe from the Middle East during the Habsburg Empire (1804–1867), an old wives' tale tells us that the best strudel has the unleavened dough stretched thin enough to be able to read a newspaper through it, and stretched, perhaps, to the size of a bed sheet. Apples, very thinly sliced or grated, are mixed with raisins, sugar, nuts, and cinnamon and spread on the dough, which the talented bakers fold countless times until there is nothing left to fold. Baked apple strudel is served with coffee for breakfast, midday snack, or as dessert; the confection is presented warm or cold, plain or dusted with powdered sugar, or garnished with ice cream or whipped cream.

Similar to strudel, many Czech desserts are variations of cream, sugar, flour, and eggs which are embellished with fruit fillings or garnishes in cakes, dumplings, *koláče*, tarts, and fritters. The Czechs make one of their typical national dishes—their sweet, boiled, fruit dumplings—by wrapping locally grown strawberries, apricots, or plums in a yeast dough made with quark, egg, and flour. (Quark is a soft, creamy cheese with a sour cream-like flavor, very commonly used in cooking and baking in the Czech Republic.) The fruit dumplings are then boiled in water, and when they are done, the happy cook serves them sprinkled with butter, sugar, grated mild cheese or poppy seeds. The dough for fruit dumplings is not sweet by itself; the dumplings are sweetened upon serving. Historically (until the second half of the 19th century), the sweetener was not sugar but, rather, dried and powdered pears. The dough for dumplings can be made either with flour or potatoes. Families typically have different traditional combinations of fruits, jams, and cheeses for their dumplings. Besides strudel and dumplings, fruits or fruit sauces or jams also sweeten *palačinka*, the Czech version of French *crêpes*, which are light, delicate, and cook very quickly.

Cream, sugar, and eggs are also the basic ingredients for *bublanina*, a popular, household, Czech sponge cake that varies with the season and available fruits but



Czechs enjoy traditional *koláče* at weddings, births, funerals, and all celebrations in between. The sweet treat of Moravian origins has become symbolic of Czech culture at home and abroad. (Svehlik21/Dreamstime.com)

usually contains whole cherries, sometimes pitted and sometimes not. The fruits are placed in the batter after it is poured into a flat cake pan. *Bublanina* is frequently served at breakfast, as it more closely resembles a coffeecake than a fancy dessert cake, although with additional cream or a dusting of powdered sugar, it is easily transformed into a more elegant dessert.

The Czech Republic is a major supplier of poppy seeds to the world, so it is not surprising that many Czech foods, like other central European foods, are garnished with whole poppy seeds or filled with ground poppy seeds. Czech cuisine uses poppy seeds liberally—in sweet yeast dough *koláče*, and as mentioned earlier, in dumplings, rolled in a sweet strudel, or as a filling or topping for *palačinka*.

Czech weddings are laden with traditions. Women of the bride’s family traditionally make “invitation cookies” two or three weeks before the wedding ceremony. The wedding cookies (which are not cookies as Americans tend to think of them) are small, sweet, bready, filled pastries, most often *koláče*. Historically, the process of making the wedding *koláče*, in which usually all the women from the bride’s family participated except the bride herself, was considered to be an important family occasion. The bridal couple goes to visit friends, family, and others to invite them to the wedding (the average Czech traditional wedding has about 50 guests) by presenting them with an “invitation cookie” rather than sending an American style “save the date” card. The *koláče* customarily contain various fillings, often ground poppy seeds, apricots, or prunes. Tradition says that it is bad luck for the bride to participate in baking the traditional *svatebni koláčky*.

The Czechs are rightly proud of their *koláče*, credited with Moravian origins. They make *koláče* with sweet, yeast dough; *koláče* look rather like a dinner rolls but contain fruit fillings, the most popular being poppy seed, apricot, or prune, as in the wedding “cookies.” The creation of *koláče* is time-consuming, as they are very carefully rolled, folded, and filled. In most families, *koláče* are a traditional food eaten at celebrations, funerals, births, and, of course, weddings. For Czech settlements in the United States, *koláče* are a very important part of Czech culture. The cities of West, Texas, and Montgomery, Minnesota, originally Czech settlements, have built admirable reputations on their delicious *koláče* traditions.

The Czech Republic was a Christian country. But a process of faith loss began in the 19th century because of the national awakening movement (that identified Catholic faith with Habsburg domination) and nowadays, some scholars believe, the number of professed atheists is greater in the Czech Republic than anywhere in Europe. However, even the professed atheists celebrate Christmas and Easter. Both holidays are now “family occasions” more than religious observances, but they remain as times that include traditional foods. *Bábovka* is a yeast cake that is served throughout the year, but always at Easter, when it is baked in a lamb or fish mold. After the dough is rolled out and filled with ground poppy seeds, it is placed in the special Easter mold (or a tube pan for normal use). Nowadays, there

are variations of *bábovka*, including substituting other fillings, sweetened cocoa powder, for example, for the ground poppy seeds, or simply putting raisins in the dough. *Mazanec*, another Easter tradition, is a round loaf of sweet bread with rum-soaked raisins inside, and garnished with almonds on the crusty, golden outside. By using the same basic sweet, yeast, egg dough recipe as *mazanec*, *vánočka* becomes a *brioche*-like braided, sweet bread, traditionally served at Christmas Day breakfast. With careful attention, the bakers (sometimes professional, but most often women in their home kitchens) mix raisins, almonds, and citron into the dough, and, when ready, carefully place three braids of decreasing sizes on top of each other before baking.

The Czechs use what they have—they were locavores long before the word existed. With pastries and breads made from combinations of cream, sugar, eggs, and flour, and garnishes and fillings made with local fruits and seeds, the bakers of Czech sweet treats demonstrate what it means to make delicious treats with creativity, practicality, and practice—for the perfect paper-thin strudel dough, the beautifully folded *koláče*, and the leak-proof dumplings.

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D

Denmark

Denmark: think Hans Christian Andersen and “The Little Mermaid,” “Wonderful, wonderful, Copenhagen, salty old queen of the sea,” Viking history, and Tivoli Gardens. Then, think of salty licorice, Danish pastries, flaky pastry, Danish butter cookies, berries with cream, and Danish apple cakes, and your list of Danish sweet treats has an auspicious beginning.

Denmark’s cuisine bears evidence of the influence of its southern neighbor, Germany, in the preparations of breads, meat, fish, and the accompanying gravies, which add sustenance in long cold winters. The simplicity and purity of the diet also reflects the traditions of nearby the Netherlands; there are few embellishments. In prehistoric times, hunting and fishing provided sustenance to the inhabitants of the area; now strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, black currants, red currants, and over 700 varieties of apples support a diet with a multitude of fruit dishes—main dishes, garnishes, sauces, and, of course, desserts. As time passed, the rolling green hills led to the evolution of dairy farms, which still thrive today. Besides dairy products, Denmark produces sugar beets, wheat, and barley, all used in the production of their sweet treats.

Situated in the far north, between the North and the Baltic seas, Denmark is the smallest of the Scandinavian countries and claims over 400 islands, about 70 of which are populated. The largest island is Zealand; *Sjælland* is the home of Denmark’s largest and most famous city, the capital city of Copenhagen.

Before the Industrial Revolution, in the 1860s, Danes created sweet treats and desserts from pure, locally grown, natural ingredients. A decade or two later, the Danish farmers formed cooperatives, and milk production became more widespread, as did milk products such as cream and ice cream. About the same time, fruit soups and stewed fruits grew in popularity. One of the most traditional desserts that grew out of this period, and one that remains popular today, is *rødgrød med fløde*, berry pudding with cream. Today, the Danes make this wonderfully aromatic berry pudding from puréed, strained berries cooked with water, with cornstarch as a thickening agent. When the pudding has cooled and thickened, it is served with a delicious dollop of light cream, a combination of whipped cream and yoghurt. While it is traditionally made at the end of the summer in Denmark, when raspberries and red currants are plentiful, it is also made with springtime strawberries.

Any history of Danish sweets and desserts must include the story about the Junket brand of dessert mixes. In 1874, shortly after the Industrial Revolution, Christian Hansen, a young chemist, worked to make a commercial rennet extract (the digestive enzyme that curdles milk) for the cheese-making industry. Years later, in 1911, Mr. Hansen began marketing a powder called “Nesnah” (Hansen spelled backward), which was a sweetened, flavored thickener for making custards and drinks, and became the dessert known today as Junket Rennet Custard. (It was in 1915 that the brand name changed from Nesnah to Junket and remains so to this day.) Junket product line extensions grew, and by the end of World War II, there were freezing mixes for ice cream, quick fudge and frosting mixes, and later, the Danish dessert line. The Junket name and products are no longer exclusively Danish but are nonetheless still a tribute to the Danish scientist, Christian Hansen.

One of the best-known commercially produced brands of butter cookies in the world is Royal Dansk, a small, crisp, baked-in-Denmark luxury unleavened sweet cookie made of natural ingredients only. Danish butter cookies are usually round, but they come in a variety of shapes. Royal Dansk is a genuine Danish product, diligently maintaining its traditional pride in the quality of the ingredients and production procedures of the world-famous butter cookies sold in the easily recognizable, beautiful blue tins known affectionately and most simply as “The Blue Tin.” Many butter cookies are still made at home, of course, frequently with the addition of ground filberts. What makes Danish butter cookies so special? Danes claim that it is the butter.

Denmark has a long history of producing excellent dairy products. The Danes maintain high standards of excellence, freshness, and taste in all that they produce, including Danish butter. As far back as 1888, these standards of excellence were embedded in the cuisine when one-brand-for-all Danish butter was created. The brand is “Lurpak,” and if butter is not “Lurpak,” Danes do not consider it Danish butter, and they certainly do consider it inferior. Rigid Lurpak quality controls are still in place today.

The Danes make a delicious, light, flaky dough, originally from Vienna, called *wienerbrød* (“Viennese bread”) in Denmark, and *Danish* in the rest of the world. It is the Dane’s classic, slightly sweet, gently flavored with cardamom, buttery pastry dough that is often shaped to hold a fruit, cream, or nut filling. Traditionally, Danish bakers roll out the yeast dough, spread it with the delicious Danish butter, fold it, roll it out again, and repeat the process several times to produce the many layers of sweet, rich pastry dough.

How did the famous Danish pastry get from Vienna to Denmark? The making of Danish pastry is a baking tradition that dates back more than 160 years. In the mid-19th century, Danish bakers in Copenhagen received bed and board privileges as pay, but they wanted their wages in cash. Recognizing strength in numbers, the

Danish Pastries

Danish pastries were introduced in America around 1915, when Woodrow Wilson invited a Dane named L. C. Klitteng to bake *wienerbrød* for his wedding. *Weinerbrød*, “Viennese bread,” originally came to be made in Denmark by foreign bakers imported from Austria during a bakers’ strike. Legend says that later, Mr. Klitteng convinced a New York restaurateur to sell his “Danish,” and Danish pastries, originally from Austria, became an American sweet treat tradition.

bakers organized a strike and refused to work. To meet the demand for bakery products, Danish entrepreneurs hired foreign bakers, many of them Austrian, who came to Denmark from Vienna, with experience in making buttery, flaky pastry (which explains why Danes refer to Danish pastry as *wienerbrød*). After the strike, the Danes continued to develop the Viennese techniques, and thus Danish pastry was born.

Danishes share common pastry ingredients of flour, yeast, milk, eggs, sugar, and butter. Nevertheless, Danish pastries are available in myriad shapes and sizes, and the Danes can easily tell you the defining characteristics of the different Danishes: *kamme*, for example, are usually almond-flavored and are referred to as bear claws in the United States; a *frosnapper* is a twisted flaky pastry dough, adorned with sesame and poppy seeds; and *tebirkes* are croissant-like pastries with marzipan filling and garnished with poppy seeds. Then, there is *spandauer*, a light delicate pastry with a nest of custard or raspberry jam in the center. A spiral-shaped cinnamon pastry is known as a *snegle*, and a *kringle* is a pretzel-shaped, multilayered buttered pastry dough coffee cake filled with nuts or fruits. The pretzel *kringle* icon is displayed at all Danish bakeries; it is a symbol that dates back to the medieval guilds.

Folklore tells us that the Vikings created the first *æbleskivers* at a time when they were not celebrating victories, but, instead, nursing their wounds and defeated egos around a campfire. A pouting warrior supposedly mixed up a batter and cooked it over the fire in the hollows of heavily dented armor, and thus *æbleskivers* were born.

Æbleskivers are Danish pastries now made by frying pancake-like batter in a special pan called a *monk*, and not in a dented shield. They are usually a breakfast sweet, but Danes also often enjoy them at Christmas dinners. The batter is poured into the circular indentations in the *monk*, and before the *æbleskivers* are skillfully flipped, a filling of apples, applesauce, prunes, or other fruits is placed in the center. Artfully prepared *æbleskivers* are spherical in shape, with a crunchy outside and moist inside and are a signature Danish sweet treat.

Like some other countries, the Danes memorialized historical figures and famous artists who performed in Copenhagen by creating traditional Danish cream cakes in their honor, and many of the cakes are still popular today. *Napoliønshat*, named after Napoleon Bonaparte, is a small cake shaped in the signature triangle of Napoleon's hat; the "hat" contains marzipan and is garnished with dark chocolate. *Othellolakaga*, a layer cake with vanilla cream filling and dark cocoa icing, is named after the 1887 Verdi opera *Othello* that was performed in Copenhagen's Royal Theatre in 1898. The famous actor Sarah Bernhardt visited Denmark four times between 1880 and 1911, and as a result, the Sarah Bernhardt cake was born, a macaroon layered with chocolate cream and covered with dark chocolate. A final example of a memorial cake is *Rubinsteinkage*, named after the famous pianist, Anton Rubenstein. The cake, created in the mid-19th century, is white with dark chocolate accents, a creative metaphor for the black and white piano keys.

Kransekage is the signature cone-shaped cake, also known as marzipan ring cake. Legend dates it back to the Middle Ages, and since that time, it is a celebratory cake at Christmas, weddings, and other special occasions. Traditionally, the rings of this cake are stacked on top of each other, each ring smaller than the preceding ring, and frequently, the rings are placed around a bottle of champagne (which encourages a symbolic celebration when the cake is served). On other occasions, bakers place the rings in the shape of a cornucopia or horn of plenty, the mythological symbol of food and abundance, filled with tiny biscuits, chocolates, and other sweets that "spill out" of the cornucopia. Typically, the rings are laced with white icing, and often the cake is decorated with red-and-white paper Danish flags or other appropriate adornments.

Danish sweets also include rice puddings, combinations of berries or cherries, *pandekager* (a rolled crêpe-like pancake with jam or ice cream in the middle), and fruitcakes. The beauty of the Danish sweet treats and desserts lies in their purity, their lack of adornments, their freshness, their visual beauty, and their wholesomeness—perhaps they are, after all, a metaphor for the Danes themselves.

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E

East Africa

(Burundi, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda)

South of the Horn of Africa lay a number of East African nations, including the five African Great Lakes countries that make up the political and economic organization known as the East African Community: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Mozambique, the southernmost country of continental East Africa known until 1975 as Portuguese East Africa (officially, State of East Africa), faces the island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Other island countries in the Indian Ocean, often considered a part of East Africa, include Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, and the French Overseas territories of Réunion and Mayotte.

People of the many East African cultures and lifestyles, while different, share the commonality that they eat few sweets, and none of them include what Americans might consider “dessert.” In the rural areas, quite often sweets amount to little more than naturally sweet and sweetened drinks and fruits. Fresh fruits, as Marcus Samuelsson (2006), the internationally known chef born in Ethiopia, points out, are the sweet treat “common denominator” in the warmer climates of Africa. Outside of urban areas, few people eat commercial or baked sweet treats. And while desserts are not unknown in Kenya and East Africa, and other parts of Africa in general, they are not part of the local cultures’ culinary customs, apart from the fresh fruits eaten, for what Americans might call dessert, occasionally sprinkled with a little honey or sugar or vanilla.

In Madagascar, the after-dinner fruits are usually flavored with vanilla, their most common use for it. The fruit is not only prepared with vanilla, but more vanilla is also added to it when it is served. Vanilla, a flavoring made from orchids, originally from Mexico, arrived in Madagascar and East Africa with the Portuguese in the late 16th century. Vanilla features so prominently on “The Great Red Island,” the fourth largest island in the world, that some call Madagascar “the Vanilla Island.” Today, it is second only to Indonesia in vanilla production, with much of the crop going to America.

When the Portuguese arrived in Madagascar and other parts of East Africa in 1496, they introduced bananas and pineapples from newly discovered Brazil, and oranges, lemons and limes from China and India. Guava tagged along from the Americas,

with the peanut (known in Africa as the “groundnut”) coming from Paraguay with Vasco da Gamma and the Portuguese. These fruits and treats are now picked locally in the rural areas, and in the urban centers, such as Nairobi, “a dollar can buy a month’s supply of oranges.”

Africa, of course, had dozens of its own native edible fruits, including various local mangoes; apricots; apples; peaches; cherries; berries; figs; plums; palms; persimmons; tamarinds; melons; unique tree fruits such as those of the butterfruit, *imbe*, junglesops, *nééré*, *marula*, star apple, sycamore fig, sweet detar; and the fruits from its famed baobab trees. Various African groups have used these sweet fruits for thousands of years. To many foreigners the baobab tree is synonymous with subtropical and tropical Africa. The baobab, Africa’s most famous tree, and the national tree of Madagascar, is a good example of the key role played by native fruits.

The native iconic almost-mystical baobab tree of legends and stories—the “upside-down tree” or “monkey bread tree” of the hot, dry woodlands, coastal areas, and savannah regions of Africa—is one of the oldest living things on earth. It produces an ovoid velvety yellow-green woody fruit about the size of a coconut, whose soft ivory/peach-colored flesh and dry pulp chunks have a tart flavor described as “somewhere between grapefruit, pear, and vanilla.” The fruit can be eaten fresh or cooked; it can be mixed with milk, water, or one of the many gruel/porridge staples found throughout most of Africa; or it can be made into gruel itself, either alone or with millet. Baobab is a traditional fruit of Africa, one that is rarely found elsewhere other than in Australia, and one now often considered a modern “superfruit” by some international researchers, and even “the *king* of superfruits” by others. In recent times, it has been used commercially as a sweetener in fruit drinks and as a thickener in jams. Baobab is also beginning to appear in smoothies and related treats in the European Union and the United States. In Tanzania, baobab dry pulp is added to aid the fermentation of sugarcane in beer making. In the coastal areas of Kenya and Tanzania, vendors cover dried baobab seeds with a usually red sugary coating and sell them in packages in urban areas as a sweet-and-sour snack candy called *umbuyu*. *Mabuyu*, in Tanzania, refers to the seeds of the calabash gourd, which are prepared in a similar fashion.

Wherever baobab grows, and especially in the lands below the Sahara, African peoples depend on it for food, drink, refreshment, shade, shelter, medicine, clothing, and spiritual help. Natives believe the trees possess divine power and approach them with reverence and devotion. One *Adansonia digitata*, the most widespread baobab species in Africa, can produce 65–1,200 fruits per year, although fruit production varies widely between trees, geographical area, and seasonal fluctuations. Some trees, it is said, “act like males” and produce none. In some areas, baboon predation is said to reduce the mature fruit harvest by 85 percent. Baobab trees commonly host African honeybees, and the honey from some individual trees has been regularly harvested by local people for centuries. Considering that cash derived

from the sale of fruit supports thousands of rural people, and that baobabs have many more uses than fruit and honey production, one can easily understand why the baobab trees, which were formerly protected by taboos, are now also protected by law.

When the Portuguese introduced bananas and pineapples to Kenya in late 1400s, and cashews to Mozambique between the 16th and 17th centuries, some baobab in use by Kenyan and other African peoples of the time—and which are still living today—were said to be over 2,000 years old. The baobab also witnessed the arrival of coconuts and cashews. Although the Portuguese named the coconut “grinning face,” the coconut actually arrived on African soil long before the Portuguese explorers. Two genetically distinct varieties of coconut seemed to have met via ocean dispersal and mated in Madagascar or along the coast of East Africa, spreading from there across much of the tropics with seafarers and ocean currents. Kenya and Mozambique are today major producers of coconut and copra, the dried meat of the coconut. Coconut meat is used in Africa and throughout much of the world in confections and desserts. Coconut water from the inside of young coconuts—not to be confused with the mildly sweet coconut milk or cream made from the grated meat of the coconut—is consumed throughout the tropics.

Cashews, on the other hand, arrived with the Portuguese in East Africa and were likely spread from there along the east coast and to the western part of Africa by elephants, known for their love of cashews. Nigeria is the number-one producer of cashews in the world today, with Tanzania also included among the top 10 producers. Mozambique, where Vasco da Gamma introduced cashews, was once the largest producer of cashews. Today, fresh fruits, such as pineapples, sprinkled with sugar and cashews are a popular treat in Mozambique.

Africa is a huge continent, covering more than 12 million square miles; it is the second largest in the world, after Asia. It is a vast continent of contrasts, with world-famous deserts, rainforests, savannas, plateaus, and mountains. About 15 percent of the world’s population lives in Africa, in more than 55 countries and speaking more than 800 languages. East Africa is a microcosm of the continent. Its beautiful, friendly people, originally foraging hunters and gatherers, became farmers and herders in late prehistoric and historic times, about AD 1000. Early Christians arrived in the middle of the first century, to be augmented by the Portuguese and Spanish versions of Christianity in the 16th century. In the seventh century, Arabs brought Islam to Africa. While most Africans today follow Christianity or Islam, many continue to follow their traditional religion, often animistic.

Historically, the infamous slave trade formed many modern-day African countries, as did, of course, the successive occupations by several early empires, the early trading with regional merchants, the arrival of proselytizing Christians and Muslims, the 19th- and 20th-century European colonial rule of all but two of the countries of Africa, and the late 20th- and early 21st-century struggles for independence.

The slave trade and the resulting displacement of people continue to form a diaspora of African cultures around the world.

All of these forces yielded today's sweet treats. Vasco da Gama landed at Mozambique on his voyage to India and established ports which ensured subsequently enduring Portuguese and Indian influences on the foods of East Africa. Later on, Britain imported thousands of Indians to Africa for labor. And, suggest some sources, Indian traders themselves left the most indelible mark on the cuisine of the region. Throughout East Africa, it has been noted that few things today are more refreshing after a spicy-hot meal than a *kulfi*—an Indian-style frozen dairy dessert—accompanying your fresh fruits or even that rare slice of cake. *Kulfi* is a treat similar to a frozen custard, where the ingredients—sweetened condensed milk, heavy cream, puréed fruit of choice, and spices—are slowly reduced to a heavy cream consistency, brought to a boil and stirred like a custard, and then frozen, rather than churned like regular ice cream, so that *kulfi* does not contain a lot of air. East Africans traditionally flavor the custard with saffron or cardamom, two of the world's most expensive spices, as well as pistachios and rose water. Tanzania is one of the largest producers of cardamom. One favorite *kulfi* is mango-papaya with cardamom and Zanzibar cinnamon.

African food and sweet treats vary from ethnic group to ethnic group, from religion to religion, from region to region, and from rural to urban settings; but important similarities appear. In East Africa—and indeed most of the tropical areas—as Marcus Samuelsson points out, countries share a common denominator: “in all the warm climates, the end of most meals is marked not with cakes or tarts or pies, but with fruit, served as simply as possible” (Samuelsson 2006). In the world of African sweet treats, Samuelsson suggests, only South Africa and Morocco developed strong dessert traditions. Struck by the fact that these very different places had all evolved cuisines without a tradition of baking, he goes on to suggest similarities in the cultures that seem to explain the absence of dessert. First, food is not eaten in courses. Classic “poor man's cooking,” he suggests, is “to fill up your belly so you can get your work done.” A light and refreshing ending to a heavy meal makes sense. “And perhaps just as important, these are tropical climates where the greatest fruit in the world can be found year round, so there's no need to make sweet treats—they literally grow on trees” (Samuelsson 2006).

Or sometimes they grow on flowering plants, like bananas. Bananas are one of the most important fruits in East Africa, as they are in other parts of Africa. In Uganda, for example, bananas are the main food crop and account for over one-fourth of the total cropped area, although only about one-third of its estimated 11 million tons of bananas (about 15 percent of the world's banana production) is marketed, as bananas are primarily subsistence production for domestic consumption. Ugandans reportedly eat about a pound-and-a-half of bananas per day, which is about 3 to 11 bananas, depending on size—the highest consumption rate in the

world and 20 times more than eaten in the United States. It is said that in some remote villages, people eat as much as 970 pounds of bananas—2,000 to 7,000 bananas—per person per year.

Desserts in Africa, when they appear, celebrate events and people—a wedding, a birthday, a funeral, a naming ceremony, a religious ceremony, or a meeting of people—and each region has its own special occasion desserts. On the ordinary day, however, most sweet treats other than fruits are few and modest.

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Ecuador

It is not known exactly how many of Ecuador’s 16,087 plant species are used for sweet treats—but there are many. Straddling the equator from whence the country gets its name, Ecuador abounds in year-round tropical and semitropical sweet fruits. With a humid coast along the Pacific Ocean, a mild central highland region (*La Sierra*), and a sparsely populated tropical Amazon rainforest area in “The East” (*La Amazonía* or *El Oriente*), Ecuador enjoys food year-round from several spiritually revered ecological and climatic zones. Ecuadorians sacredly value Earth, her foods and other products, and her various deities. In its new constitution of 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to provide for a legally enforceable ecosystem, “Rights of Nature,” for *Pachamama*, “Mother World.” Although a relatively small country, its “megadiverse” biodiversity, especially in southern Ecuador, ranks among the highest in the world. Sitting on the Pacific coast between Colombia and Peru, bisected north-south by the Andean mountains, Ecuador is a land of varied climates and landscapes. Ecuador also includes the ecologically diverse Galapagos Islands (Archipiélago de Colón), made famous in the works of Charles Darwin.

Loja Province in the southern Ecuadorian Andes, “the botanical garden of Ecuador,” is the likely ancestral home of “the queen of subtropical fruits”—*cherimoya*. (National Research Council 1989). *Cherimoya* and *maracuya* were most likely sweet fruits eaten by the Inca, the best-known of Ecuador’s pre-Columbian peoples. *Cherimoya*, a deliciously sweet fruit commonly eaten plain, is now more frequently

known outside of South America as the “custard apple.” Mark Twain called the soft, custard-like flesh of the *cherimoya*, “the most delicious fruit known to men. . . . It has a soft pulp, like a pawpaw, and is eaten with a spoon” (1866). To Twain it was “deliciousness itself” (1872). The fruit is full of black seeds that are easily removed while eating and are usually discarded along with the stippled green skin. Some characterize its flavor as a blend of bananas, pineapples, papaya, peaches, and strawberries. Others suggest that it tastes like bubblegum, or simply say it is pear-like. It is commonly eaten plain or used to make ice cream and other sweet treats.

Black seeds and a semitransparent grayish-pulp characterize a small round dark purple or yellowish-orange *maracuya* fruit, also native to the regional Andes, and known to outsiders as “passion fruit” or “sugar fruit.” Ecuadorians most often eat the mild sweet *maracuya* raw, although elsewhere they are popular in fruit drinks. Ecuador is the world’s largest exporter of passion fruit, satisfying growing world demand especially for use as a fruit flavoring in beverages. Passion fruit juice can also be used in making jellies, jams, pie fillings, smoothies, cocktails, sauces, salad dressings, ice creams, and yoghurts.

It is difficult to escape talk of gold in colonial America, and so it is in Ecuador today. The capital of El Oro (“Gold”) Province in Ecuador, Machala, is known as the “Banana Capital of the World”—one of the world capitals anyway. *Oritos* (“little golden ones”) are firm “baby bananas” about three inches long, having a sweeter, more intense flavor than ordinary Cavendish bananas. *Oritos* are a local favorite throughout Ecuador, although they have not been commercially very successful abroad.

Ecuador has long been identified with the banana industry and its cuisine with banana dishes. Since the mid-1980s, Ecuador has been the world’s leading exporter of bananas—exporting almost twice as much as the next highest country, Costa Rica. Other countries, such as India, grow more bananas but export fewer. Experts predict “Panama disease” will wipe out the currently popular Cavendish banana variety within the next 10–30 years, with no obvious replacement having the Cavendish’s highly desirable characteristics in sight.

What do folks in the world’s leading banana exporting country eat for sweet treats?

Not the Cavendish banana, the “commercial banana” most of the world eats. Domestic consumption of the Cavendish in Ecuador is less than 2 percent of their total output. They eat “subsistence bananas,” and lots of them—along with “banana” look-alikes like the plantains, a popular and important slightly starchier “cooking banana” botanically similar to “bananas” but culturally distinct. You might hear up-to-date city folks refer to their subsistence bananas as “artisanal bananas,” of which they too have many.

Ecuador is famed for its banana varieties and banana products. Bananas of the genus *Musa* and plantains, also of the genus *Musa*, are a staple food that one finds

prepared in every manner possible: raw, fried, baked, boiled, mashed, ripe, over-ripe, green, “cut crosswise and lengthwise, fried slowly, brown sugar added and banana pieces browned on both sides, dribbled with brandy or local rum, and dusted with powdered sugar. Bananas puréed mixed with beaten egg, and baked as a soufflé” (Brittin 2011).

In the cities and in the tropics, things vary; there is a distinctive rural–urban difference with many foods and customs. A city version of *jugo de mora* (blackberry juice), for example, sometimes includes yoghurt, resulting in a drink more akin to a smoothie. And folks, especially in the tropical areas, use more and a greater variety of local fruits in their sweet fruit drinks—*naranjilla* (a bittersweet orange-like fruit), *tomate de árbol*, guanábana, *lucuma* (“the gold of the Incas”), *maracuya*, papaya, *babaco* (a cousin of papaya), passion fruit, *mamey sapote*, and the more familiar strawberries, mangoes, pineapples, peaches, oranges, and melons. In the urban areas, one can enjoy a *come y bebe* (“eat and drink”)—an Ecuadorian “drinkable fruit salad” made up of papaya, bananas, pineapple, melon, and orange juice, and/or basically, whatever other fruits you want—with *un poquito vainilla* and a dollop of honey whipped cream added for extra flavor and sweetness.

On November 2, *Día de Difuntos* (“Day of the Dead”), one of the most important holidays in Ecuador, people throughout the country, but especially now in the rural areas, prepare a special drink called *colada morada*, with fruits and black corn flour, to celebrate the day with their deceased ancestors. In central Ecuador, for example, rural villagers drink *colada morada* at the cemetery next to the tombs of deceased relatives as part of a “rite of reunion with ancestors.” Rural families also traditionally have “bread babies” (*guaguas de pan*) as part of their *Día de Difuntos* rituals, decorated sweet rolls shaped like an infant, generally made of wheat, with a drizzling of sugar icing and occasionally also a sweet filling. Households exchange *guaguas de pan* among family and friends and give them to their godchildren as they all visit and bond with living and deceased relatives alike.

Coladas moradas and *guaguas de pan* serve the deceased ancestors and their descendants well on *Día de Difuntos*. At Christmastide, fried *pristiños* with honey join the bread babies: “Often served at the *cafecito* (the coffee hour, around 6:00 PM) or as a dessert, *pristiños* are a popular item during the month of December at roadside restaurants, in households and with street vendors. The hearty fried dough is topped with a rich, sweet, caramel brown sugar syrup to make a satisfying dessert after the Christmas meal, or an early afternoon snack” (Miller 2009). Honey, of course, as with most peoples of the world, has been enjoyed since prehistoric times. *Pristiños* are “bathed in honey”—honey flavored with the hard-caked *pan-ela*, vanilla, cloves, peppercorns, cinnamon, and lemon. Except for the vanilla, which was first cultivated by the Totonac peoples of ancient Mexico, all the honey bath flavorings for the *pristiños* arrived in Ecuador with the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. One could even say *pristiños* are a great metaphor of Ecuador—having a sound prehistoric base, augmented with colonial Spanish



On November 2, *Día de Difuntos* (“The Day of the Dead”), people prepare *colada morada* with fruits and black corn flour to celebrate a “rite of reunion with ancestors.” (Pablo Hidalgo/Dreamstime.com)

and neighboring-native flavorings and superbly fused into a sweet enjoyed and loved by all.

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Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan

For tens of thousands of years, the first settlers along the Nile River in northeast Africa lived by hunting, gathering, and fishing. By default, honey was their main sweet treat, along with dates and other sweet fruits. Hunting and foraging persisted longer in Egypt than elsewhere, but by about 5500 BC people in several areas of Egypt began herding and cultivating wheat and barley as a way to improve on hunting and foraging by diversifying rather than replacing it, in an attempt to stabilize rather than expand food supplies. These settled agricultural peoples were the first in the world known to have raised bees and collected honey, and they did so very soon after they settled in villages. The oldest written reference to the use of honey is thought to be Egyptian, from about 5500 BC. By the time of the Predynastic Period of Ancient Egypt (*ca.* 3500–3100 BC) the north (Lower Egypt), with its extensive Nile-irrigated lands full of flowering plants, had become the main center of beekeeping and was even called “Bee Land,” and the pre-pharaoh rulers of Lower Egypt had begun to call themselves by the formal royal title *bjtj*—“he of the bee.” By the first dynasty of the Early Dynastic Period (*ca.* 3050–2890 BC), the official title of “Sealer of the Honey” appeared, an appellation given to the overseers of the processing of honey who ensured quality control. By the fifth dynasty of the Old Kingdom (*ca.* 2498–2345 BC), beekeeping began to appear in several temple reliefs. The oldest depictions of beekeepers in action (as opposed to honey hunters)—where beekeepers are shown blowing smoke into hives as they remove the honeycombs—also come from the fifth dynasty.

Egyptians associated gods with the bees, and the bees were considered a sign of divine royalty. The early Egyptians called honeybees the “Tears of *Ra*,” tears of their sun god. The Temple of Neith in Sais is known as *Hwt bjt*, “the House of the Bee.” Temples kept bees in order to satisfy the desire of their gods for honey and for the production of medicines, ointments, and beeswax.

Honey was a valuable commodity used widely in trade. Honey was so valuable that royal archers often protected hunters of wild honey. Egyptian influence

spread with trade, up the Nile to the area now known as the Sudan, and elsewhere, with major impacts on the later development of and change in African and Middle Eastern cultures.

Some things sweet have not change all that much over the years. Depictions from the 18th dynasty (*ca.* 1549–1292 BC) show scenes of daily life in the New Kingdom, including hives similar to those still used in Egypt. Breads and cakes made of barley and emmer wheat, seasoned with spices and sweetened with honey, appeared in the burial chamber with King Tutankhamen of the same 18th dynasty. Small pottery flasks interred with King Tut originally contained honey. The boy pharaoh also had 11 baskets of watermelon seeds to enjoy, with a honey wine and a variety of other wines. Roasted and salted watermelon seeds remain one of the traditional snacks today. Honey wine is widely believed to be the oldest fermented beverage in the world. King Tut also had dates, figs, and pomegranates for the next world. Ancient Egyptians made beverages out of figs, pomegranates, possibly also dates, and unfermented grapes, boiled down to make very sweet drinks. The sap of a species of palm can also be drunk fresh. It is sweet and refreshing, not unlike sugarcane juice. Elsewhere a hieroglyph depicts a stack of pancake-like offerings, translated as “piled up sweets”—cakes most likely made with date flower and sweetened with honey. In the tomb of Rameses III of the 20th dynasty (*ca.* 1189–1077 BC), one finds inscriptions of bakers making long, thin, honey-drenched pastry not unlike pastries seen today. As for King Tut, although it is sometimes said that honey was used in the embalming of mummies, actual evidence of that seems to be lacking.

For the desert nomads, dates meant survival as well as sweetness—from prehistoric times through the present day. For more than 6,000 years, dates have been a staple food throughout Egypt and Sudan. The edible date palm, especially abundant in ancient times between the Nile and Euphrates rivers, probably originated just to the east, in the lands around the Persian Gulf. Remains of dates have been found in a number of 7,000–8,000-year-old Neolithic sites, particularly in Egypt and Syria. Dates are likely among the oldest cultivated tree crops in the world.

Figs were cultivated prior to the Old Kingdom (*ca.* pre-2686 BC). Grapes grew in Egypt in the Predynastic Period (*ca.* 3500–3100 BC). *Chufas*—tigernuts—have been cultivated since the Predynastic Period, making them one of the oldest cultivated plants in Egypt. Tigernuts—a native rush with sweet nutty-flavored tubers about the size and flavor of hazelnuts—were widely used during the Predynastic Period and have been found in tombs of that era. Today, tigernuts are eaten raw, roasted, boiled, baked, or are ground up and mixed with honey. Tigernuts are now found mostly in Egypt and in Spain, where the Arabs introduced them, and where they are still used in the preparation of their drink *horchata de chufa*. Tamarind, a tree indigenous to Sudan that bears fruits sweet and sour in taste, is also used in drinks. Tamarind edible fruit pulp is also eaten raw or used in jams, as

flavoring, and in cooking, by native Egyptians and Sudanese, and by everyone who uses Worcestershire sauce.

Sweet-tasting smaller figs, found in Egypt since the Predynastic Period, had become a popular sweet treat by at least King Tut's time. Figs were considered a delicacy because of their high sugar content. The ancient sycamore fig—called the “tree of love” by the Egyptians—has been cultivated in Egypt since the third millennium BC. Egypt, in ancient times, was the principal area of sycamore fig development. In the Bible, God destroyed the sycamores as one of the famous plagues inflicted on the Egyptians.

Romans ruled Egypt until Muslim Arabs invaded it in the seventh century, the latter bringing with them Islam and the Arabic language, and the Persian-influenced renowned honey-soaked pastries and the use of dried fruits and nuts (especially almonds) as sweetmeats. They also brought citrus and sugar, from which Egypt eventually profited greatly through its trade relations with Venice. Sugar became so important to Egyptian trade that in AD 1324, for example, there were 67 sugar refineries in Cairo. By the Middle Ages, Egyptian sugar (known as Alexandrian or Babylonian sugar) was of consistently good quality: “The best in the world, white as snow and hard as stone,” reported a Tuscan pilgrim visiting Alexandria in AD 1384 (Richardson 2002).

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Turks invaded Egypt, solidifying and expanding the Arab and sweet treat traditions of the Persians, featuring treats such as *baklavas* and *halvas* made from ground nuts with butter and sugar, and the use of flower essences, principally rose water and orange blossom water—treats still popular in modern-day Egypt and Sudan. Egypt remained a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1517 to 1914. While honey was important to the ancient gods of Egypt, under the Muslims sweets became even more important, in part for religious reasons. The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul: the *Qur'an* and honey. Hence, honey early on acquired religious and medicinal as well as culinary importance in Muslim Egypt and Sudan. Today's Egypt and Sudan have a 90 percent and 70 percent Muslim population, respectively; South Sudan, however, is described as animist and Christian. Muslim sweet treat religious traditions are especially important in Ramadan and *Eid* celebrations and observances.

Today, most people continue with a diet from their past. From the long history and prehistory of Egypt, from hunting and foraging times to more recent days, one thing stands out: there has been a remarkable degree of continuity in Egyptian foodways, closely connected to those of the Middle East. Sweet treats in Egypt and the Sudan today include fresh and dried fruits, and hundreds of variations on *phyllo* pastry and wheat-based pastry, using ingredients from the past, such as honey, native seeds (caraway, coriander, and aniseed), sugar, fruit syrups, dates, figs, raisins, pomegranates, rose water, citrus fruits, and nuts, especially almonds. One also finds a number of sweet rice puddings and steamed sweet couscous treats.

One can find in the urban areas of Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities, of course, both the full repertoire of international world-class desserts and the run-of-the-mill commercial confections. Almost half (43 percent) of the 85.3 million Egyptians are urban, as are 40 percent of the 34.9 million Sudanese, but only 18 percent of the people in South Sudan are urban. Urbanites, who can afford to, choose whatever traditional or international sweet treats they prefer. Non-urbanites continue on with their sweet treats, influenced by past ages to include items like *basboosa* (semolina cake soaked with a floral-scented syrup and topped with almonds), *asabi gullash* (*phyllo* pastry fingers with lemon juice, cardamom, honey or sugar, and pistachios), *halawa tahiniya* (a sesame paste-based sweet, mixed with nuts and other ingredients), *khushaf* (a staple during Ramadan, containing dates and dried fruits soaked in milk, juice, or water, and sugar), *kunafa* (shredded wheat-like in appearance, this sweet “shredded *phyllo*” pastry prepared for Ramadan is toasted crunchy on the top and bottom, and filled with mixed nuts, cream, custard, or ricotta cheese [said to have been brought to Cairo in AD 969]), *muhallabiya* (rice flour custard), *qatayef* (a little crescent-shaped pancake-like pastry specialty that is eaten during Ramadan, stuffed with fillings like sweet nuts and cinnamon, yoghurt, cheese, or cream, cooked on one side, then folded and coated with honey or sugar syrup or rose water), *roz bil-laban* (rice with milk—rice pudding), *umm Ali* (“Ali’s Mother”—a light, fluffy puff pastry version of bread pudding dating back to Ottoman era Egypt), and *zalabia* (puffy fritters soaked in syrup).

Both urbanites and non-urbanites alike still continue, and will continue, to enjoy their sweet treats with heavily sweetened tea, a bequest of the British, or strong Egyptian Arabic coffee, a legacy of their Ethiopian and Yemeni neighbors.

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England

Imagine part of a big island, situated to the north of the English Channel, south of Scotland, east of Wales and the Irish Sea, jam-packed with ancient castles and ruins with burial chambers, monuments, and artifacts dating back thousands of years. Ancient stone circles, tombs, and areas like Stonehenge tell us about the people of Bronze and Neolithic Ages; imagine a time when “sweet” meant an abundance of fresh fruits, dried fruits, nuts, and wild honey.

Continue to imagine a land that endured bloody invasions for hundreds of years. Julius Caesar and the Romans, in 55 BC invaded this land, and for nearly 400 years

it was part of the Roman Empire. Then came the Vikings, and then the Anglo Saxons. Life changed in 1066, with yet another invasion; this time Duke William II of Normandy led the assault.

The successful Norman Conquest was historically significant because the Normans replaced the ruling classes with French aristocrats and royalty, and, it goes without saying, this invasion by the French radically altered the language, culture, and, very importantly, it had a profound effect on the diets of the upper classes. This land is England, one of the countries, along with Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, that make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. (The three conjoined countries that make up Great Britain are England, Scotland, and Wales.)

Then, in 1099, the Crusades had another profound effect on the diets of the royalty and other wealthy citizens. No one knows how many Crusaders there were, but estimates run in the tens of thousands, and these great armies, in their avowed mission to restore access to holy places near Jerusalem, traveled all the way to the Holy Land. It was during these journeys that the Crusaders acquired tastes for spices, including cinnamon, saffron, mace, nutmeg, ginger, and sugar. These spices (including sugar) transformed food preparation and tastes. The Crusaders returned to their native countries with not only a love for new flavors and foods but also a cache of gloriously colored spices.

As if acquiring a taste for and access to the amazing array of spices was not enough, 1099 was also a significant year for another reason: it was the year of the first recorded use of sugar in England. Sugar, at that time, was a spice and a medicinal ingredient; it was not a sweetener as we know it and was rare and very expensive.

Of all the items on the medieval spice list, sugar was the one to most profoundly affect the eating habits of the English upper classes. When sugar became available as a sweetening agent, the very few who could afford it imported plain sugar, sugar candy, and rose- and violet-scented sugars and, understandably, they eventually consumed large quantities of this sweet treat. The late 12th century household records of Henry II indicate that sugar was a prominent addition to the pantry. In 1226, Henry III requested a luxurious, and very costly, three pounds of Alexandrian sugar from Egypt. By 1287, the royal household was consuming a whopping 677 pounds of generic sugar, 300 pounds of “violet sugar,” and 1,900 pounds of “rose sugar.” The aristocrats first used these sugars as remedies for colds and other illnesses, and later as a favored sweetener. Sugar was for the nobility, whereas honey and dried fruits were for the common people.

About 200 years later, in 1485, only seven years before Christopher Columbus famously set sail on his search for a westward route to Asia, another historic period began, one that had a great influence on the diets of the rich and famous. This time England set out to be the conquerors and invaders, rather than be the conquered and

invaded. This was the Tudor period, identified with two famous rulers, Henry VIII (the “Wife Beheader”) and his daughter, Elizabeth I (the “Virgin Queen”). Both monarchs practiced a culture of conquests, had profound influences on their country, and led England to become a major political force with which to be reckoned.

By the end of Elizabeth I’s reign, in 1603, the English viewed North America and the West Indies (where much of their sugar was then produced), as the places to continue British expansion. The English would ship their goods, especially wool, to sell in North America, and the ships returned with large amounts of tobacco and, most notably, sugar, which allowed the Tudors to enjoy sweets like gingerbread, sugared almonds, and jelly.

What did the Tudors eat? Besides lots of meat, they ate few vegetables (which were considered food for the poor) and very few fresh fruits (which they considered unhealthy). They ate so few fruits and vegetables that many of the upper classes suffered from scurvy, which caused, among other symptoms, painful joints, swollen gums, and teeth that fell out. However, what they did not eat in fruits and vegetables, they made up for in sweets. Sugar was still expensive in the 16th century, and the best sugar at the time was from Madeira, with sugars from Barbary and the Canary Islands coming in as close seconds. So while the aristocrats and royalty enjoyed sugar as a sweetener, the common people still used honey and dried fruits.

Dried fruits sweetened the traditional Christmas mince pies, which were quite different from the mince pies we know today. Literature tells us that the pies had 13 ingredients, representing Jesus and the apostles. Cooks, at the time, sweetened the minced mutton with dried fruits such as currants and raisins, and those who could afford to purchase spices did so and enjoyed the exotic flavors from the Middle East—cloves, mace, saffron, cinnamon, and sugar. The literature also tells us that Elizabeth I loved her sweet treats, especially custard. Her apparently black or missing teeth bore testimony to this metaphorical sweet tooth. In the meantime, Elizabeth I also developed a taste for vanilla, the then recently arrived flavoring from Mexico, by way of Spain. A typical custard recipe during Elizabeth I’s time included eggs, milk, sugar, vanilla, and almonds and is very similar to the vanilla custards we know today.

Elizabeth I also enjoyed marzipan (also known as marchpane)—the very sweet moldable paste made of sugar and powdered almonds. One New Year she received a gift of miniature models of St. Paul’s Cathedral, St. George the Crusader, and a chessboard and pieces, all made from marzipan. She was hooked. Thereafter, Elizabethan dinners included marzipan shaped into miniature ships, castles, or anything else the queen desired. The Tudors take credit for putting the pleasures of marzipan on the English culinary map. Marzipan is still popular, enjoyed alone or in combination with other sweets.

Early European recipes for gingerbread contained ground almonds, ginger, dried breadcrumbs, rose water, and sugar. These ingredients produced a very hard cookie.

In the 16th century, creative English cooks added eggs, flour, and other spices, which produced a lighter, more palatable sweet treat. Elizabeth I “invented” the gingerbread man. Having cultivated a taste for newer, softer, and tastier gingerbread—no doubt much easier to eat with missing teeth—she gave visiting dignitaries likenesses of themselves made out of gingerbread. It seems that Elizabeth I was not the only one who acquired a taste for gingerbread—in Act V, Scene I, of William Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, Costard cries out, “And I had but one penny in the world, thou should’st have it to buy gingerbread.”

Hans Sloane, an English physician who visited Jamaica in 1687, created a bitter chocolate medicinal drink and, in 1690, he made it more palatable by adding milk (it became “the Sloane recipe”). About the same time, the “Cocoa Tree Chocolate House” became a London destination, and sugar became a popular addition to coffeehouse desserts. Cadbury chocolate products became available in 1824 in the grocery shop that John Cadbury opened in Birmingham, England. The products were eventually so popular that in 1879, John Cadbury’s sons opened a small factory in a village on the outskirts of Birmingham that they renamed Bournville, and there began manufacturing drinking chocolate and cocoa using a “dutching” process developed in the Netherlands. The Cadbury brothers acquired the Sloane recipe and introduced their own milk chocolate products (which tasted very different from what we know today). About the same time, coffeehouses began using chocolate in cakes and pastries, thus starting a new trend: chocolate as an ingredient in sweets and pastries. Until the 1890s chocolate was mainly used in beverages.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, besides mechanizing the production of chocolate, the Industrial Revolution dramatically changed the lives of the common English people in general. It brought more than new machines and dirty factories to England; the Industrial Revolution changed agricultural practices and politics; it increased production of goods and for some, it raised the standard of living. For others, it brought poor working conditions and health problems. It produced a working class which would challenge the social fabric of England by fighting for workers’ rights. The Industrial Revolution introduced mass production of biscuits (cookies), candies, and other sweet treats, along with other items, including textiles and iron works. The tragedy was that many of the workers who produced these basic goods could not afford to buy them, including the sweet treats.

The era of dramatic social change continued under Queen Victoria’s long reign—from 1837 to 1901. During her reign, the Victoria sponge cake became *the* “sweet treat” at teatime—a time between lunch and dinner when the diminutive queen, and her staff, needed a bite to eat to “tide them over” until dinner. The small sponge cakes became one of Queen Victoria’s favorite sweets. A mixture of sugar, eggs, flour, and butter came to be the irresistible sponge, and the fresh fruits or jam in between the layers raised the elegance level. Victoria sponge is never frosted but may have a dusting of sugar. The Victoria sponge remains an English teatime favorite sweet.



Victoria sponge, an English teatime favorite, was one of Queen Victoria's favorite sweets. (Ershamstar/Dreamstime.com)

When, in World War I, German submarines sank cargo ships carrying food to England, major food shortages resulted in food rationing in all of Great Britain. The lack of sugar and butter led to the development of desserts like apple cobbler and rhubarb crumble, frequently embellished with custard sauce. World War II renewed the need for rationing. Naidia Woolf, in her work *Making Do: Rationing in Britain during the Second World War*, wrote that in between the World Wars, the United Kingdom was importing millions of tons of food, including more than half its meat, 70 percent of its cheese and sugar, and 80 percent of its fruits (Woolf 2012).

During the war, military personnel serving overseas received shipments of the food and supplies that were available, leaving relatively little food for citizens at home. To attempt a more even distribution process, and to prevent hoarding, in January 1940, food rationing again came into force, beginning with butter and sugar, which, as in World War I rationing, led to more cobblers and crumbles as sweet treats.

Bread pudding became popular because it used minimal sugar, lots of dried bread, and, for a special touch, diners poured vanilla custard similar to the one enjoyed by Elizabeth I over the pudding. Cobbler, crumble, pie, tart, torte, grunt, slump, buckles, and pandowdy are just a few of the many names for cobblers, according to Linda Stradley in her work on the history of cobblers and crumbles (Stradley 2012). They are all simple variations of the same ingredients: whatever fruits and berries are in season, with a pastry made of flour, butter (or margarine), perhaps

a little sugar, and milk. Nowadays, the toppings often include rolled oats, almonds, and other nuts. In other words, they are made with whatever fresh ingredients are readily at hand. They are homemade, and their acceptance is based more on tasting good than fancy preparation and presentation.

We now fast forward to 21st-century England, and a chat about puddings. In England you hear the question, “What’s for pud?” “Pud” is short for pudding and refers to the dessert course of the meal, which may or may not be a pudding as Americans think of it. The English are proud of their puddings, which can either be desserts or custards, as Elizabeth I enjoyed, or heavy, boiled-in-a-cloth, fruitcake type puddings such as plum pudding or a meaty main course pudding. It is a bit confusing; all desserts are “puddings” but only some puddings are desserts. The puddings that definitely are not desserts, but are part of the meal, include Yorkshire pudding, black pudding, and steak and kidney pudding. These are considered to be “savory,” rather than sweet—an important distinction in describing English food.

The first puddings (not to be confused with custards) that were desserts date back to the 17th century, when sugar became more widely available and sweet puddings became a part of many diets. Sweet puddings consisted of nuts, dried fruits, flour, and the available sugar. These puddings were not what we consider “pudding” today in the United States (which is really more like custard), but these are, rather, a dense, compact, sweet that is boiled or steamed in a bag (more like a fruitcake), the same way the Tudors enjoyed their puddings (except they probably boiled their puddings in an animal gut pouch, rather than a cloth bag). Clarissa Dickson Wright (2011) best describes the process in her book, *A History of English Food*, when she explains how to boil or steam a pudding in a cloth bag: one simply ties the ends of the cloth around the pudding and plunges it into a pot of boiling water and, more or less, forgets about it. Today, many of the sweet puddings are still boiled. These puddings are traditionally served as Christmas puddings and are often a variation of plum pudding. The steamed puddings eaten today grew from this tradition.

Rice pudding is another sweet treat that dates back to Tudor times. It was then a very popular treat for royalty; today, we all enjoy rice pudding. Recorded recipes for rice pudding date back to the 17th century. It was so popular and was considered a staple food, that even Shakespeare’s clown, in *A Winter’s Tale*, recites what seems to be the essential ingredients for a sweet rice pudding: “Let me see: what am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound of sugar, five pound of currants, rice. . . . I must have saffron to color the warden pies; mace; dates none—that’s out of my note; nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger, but that I may beg; four pounds of pruns, and as many of raisins o’th’ sun” (Act IV Scene III).

Chef Michael Burke, who apprenticed under his aunt, the pastry chef at a five star prestigious hotel in London in the 1970s, is very fond of *syllabub*, another dessert that dates back to Tudor times. Chef Burke notes that the thick, frothy drink or dessert was traditionally made by beating milk with wine or ale, sugar, spices, and sometimes beaten egg whites, for a frothy effect. A richer version made with

cream is used as a topping for cakes, cookies, and fruit desserts. Food historians suggest that the name of this concoction originated during Elizabethan times and bears the French influence in the word *sille* (the French wine that was used in the mixture) and *bub* (Old English slang for “bubbling” drink) (Burke, personal communication, 2012; Davidson 2006).

Many who revel in sweets have enjoyed “English toffee,” and the very mention of it brings thoughts of caramelly, chewy, buttery toffee. No one knows exactly when or where the word *toffee* originated (perhaps in the West Indies), but there is speculation about the origins of toffee as a sweet. In the early 1800s, the abundance and use of slave labor depressed the prices of sugar and treacle (a by-product from refining sugar, similar to molasses). As a result, the key ingredients needed to create toffee became widely available in large quantities to average consumers. Using these ingredients, women in England (who, at that time, did most of the cooking and baking) created an affordable candy. The present-day English toffee is somewhat similar to the treat made in those earlier days. Toffee is very simply made by caramelizing treacle (or molasses) or sugar and butter. Of course, today there are many varieties of toffee—what began as a simple sweet, now has nutty flavors, and essences like vanilla, coffee, and citrus are common additions, including dark, milk, or white chocolate. Although we do not know details about the origin of toffee, one thing is certain: people all over the world enjoy varieties of English toffee; it does not matter if it is sticky and chewy or hard and tooth-cracking.

No discussion of English sweets can be complete without a conversation about fine cakes and biscuits. A popular British cookbook by Thomas Dawson, written during Elizabethan times, called *The Gud Huswifes Jewell*, contains a piece on “fine cakes,” or cookies, as we would call them in the United States. These cookies were square, enriched with egg yolks and spices, and cooked on parchment. From a transcription of the original recipe:

To make fine Cakes, Take fine flowre and good Samaske water you must haue no other liquour but that, then take sweet butter, two or three yolkes of egges and a good quantity of Suger, and a fewe cloues, and mace, as your Cookes mouth shall serue him, and a little saffron, and a little Gods good about a spon full if you put in too much they shall arise, cutte them in squares lyke vnto trenchers, and pricke them well, and let your ouen be well swept and lay them vppon papers and so set them into the ouen, do not burne them if they be three or foure dayes olde they bee the better. (Dawson 1596, §f12r)

Fine cakes are “biscuits,” and “biscuits” in England are what Americans call cookies. And what we call “biscuits,” the English call scones. If you are confused, have no worries. It takes time, even for an American *living* in England to understand the differences in puddings and desserts, and cookies, biscuits, and scones.

Cup Cakes

“Cup cakes” of the early 19th century were named with reference to the practice of measuring the ingredients by volume—with a standard-sized cup—as opposed to weighing them. These cup cakes often consisted of a cup of butter (weight, 1/2 lb.), two cups of sugar (weight, 1 lb.), three cups of flour (weight, *ca.* 0.8 lb.), and often four eggs and were typically baked in regular loaf pans. “Pound cakes,” richer and more expensive, on the other hand, were proportioned by weight. The pound cake is British, consisting of a pound each of flour, butter, eggs (*ca.* 8), and sugar, usually baked in a heavy bunt pan. Cup cakes are known as “fairy cakes” in Britain. Prior to the 19th century, cooks also often baked small cakes in ceramic pots, ramekins, cups, or molds, and these were also known as “cup cakes.” By the end of the 19th century, purpose-made cupcake pans appeared. Taggart Bakery of Indianapolis, Indiana, introduced industrially produced cupcakes in 1919, branded simply “Chocolate Cup Cakes,” which were the first nationally marketed commercial pastry in the United States. They were renamed “Hostess Cup Cakes” in 1925 when the Continental Baking Company acquired Taggart. A modern trend sees cupcake towers replacing traditional wedding cakes.

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On the one hand, in England, most biscuits (cookies) are now prepackaged. On the other hand, most scones are freshly made either in bakeshops or at home. Scones are rather like small quick breads (biscuits). They are made with the basic ingredients of flour, sugar, baking powder or baking soda, butter, milk, and eggs and are baked in the oven—either in the traditional wedge (often seen in coffee shops) or in round, square, or diamond shapes. Traditional English scones may include raisins or currants but are often plain, just waiting for a topping of preserves or clotted cream, or both—clotted cream is a heavenly concoction made from the high butterfat milk from cows that graze in the southwest of England. It is as rich and creamy as butter.

We cannot talk about scones and biscuits without talking about the phenomenon of tea. Tea is another of those confusing terms; “Afternoon tea” with cakes and little sandwiches seems to be more of a leisure class event, to tide people over until a later dinner, as in Victorian times. For most people, a break at about 4:00 P.M. for a “cuppa” is a tradition, as well as the break for coffee in the morning. What Americans refer to as “dinner,” is also called “tea,” but “tea” is a lighter, evening meal, and “dinner” is traditionally served at noon in England. “High tea” can be a high-class term for supper, or an elegant tea with proper sandwiches and sweets. “Tea” can mean many things; you might think that the three meals of the day are

breakfast, lunch, and dinner, but traditionally, for the English they are breakfast, dinner, and tea (supper).

The ritual of English teatime is credited to Queen Mary, the daughter of Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Although not the most liked of royalty, she apparently enjoyed her tea time with delicate little sandwiches, cakes, and biscuits beautifully presented on the royal silver dishes. The teapot, hot water jug (pitcher), cream jug, and sugar bowl that Mary used were the same antique silver service that would be used by her successor, Queen Victoria, several decades later. There is high tea, low tea, tea, afternoon tea, cream tea, light tea, and the common theme is that they are served with some type of sweet treat—biscuits, sponge cakes, or scones. If anyone asks you if you would like some tea, and you have no idea what he or she is asking, an appropriate response is, “Yes, please.”

Nowadays, England is as diverse as many other parts of the world. And the diversity has enriched its cuisine in ways the Tudors and Victorians could not have imagined. Asian, Indian, Latin American, West Indian, Caribbean, and European fare are commonplace, and so the tastes for sweet treats are ever evolving. One thing is for certain: for the first time since it opened in 1906, the Ritz Hotel in London changed its High Tea menu. It was out with the foreign and in with the “best of British” for the 2012 Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics. Victoria sponge cake, lovely scones, custard tarts, and clotted creams grace the sweet treats menu.

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The English Caribbean

(The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica)

The tropical lands of the English Caribbean were settled later than the Spanish islands, their native Amerindian populations were more quickly relocated and decimated, their economies early on became dependent on sugarcane, molasses, and rum—and hence on West African slaves, for the most part—and their colonial culture was dominated by the English. As the Amerindian populations in the English New World island colonies were decimated early and quickly in the 16th century, sweet treats of the colonial West Indies took on the flavors of the settlers, the West Africans of the early slave trade, later immigrants to the islands, and the cuisines of their respective mother countries. Several island localities were part of the early "British West Indies" region of the eastern Caribbean area, including The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Bermuda, and a number of other small inhabited landmasses.

Although Columbus made note of honey and its use on his first voyages, honey as a sweet treat ingredient was immediately eclipsed with the arrival of sugarcane in the mid-17th century. Outside of Mexico and other parts of Mesoamerica, most Caribbean honey was obtained by hunting stingless bees' nests rather than hive beekeeping, although that practice has begun to change in recent years. From this background sprang today's sweet treats, primarily incorporating sugarcane, refined and unrefined brown sugar, molasses, rum, and native and introduced tropical fruits made into cakes and sweets of various kinds—especially rum-soaked cakes.

The regional signature "black cake" popular throughout the English-speaking Caribbean is obligatory during Christmastide and at weddings. Made from a variety

of ingredients—but primarily including brown sugar, molasses, dark rum, and rum-soaked fruits—the dense, sticky, sweet, moist fruitcake-like holiday and wedding classic is descended from English Christmas plum pudding, with recipes and methods of assembly varying throughout the Caribbean and from family to family. Some say, as is a common theme with sweat treats almost everywhere, that the best black cake is the one you grew up with.

Plenty of rum and rum-soaked fruits, molasses, and a “browning of the sugar” give black cake its famous character and distinctive “intensely dark color.” Traditionally for a year—three months if one is impatient—dark raisins, golden raisins, pitted prunes, and currants, dried cherries, and mixed candied citrus peel, are soaked in liters of dark rum and port wine, with brown sugar and ground cinnamon. The black cake’s character and comes, traditionally, from the crushing up of the macerated fruits into a sweet fruit paste just before combining with other ingredients, hence creating a texture quite different from North American Christmas fruitcakes. Other ingredients include dark sugar, molasses, eggs, flour, baking powder, nutmeg, cinnamon, butter, almonds (optional), the zest of limes, cloves, ginger, mixed spice, almond or vanilla extracts, and Angostura Bitters from neighboring formerly British Trinidad and Tobago. The customary “browning of the sugar” produces a close-to-burnt “sugar essence”—a caramelized paste, referred to by one resident as “viscous black goo”—that along with the mashed alcohol-stewed fruits and molasses adds to the cake’s signature dark color. This heavy sludge is baked in round cake pans with a long and “very relaxed” cooking time well before Christmas or the wedding, to allow frequent brushing with dark rum—to further darken the cake, of course. Eaten in thin slices, black cake is enjoyed in moderation with a glass of rum. Black cake is sometimes known during the yuletide holidays as “Christmas cake” but during other times of the year it is also called “rum cake,” “wedding cake,” or simply “great cake.”

As is usual in tropical and semitropical countries, fruits play an important part in local sweet treats. Islanders enjoy fruits by themselves, in jams and sweet snacks, in fruit cocktail, as juices or in sweetened drinks, in sorbets and ice creams, or as sweetened syrups poured over shaved ice. In the English Caribbean, fruits that escape the black cake occasionally also end up candied and soaked in rum. But most often tropical fruits are enjoyed fresh, especially bananas, pineapple, mango, papaya, and soursop; coconut and citrus are also essential to island sweet treats. Guava often appears as a frequent flavoring in desserts and candies, with taste varying from species to species. Guava duff—a popular rich Bahamian dessert consisting of dough-encased guava pulp, brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, vanilla, and butter—is traditionally boiled much like English Christmas plum pudding. Guava duff is served with a warm sugared egg, butter, vanilla, and sometimes rum sauce. Guava is common throughout the region, from whence it was quickly spread early on by the 16th-century Spanish and Portuguese colonizers.



Jamaicans commonly enjoy tamarind fruits in small marble-sized sweet-sour peppery-tasting tambran balls, a treat also popular in Trinidad and Tobago and in Barbados. (Lemonpink/Dreamstime.com)

language term. Scientifically akee is known as *Blighia sapida* after Captain William Bligh who in 1793, four years after the famed mutiny on his ship the *HMS Bounty*, took the fruit from Jamaica to England. On the *Bounty*, Bligh was originally on a mission to transport breadfruit from Tahiti to the English Caribbean Islands to see if it could be a cheap food for slaves. His second attempt was successful, and breadfruit has remained important in the Caribbean to this day. Breadfruit is normally eaten as a vegetable, but ripe and overripe breadfruit shows up in sweet treats such as breadfruit cake, roasted ripe breadfruit with sugar, and breadfruit custard, where it is treated much as a sweet plantain. Akee and saltfish with breadfruit is the best-known Jamaican dish, and one of the world's most famous, but today akee has also made its way into akee cheesecake, akee mousse cake, an innovative pudding made with a cornmeal base and served with a white rum sauce, and even into akee *gizzardas*—small sweet baked pastry-shell snacks enjoyed in Jamaica, usually filled with coconut, brown sugar, butter, and ground nutmeg. Akee is also known for its poisonous effects if its edible portions are eaten before they are ripe.

Jamaicans also enjoy a native fruit literally in a class by itself—tangelos, an orange-grapefruit-tangerine hybrid known to the scientific world as *Citrus X tangelo* and to North American shoppers as ugli fruit, the trademarked name of a Jamaican tangelo. Tamarind is another fruit typically enjoyed by the Jamaican islanders, commonly in small marble-sized sweet-sour peppery-tasting tambran balls first coated with sugar and then again with more sugar and spices—including garlic and native hot pepper. Tambran balls are also popular in Trinidad and Tobago and in Barbados.

The Jamaicans especially love akee, another notable important fruit of the region and the national fruit and sometimes symbol of their country. Canned akee fruit is a major export of Jamaica. A mild pear-shaped apple-sized fruit, it was most likely imported with West African slaves and is popularly called by its West African Akan

Egg custards are always popular on the islands, especially coconut versions. Jamaicans favor coconut custard topped with whipped cream flavored with rum. Barbadians like coconut custard pie. Classic rum-flavored custards, of course, remain perennial favorites throughout the region.

Islanders also enjoy a cornmeal cake, made with wheat flour and cornmeal, raisins, cherries, and rum. Bahamians enjoy cornmeal pudding, with or without the rum. For Christmas holidays, Jamaicans serve cornmeal *ducknoos*, also known as tie-a-leaf or blue drawers, a traditional green banana and coconut treat made with cornmeal, dark brown sugar, molasses, raisins, vanilla extract, ground cinnamon, allspice, and coconut milk—all wrapped up in a banana leaf and gently simmered in water—thought to be of West African origin.

Allspice—a key ingredient in Caribbean cuisine—is a single spice native to the region but named by the English settlers who thought it combined the aromas of several of the then common spices: cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Columbus brought allspice back with him to Spain on his first voyage, baptizing it “Jamaica pepper,” and soon thereafter the English took to adding it in their spice cakes, bread puddings, gingerbreads, and the like, to the point where it later became known in England as “English spice.” Both the most and the best allspice is still produced in Jamaica. One often finds allspice in old-style Jamaican cake classics, like their well-known *toto*, a traditional, heavy, delicious coconut spice cake.

Like everywhere else, times have changed in the English Caribbean. But unlike almost anywhere else, people reminisce nostalgically about special sweet treat favorites of their youth. In Jamaica, old timers fondly remember the jackass corn, *asham*, Bustamante backbone, and police buttons of yesteryear.

Asham is a brown, powdered snack made by crushing roasted corn and adding sugar and other spices. Jackass corn is made from a dough of flour, water and spices. It is rolled flat and then cut into the desired shape with a patterned cutter. Most are rectangular, and are crisp and hard. This consistency is achieved by eliminating baking powder and soda from the dough. *Busta* or “stagga back” is a candy made from caramelised sugar and coconut. This is cooked until soft, mixed with ginger and other spices, flattened and left to cool. It is then cut into squares and wrapped in paper. Police buttons are round, yellow cookies made from a soft dough. (Gaynor 2006)

Busta, a hard but chewy dark brown grated coconut and molasses candy, named after the national hero and first prime minister of Jamaica Alexander Bustamante, is said to embody the hero’s tough firm character. Old timers fondly remember the Jamaican favorite also as “bus-mi-jaw.” And as Jonique Gaynor, staff reporter for *The Jamaica Star*, laments, with the erosion and loss of traditional Jamaican sweet

treats made with easily accessible local ingredients, so too is lost a part of their cultural identity.

What has not changed is the tropical islanders' love of ice creams and ices, especially ice desserts made from coconut. Coconut, mango, and soursop ice creams are especially popular in Jamaica, while Barbadian favor coconut-milk sherbet. Bahamians and Bermudians love them all.

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Finland

The Finns create their cuisine, like those of other Nordic countries, with fresh, natural, and locally grown ingredients, served up and varied according to the seasons. Their food, like the landscape of their country (Finland), is clean, pure, and uncluttered. Their sweet treats usually involve fruits, especially berries, and dairy, simply prepared in such a manner that the richness and the purity of its fresh flavors stand out, demonstrating both true modern European haute cuisine and traditional cooking.

Finland was a province of, and then a grand duchy under, its neighbor to the west, Sweden, from the 1100s to the 1800s. After 1809, it became a self-governing grand duchy of Russia, its neighbor to the east. Finland became an independent country in 1917 and developed into a forward-thinking, visionary, nation whose per capita income is among the highest in Western Europe, quite a feat for a small Northern European republic. It is not surprising, then, that Finnish sweets suggest amalgamations of its neighboring cuisines.

Finland, the northernmost crop-producing country in the world, claims a cold climate that bears heavily on what ingredients are readily available. In earlier times, its rugged residents harvested fresh fruits and honey but only during the summer months. Root crops, fermented dairy products (e.g., cheese, buttermilk, and yoghurt), dried fish, fruits, and nuts provided sustenance during the winter. There were few seasonings other than salt. Then, as now, dairy products were abundant. Current crops continue to be those capable of growing in a very northern climate with a short growing season; snowy cold winters, rich pure soil, and long summer days allow for the plentiful production of root crops, fruits, and grains. Barley, oats, and rye flourish in the Finnish climate because they ripen quickly. They are used in a variety of breads and desserts. *Ohrapiparit*, Finnish barley cookies, are delicious examples of how Finnish bakers use barley flour in sweets. Its slightly nutty flavor combines well with butter, sugar, eggs, and cinnamon to produce a light, crunchy, shortbread-type cookie, which also is very low in gluten (a characteristic of barley).

Berries include lingonberries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and cloudberries, and are used fresh in the summer and stored, dried, or frozen for use in the winter. Finnish cuisine uses berries in cold puddings, parfaits, and ice creams, frequently embellished with a native berry-flavored liqueur. Strawberries often accompany *raparperikiisseli*, a lovely rhubarb soup, to balance the tart flavor of

the rhubarb. Rhubarb thrives in the Finnish climate, as do apples, which are both popular dessert ingredients. Finland produces an abundance of apples; Finnish people much prefer their apples as they grow them organically, without chemicals, and consider them healthier options than imported apples.

Finland also produces sugar beets, which, besides providing sugar, are used in the production of molasses, a popular sweetener used in breads and desserts and in the classic Easter dessert *mämmi*—a centuries-old pudding made with rye flour, malt, molasses, and bitter orange peel, served cold with cream and sugar.

Finns also enjoy fresh berries with cream or *piima*, a drinkable yoghurt. *Kiisseli* is a berry pudding made with one type or many types of berries and is sometimes thick and sometimes soupy, sometimes topped or combined with cream or sometimes not. *Vatkattu marjapuuro* is a very popular, traditional whipped lingonberry pudding. Then, of course, there are pies and tarts containing berries, pancakes sprinkled with sugar and berry jam, and cakes with berry fillings.

Naturally, in a country with a large dairy industry, ice cream has been a venerable favorite dessert for centuries. In the early 20th century, ice cream flavored with imported fruits and nuts was a favorite dessert. Nowadays, flavors such as wild strawberry ice cream, served with a drizzle of puréed berries, are common and popular. Frequently, a berry liqueur complements the puréed berries. Berries also complement many other dairy desserts. Chocolate *flan*, for example, is served with black-currant ice cream and a black-currant puréed drizzle. And, of course, pastries are made from a variety of native flours and served with local fruit (usually berry) fillings and ice cream or whipped cream.

In addition to ice cream, a unique dairy dessert enjoyed by the Finns is *leipäjuusto*, or Finnish squeaky cheese, or bread cheese. *Leipäjuusto* is a fresh cheese that originated in northern Finland but now is common throughout the country. It is “fresh” because it is made from the beestings of a cow (or reindeer or goat); beestings is the rich milk produced just after an animal gives birth. Usually dense and round, and about one inch thick, *leipäjuusto* wedges are cut, warmed (sometimes with coffee poured on or sometimes with pieces dipped into hot coffee), and served with cloudberry jam and ice cream or whipped cream. Cloudberries are an appropriate topping because they, too, are abundant in northern Finland, the birthplace of *leipäjuusto*.

Finland’s traditions of organic production of dairy products and fruits provide the foundations for a marvelously fresh and healthy diet of sweets, treats, and desserts. Innovative recipes and uncomplicated, pure preparation of its culinary treats warm the hearts and homes of the inhabitants of this cold, beautiful, uncomplicated, and pure land.

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France

France borders the English Channel on the north, the Atlantic Ocean on the west, and the Mediterranean Sea on the south, with mountainous regions defining much of its land-based boundaries in the east (the Alps) and the southwest (the Pyrenees). Most of the non-mountainous countryside is flat and fertile and home to bountiful vineyards, farms, and orchards. Because of its location, France claims an unusually varied climate and, combined with the other geographical features, it produces the famed and abundant high-quality fresh ingredients used in French kitchens.

Known the world over for a cuisine unto its own as well as for its influence on other cuisines, one rarely, if ever, hears much discussion of any other country’s influence on French cuisine, probably because, with one notable exception, there is not much. That exception occurred in the 16th century, when Catherine de’ Medici, at the age of 14, brought her Italian cooks from Florence when she moved to France to marry Henry II in 1533 (the Italians learned to cook from the Romans). It was Catherine who, among many other things, brought to France new table protocol, including the separation of salty and sweet dishes, at a time when sweets were still consumed together with meat and fish in the medieval style prevalent throughout Europe. The French took what they learned from Catherine’s chefs—and especially her pastry makers—perfected it, and, they say, surpassed the Italian masters at every level in giving birth to the modern-day French culinary tradition.

What makes French cuisine the standard to which chefs aspire?

How did they earn this lofty reputation?

Modern-day Desserts

Desserts as we know them today most likely were introduced by the French. The word *dessert* (“*disserve*”), which appeared in the 17th century, derives from the French word *desservir*, meaning removal of what has been previously served. *Dessert*, referring to treats enjoyed after the previously served foods had been cleared from the table, at that time included sugar sculptures, cakes, *crêpes*, confections, sweetened fruits, meat pâtés, and cheeses.

French culinary professionals are revered the world over because of their dedication to the art and science of cooking and baking, maintenance of rigid standards of preparation, insistence on the finest, freshest ingredients, and production of delectable wares that have become the world standard. Some argue that, in France, cooking is an attitude, and the reverence and passion for traditions have made France the culinary heart of world cuisine, and today the French remain as discriminating in their ingredients and methods of preparation as they have been for centuries. It is not surprising for the French to walk from one specialty store to another seeking the best-quality honey, freshest eggs and cream, purest butter, or richest chocolate for their sweets and treats. And it is not surprising that young French children are already able to judge the quality of ingredients at these markets.

Nor should it be surprising that the word *dessert* comes from the French word *desservir*, which means, “to clear the table.” History suggests that the word was first used during the 17th century to describe a serving of fruits, nuts, or cheeses after dishes from the main course were cleared. It was during this time that the French developed the quintessential French desserts that we enjoy today—desserts typically made from *genoise*, cream, custard, and fruits—desserts favored by many as the best pastries and confections in the world. French cuisine is—and French chefs are regarded as—the best of the best, the finest of the fine, *la crème de la crème*. The word *chef* itself comes from the French *chef de cuisine*, “head of the kitchen/head of cooking.”

Two chefs have earned the title *roi des cuisiniers et cuisinier des rois*, “king of chefs and chef of kings,” and both were instrumental in developing the French *haute cuisine* we know today. The first, Antonin Carême, perhaps the first “celebrity chef,” left his imprint on French cuisine in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Carême knew how to “market” his talents to Napoleon (in the form of a wedding cake), to royalty, and to the rich and famous of the time. Carême was one of the first to use meringue and nougat, and he became famous for his monumental architectural constructions of buildings made from sugar, meringue, marzipan, spun sugar (beautiful fine threads of boiled, hardened sugar), and other ingredients of the time; his edible creations gave birth to today’s elaborate wedding cakes. His pastries and desserts set the foundation for classic French confections, including plain or fruit- or crème-filled pastries, as we know them today.

The second king of chefs and chef of kings was Auguste Escoffier. In the early 20th century, Escoffier cast aside Carême’s ornate style and executed a simpler French cuisine that was easier to replicate multiple times in multiple places. Escoffier laid the foundation for using exact methods—methods that are still used throughout the world, and that make French techniques the standard in food preparation. In the field of sweet treats, Escoffier is best remembered for his creation of *pêche Melba* (peach Melba), in honor of the Australian soprano Nellie Melba, one of many desserts he created for the rich and famous.

Moving on in time, there was another chef, among many, who placed his signature on French cuisine. Fernand Point lived during the first half of the 20th century and was the primary shaper of *nouvelle cuisine*. His best practices were to focus on the quality of the ingredients, to keep the integrity of the ingredients during preparation, and to respect the classical methods of preparation (developed by Escoffier, Carême, and others), while keeping a vision for new ideas and creations. He insisted on “buying local,” and using regional ingredients. Point earned his reputation for perfection by training world-class chefs, first, in exact classical techniques and then, only when these techniques were mastered, by training them in their application to new—*nouvelle*—culinary creations that pleased all senses: taste, smell, sight, touch, and sound. Point, at the age of 26, opened the distinguished *Restaurant de La Pyramide* in the old Roman town of Vienne, nestled between Paris and the Cote d’Azur. The restaurant remains to this day the destination of locals and tourists alike, is hailed as “the greatest restaurant in France,” and is still famous for one of Fernand Point’s “masterpieces of pastry,” *gâteau marjolaine*.

Gâteau marjolaine is a marvelous *gâteau* made with four layers of chocolate and vanilla buttercream spread between crunchy hazelnut and almond-flavored *meringue*. *Marjolaine* demonstrates the delicate balance involved in making French *gâteaux*—there are perfect balances of hazelnut, almond, vanilla, and chocolate flavors, complemented by crunchy and creamy textures.

Desserts and sweets the world over have French names. *Gâteau, génoise, crème brûlée, caramel, clafoutis, crêpes, éclairs, flan, mousse, nougat, parfait, profiteroles, tartes aux fruits, tarte tatin, meringue, millefeuille, madeleines, and bonbons* are just a few of the sweets whose names and roots are French. A working knowledge of some of these basic pastry types and fillings is in order. A good beginning is *gâteau*, the French word for “cake”—but not just any cake. *Gâteaux* most often are cakes with rich fillings of cream, nuts, fruits, chocolate, or multiple combinations of the ingredients. *Gâteaux* might be traditional layer cakes but are often made with multiple layers of *génoise* or *meringue*. In general terms, any cake in France may be considered a *gâteau*, but a proper *gâteau* has fruit or flavored cream fillings made from milk, egg yolks, sugar, and flour (not whipped cream), between the *génoise* or *meringue* layers.

Often the name of the *gâteau* reveals its flavor (*gâteau l’orange* and *gâteau moka*), its size (*petite gâteau*), its place of origin (*gâteau Pithiviers*), or perhaps the *gâteau* is named after a saint (*gâteau Saint-Honoré*).

So, if the layers of *gâteau* are frequently *génoise*, an understanding of *génoise* is also in order. *Génoise* is a sponge cake that gets its light, fluffy texture from air beaten into warmed egg whites, or yolks, or entire eggs (slightly warm eggs hold more air when beaten); there is no butter or fat in a *génoise* other than the fat in the egg yolks. *Génoise* is a relatively light, dry cake, so it is customary to allow the

sponge layers to absorb some fruit syrup or liqueur, and/or to create rich creamy fillings in between the layers.

Rich, creamy fillings also fill delicacies made from *choux* pastry; *choux* pastry relies on a high moisture content that releases steam during baking to “puff” the pastry, rather than relying on a leavening agent such as baking powder. (This is true, except for *beignets*, which are fried, but made with *choux* pastry.) Cream puffs, *profiteroles*, and *éclairs* are *choux* pastry delights. Although the original recipe for *choux* pastry came to France with the de Medici chefs, it was modified over the years, and the recipe we use today is credited to the genius of Antonin Carême.

The creamy fillings for *choux* pastries, or in-between layers of *génoise*, are also French specialties. In France, *crème* has multiple variations, but two legal designations are *crème fraîche*, which is similar to sour cream, that is, slightly fermented, and which must have 30 grams of fat per 100 grams; and *crème légère* which is not quite so rich, with only 12 grams of fat required per 100 grams of cream. Both *chantilly* and *crème fraîche* are used to garnish desserts. *Chantilly* is essentially whipped cream with some sugar and flavoring (usually vanilla), although chefs and food writers disagree on this point.

Some say that in northern France, *crème fraîche* is what olive oil is to southern France, that is, an everyday staple. *Crème fraîche* is soft, creamy, and buttery, and somewhere between yoghurt and sour cream in taste, with a much higher fat content. *Crème pâtissière* fillings are used between the layers of *gâteaux*, as tart fillings, or to fill the *choux* pastry confections—cream puffs, *profiteroles*, and *éclairs*. This filling is akin to an egg custard and is thickened with flour. *Crème pralinée* is cream flavored with powdered pralines (nuts coated in caramelized sugar) and is also used to fill French pastries. Another French favorite is *crème renversée*, or *crème caramel*, similar to a Spanish *flan*.

And, of course, there is *crème brûlée*, literally translated as “burnt cream.” *Crème brûlée* is a chilled, egg custard that, just before serving, is sprinkled with sugar which is then quickly caramelized with a kitchen torch or under the broiler. The topping is brittle by the time it is served. *Crème brûlée* is a display of the French appreciation for complimentary contrasts in flavor and textures and sounds, prepared with a bit of drama.

Tarts are buttery shortbread crusts that are either baked and filled or filled and baked. The crust provides a light and tender pastry shell that complements a *crème fraîche* mixture which is either poured over fresh fruits (e.g., apples) and baked or which is poured into the cooled pastry shell and finished with beautifully arranged berries and other colorful, soft, lightly glazed fruits.

There are dozens of different tarts to accommodate many types of fruits and *crème* fillings. One of the most famous French tarts is the *tarte tatin*, which is affectionately translated, “upside down apple tart.” It is made by covering the bottom

of a tart pan with butter and sugar, then followed by apples, and topped with the pastry crust. As the tart bakes, the butter and sugar caramelize, and when the tart is inverted for serving, the rich caramelly mixture oozes over the apples.

Clafoutis are an extension of the custard and fruit theme in French desserts. They are traditional desserts from Limousin in rural southwest France, where wild cherries are plentiful, but, of course, *clafoutis* are now enjoyed not only in France but also in many parts of the world. Although originally made with the wild cherries, with the pits left in the cherries to impart an almond-like flavor, today it is made with pitted cherries or the fruits of your choice. The fruit is baked in a pancake-like batter made with eggs and milk, and the *clafoutis* is done baking when the batter is nicely browned, set, and slightly puffy around the edges. *Clafoutis* is usually served warm with a dusting of powdered sugar and a dollop of *crème fraîche* or *chantilly*, which is sweetened whipped cream.

The pancake-like mixture in *clafoutis* is very different from the French pancake, *crêpe*, which is a light, delicate, very thin creation. *Crêpes* are made with sweeteners and different flours and are spread with jams or fruit mixtures for dessert. They are folded, rolled, sprinkled with powdered sugar or liqueur, flamed with brandy, all of which result in famous French sweets like *crêpes suzette*. *Crêpes suzette* are flambéed in a chafing dish—warmed in an orange butter sauce, doused with a fine orange liqueur, and served with a dramatic blazing flair.

A small town in the Lorraine region of France, Commercy, claims the origin of the true *madeleines de Commercy*—small cakes made from egg yolks, sugar, lemon zest, flour, hazelnut-flavored butter, and stiffly beaten egg whites—that are eaten like a cookie and often dipped in coffee or tea. *Madeleines* are carefully poured into little shell-shaped molds.

Marcel Proust, the French literary genius, memorialized *madeleines* in *Remembrance of Things Past*, “She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called ‘*petites madeleines*’, which look as though they had been molded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me.”

French desserts have an elegance all their own. Equally elegant are French candies—appropriately called *bonbons*. At a time when sugary treats are frowned on, the French artisans celebrate sweets by making *bonbons* the old-fashioned way—by hand. *Bonbons* are edible works of art, often with tiny, exquisite, amazing detail. The same detail is applied to the wrappings and packages of the *nougat*, *caramel*, and *chocolat bonbons*. Some claim that one could tour the whole of France simply by tasting the unique candies of different regions, cities, and rural areas.



Petites madeleines, “those squat, plump little cakes” memorialized by Marcel Proust in *Remembrance of Things Past*, remain an elegant traditional French favorite. (Msp photographic/Dreamstime.com)

The passion for detail in French sweet treats is not accidental but is, rather, the historical culmination of a respect for care and patience in preparation, a carefully orchestrated balancing of taste, texture, smell, and sound of visually appealing culinary creations and the development of an appreciation of the importance of always using the freshest and finest ingredients available.

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The French Caribbean

(Haiti and the French Antilles)

Christopher Columbus visited what is now Haiti in December 1492, claiming its tropical isle in the name of the then Crown of Castile for whom he sailed, as was the custom of the times. On his second voyage in 1493, Columbus brought wheat and sugarcane to *La Española* (Hispaniola, now Haiti and the Dominican Republic)—but let the sugarcane grow wild. Nevertheless, by 1496 sugar was being shipped to Europe, from his new town, Santo Domingo, and by 1513 the first sugar mill in the New World was operating, introducing the Americas to the plantation and mercantile systems the Spanish and Portuguese had been using in the Mediterranean. The western third of the island of Hispaniola politically became French in 1697, and by the 1790s Saint-Domingue, as the French called the area, had become the richest French colony in the New World due to the sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo produced on its dozens of plantations. In 1804, the country declared its independence from France and changed its name to a modified form of a pre-Columbian Taíno appellation for the island—*Ayiti*.

France also appropriated what today is generally known as the French West Indies or French Antilles, a group of smaller neighboring islands in the French Caribbean: Guadeloupe and Martinique, Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy, Les Saintes, Marie-Galante, and La Désirade. French is the official language of the islands, although most people speak Antillean Creole or Haitian Creole, local languages that combine elements of Carib, African, and regional French.

Because the people are poor and perennially plagued by social, political, economic, and natural disasters and turmoils, Haitian and French Antillean sweet treats are simple. On the higher end of its sweets spectrum, however, the sweet treats enjoyed by its few wealthier citizens are strongly influenced by French cuisine. Sweet mousse desserts and fancy pastries, for example, for those who can afford them, reveal a strong French influence, in the usual flavors: chocolate, fresh citrus fruit, guava, passion fruit, pineapple, mango, and coffee. And they enjoy rum-enhanced and-flavored treats. But most of today's sweet treats eaten by the islanders, especially since the catastrophic earthquake of 2010, are influenced by their West African heritage and by their Caribbean Spanish and English, and, more recently, by their U.S. neighbors. And, as is typical in the tropics, and especially among poorer populations, locally bountiful fruits are perennially enjoyed as sweets.

French Caribbean sweet treats include their basic regional starch food staples of rice, corn, and yams/sweet potatoes, with the always-available sugarcane, unrefined sugar, molasses and rum, sugar, and local now-native fruits playing the most prominent roles.

Cornmeal treats are common, as corn, “a poor man’s staple,” is the cheapest grain available. It is served in a large number of dishes, and for a sweet treat, Haitians prepare *doukounou*, or cornmeal pudding, by steaming over several layers of banana leaves, or boiling in fresh banana leaves, a thick mixture of puréed fresh maize, yellow cornmeal, sugar, whole and evaporated milk, heavy cream, fresh coconut milk, eggs, cinnamon, lemon zest, and vanilla extract, and then eating it with a sweet sauce. Raisins, if one can afford to buy them, are optional. *Doukounou* is a name of African origin.

Akasan, a name also of African origin, is a signature Haitian sweet thick murky corn “milkshake” enjoyed for centuries, served hot or cold. Also known popularly as AK-100 (pronounced “AK-san”; in Creole *san* is a hundred, thus the name is a play on words), it is made simply of boiled cornmeal, sugar, milk, and flavoring: usually vanilla, cinnamon, star anise, and salt. *Akasan*—AK-100—is often Haitians’ breakfast—an inexpensive, nutritional, sweet treat breakfast that is sold on the streets of Haitian cities. In rural areas, *akasan* is eaten more like sweet polenta porridge, sweetened with molasses. Maize is the leading food crop in Haiti, and 15 percent of the crop is used in the preparation of *akasan*—AK-100.

Sweet corn pudding, also popular in Africa, is a favorite sweet treat in Haiti and the French Caribbean islands, made with cream corn, flour, eggs, milk, sugar, and butter and often flavored with bananas or coconut. More common, and better known, is *pain patate*, Haitian sweet potato pudding (but called “bread”), made with grated *boniato* (white sweet potatoes), brown sugar, mashed bananas, raisins, crushed coconut, coconut milk, evaporated milk, butter, grated ginger, grated nutmeg, ground cinnamon, crushed cloves, salt, lemon or lime zest, and vanilla extract—topped with rum syrup and whipped cream dusted with cinnamon or sprinkled with sugar.

African yams, similar to American sweet potatoes, were the main staple food on slave trade ships of the 16th century, with “roughly 200 per person” being provisioned for the transatlantic voyage to the New World (Holloway 2013). Sweetened yams/sweet potatoes remained a favored treat of African slaves and whites alike and, in former slave trading colonies, sugared yams and sweet potato pie remain perennial favorites. Slave-trading ships also provisioned “red” West African rice, another crop that made its way into the sweet treats of the Caribbean.

African rice brought to Haiti with West African slaves was very much a staple food and early on continued to be important in Haitian diets. But in recent times, although it is preferred over corn and millet, rice has become more of a luxury.

The sweet rice they do enjoy when and if they can—*riz au lait* in French, *diri au lait* in Creole—is often in a sweet rice pudding similar to *arroz con leche* in the Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean and New World, a simple combination of short-grain rice, sugar, milk, butter, citrus zest, salt, raisins, cinnamon, and vanilla. In the absence of milk, or simply for taste preferences, cooks use coconut milk. The Creole *diri* comes from the French *du riz*, “some rice.”

Banana (*bannann*) and plantain cooking banana (*bannann peze*) creations remain among the most popular of French Caribbean sweet snacks and desserts, as they do among West Africans. Sugared, well-ripened, mashed-banana fried fritters (*beyen*) are one of the best-known French Caribbean banana treats. But other banana treats include sweet puddings, custards, cookies, chips, cakes, bakes, smoothies, breads, and mousse—baked, grilled, boiled, cooked, steamed, and fried, often blended with chocolate, vanilla, coconut, and almond. And, of course, folks throughout the islands enjoy bananas plain.

Fruits in general play a key role in the sweet treats of all tropical locations, and here, of the many fruits available, bananas, coconuts, limes, oranges, pomelos, grapefruit, pineapples, melons, mangoes, papaya, guavas, akee, cashew apples, soursop, passion fruit, and star apples are at center stage, used in fresh-fruit salads, in baked and fried goods, jams and compotes, smoothies, and, of course, on sweet fruit-flavored crushed or shaved ices. It is especially in the tropics that one often finds these fruits in ice cream, a sweet treat enjoyed by all of those who can afford it.

A unique signature local treat comes from the fishing and tourism-centered French *commune* (village) of Terre-de-Haut of the tiny islands of Les Saintes, a dependency of Guadelupe. History tells us, or perhaps more accurately, legends say, that fishermen’s wives awaiting the return of their husbands and “tormented by fears for the safety of their loved ones” created *tourments d’amour*—“torments of love”—to welcome and comfort them home and celebrate their returns, or mourn their losses (*Une Plume dans la Cuisine* 2011). These small, round, short, soft, and flaky pastries are traditionally and most popularly filled with a special jam made of fresh coconut pulp, cane syrup, cinnamon, limes, and secret ingredients, covered with a kind of soft sponge cake—creating “an explosion of sweet fruit bursting with sunshine” upon one’s first bite (*génoise moelleuse*). In modern times, other fruits of the French Antilles have been known to burst forth, including guava, mango, banana, and pineapple. Saintoises wives carefully guard their recipes, which have been passed down from mothers to daughters over the generations. The recipes remain secret, although it is commonly known that the secret lies in the famous coconut or fruit jam. The Saintoises *tourments d’amour* ladies *will* tell you that part of the secret is that their coveted pastries are baked with love.

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G

Georgia

Georgian people know how to make any meal an event. The people of the Caucasus region of Eurasia are gracious hosts and regale guests with food, drink, and robust dining in their own homes and in restaurants. The Georgians know how to throw a lavish party, or an intimate dinner for any of life's events—weddings, birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries. And since nearly 90 percent of the Georgians are Orthodox Christian, Easter and Christmas are, of course, special, sacred, and celebrated holidays with traditional dining experiences. Georgian dinners are colorful, fragrant, fresh, flavorful, freshly herbed and spiced, and anything but dull, drab, or dreary.

Georgia is surrounded by the Caucasus Mountains in the north and its southern neighbors of Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It is divided into two geographical areas—east and west Georgia, with west Georgia having several ports on the Black Sea. The probable ancestors of modern Georgian people moved into west Georgia in Neolithic times, transitioning there from hunting-gathering-foraging to early agriculture with animal husbandry in about 5000–6000. Later centuries witnessed invasions, defeats, victories, tribal evolutions, developments and abolitions of monarchies, wars, and political conflicts, some of which still continue to this day. Beginning in the 16th century, the sweet treat-rich Ottoman and Persian empires clashed over control of the region; the results are evident in today's cuisine. In the west, the rich soil of the river valleys and flood plains bordering the Black Sea yields to Persian influences of wheat bread, fruits, and dairy. In the eastern lowlands, Turkish and Greek influences dominate the cuisine, with their liberal use of spices, walnuts, and pomegranates. Today, all over Georgia, fruits and nuts are important in Georgian cuisine. Georgians enjoy fresh raspberries, grapes, pomegranates, and watermelons, eaten alone or as popular additions to many sauces and condiments. They also use walnuts liberally in sweets and sauces.

Churchkhela is a one of the sweetest Georgian treats, made with fruits and nuts, most generally grapes and walnuts. *Churchkhela* looks like bumpy, long (6–8 inches) candy on a stick. While grape pickers harvest grapes at the end of the season, skilled candy makers string halved walnuts or whole hazelnuts onto lightweight cotton cords, then dip the strings of nuts into boiling concentrated fresh grape juice (*badagi*) thickened with flour, and sometimes sweetened with sugar. When

the nuts are adequately coated with the grape mixture, they are hung to dry; the process is then repeated. After 8 to 10 coatings, the *churchkhela* experts hang the confection to dry in the sun for two or three weeks. Purists insist that *churchkhela* must then mature in a cool, dry place for several months before serving it to guests—perfect timing to become part of traditional Georgians’ New Year celebrations.

Besides *churchkhela*, *gozinaki* is another favorite sweet, a most wonderful combination of caramelized nuts and honey, resulting in a delectable flat, sweet, nutty candy. *Gozinaki* graces the tables at Christmas and New Year, and at other special events and dinners. Many types of nuts and seeds can be ingredients for *gozinaki*, but the nuts of choice for Georgians are walnuts.

Traditionally, Georgians prefer fruits, nuts, and wine for dessert, or a combination of fruits and nuts, rather than the butter, flour, and egg-type pastries of the West (an exception being *kada*, a traditional Georgian buttery pastry, prepared, baked, and usually eaten without a topping or filling). *Pelamushi* is also a favorite among traditional Georgian sweets. It is thick congealed pudding made of concentrated grape juice, corn meal, and sometimes sugar and cornstarch. Nuts usually accompany *pelamushi* for dessert.



Churchkhela, one of the sweetest Georgian treats, is made by stringing grapes and nuts onto cotton cord and then repeatedly dipping it into boiling grape juice thickened with flour. (Roksana Bashyrova/Dreamstime.com)

Georgians enjoy honey. In 2003, archeologists uncovered some 4,700- to 5,500-year-old earthenware vessels in Georgia buried with the remains of what appears to be an ancient noblewoman. After examining the inner surfaces of the clay jars, they pronounced that the jars had remnants of the world's oldest honey, over 2,000 years older than the honey found in King Tut's tomb. In ancient Georgia, as in ancient Egypt, those who prepared the departed for a smooth transition to the next world included vessels containing honey. This ancient noblewoman was sent off on her journey with several containers of three varieties of honey—linden, berry, and a meadow-flower variety—suggesting honey's special importance. Although it is not surprising to learn that Georgians use honey for their sweet treats, it is surprising to know that they have been doing it longer than any other civilization in the world.

The Georgian diet is light on heavy sweets. There are few desserts other than fruits and nuts, and few sweeteners other than honey, which we now know they have been using for over 5,000 years. How does it happen that such simple ingredients complement their meals? For those “in the know,” Georgian food is some of the most delicious, healthy, and interesting cuisine in Eurasia.

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Germany

What people eat is strongly influenced by where they live, their religion, ethnic background, and social class, and life in medieval German-speaking areas certainly bears this out. When the nobility were eating fine cuts of meat and white bread, the peasants were eating cheap cuts of meat—or no meat at all—and dark bread; while the upper classes drank wine, the others drank water, milk, and beer. In about the first century AD, the Romans brought apple seeds to the Rhine Valley. They were so successful in cultivating the seeds and grafting fruit stocks that soon there were bountiful orchards in the monasteries and convents, and eventually, all the citizens could enjoy fruit. Cherries, berries, plums, and pears, along with hazelnuts and walnuts, became staples in the Germanic diet. Spices, however, were expensive; pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, saffron, and sugar (then still considered primarily a spice and medicine), along with almonds and rice, were enjoyed mostly by the nobility. In the early 16th century, the Reformation freed a large part of the population from the Catholic food rules of fasting, meat consumption, and saints' days observances. More people enjoyed fruits and nuts, including imported figs, dates, lemons, limes, oranges, pomegranates, and pine nuts. Wine had also become a drink that most could afford, and today, people all over the world enjoy German wines and beers.

Germany borders the Baltic and North Seas, is south of Denmark, and sits in the middle of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Poland. In addition to bordering a variety of countries, Germany's geography is varied, with lowlands in the north, uplands in the center, and the Bavarian foothills to the Alps in the south. Equally varied is the climate—northwestern and coastal areas are influenced by the seas, where the residents enjoy warmer summers and mild cloudy winters. Of course, the uplands and the Alpine regions experience cooler temperatures. Germany's overall cooler climate has a bearing in the development and the traditions of its cuisine, which is often considered simpler and more comfort-food-like than other cuisines.

Even with a reputation of being simple and comfortable, today's German cuisine exhibits influences of its neighboring countries (just as the neighboring countries exhibit the influence of German cuisine) and is loosely divided into three regional cuisines. The northern region claims an abundance of eggs, cream, and butter, which fosters the German version of the sweet yeast dough Danish pastries and other Scandinavian tastes. Residents of the central region of Germany enjoy a traditionally rich, comfortable, satisfying cuisine, which includes desserts like fruit tarts and pastries. The southern region enjoys fancier fare, suggesting Alpine influences from Italy and France.

Setting the influences of the neighboring countries aside, there are some interesting differences in German food that make it unique. One of these differences

is the use of preserved foods in the German diet. Germans preserve traditional foods like beer, sauerkraut, smoked meats, and fruits by fermenting, smoking, or drying for use throughout the year. Other unique qualities of German cuisine are the combinations of sweet and sour, and sweet and savory flavors. These combinations probably developed because, prior to the 17th century, the use of sugar and access to sweet fruits were limited; but later on, the orchards and vineyards of southern and central Germany provided fruits, usually locally grown apples, berries, cherries, grapes, and pears that became the primary sweeteners in main courses and sweet treats.

No matter what the sweet treat, the German attention to detail prevails; measurements are carefully made by metric weight rather than by volume. Ever popular and ever practical, *Blechkuchen* (sheet cake) are cakes baked in large, flat, usually rectangular pans and cut into smaller square serving size pieces, rather like brownies. There are as many variations of *Blechkuchen* as there are variations of dough and toppings for sheet cakes; there is no “typical” *Blechkuchen*. Traditionally, *Blechkuchen* are made with yeast dough because cake batter is too moist to support most fruit toppings.

Butterkuchen (butter cake), also called *Zuckerkuchen* (sugar cake), is a popular *Blechkuchen* without a fruit topping, traditionally served in the northern regions of Germany. Small pieces of butter are dropped onto the dough, which is then sprinkled with sugar and, sometimes, slivered or sliced almonds. *Butterkuchen* are often served at weddings and funerals, so they are also known as “happy and sad cakes,” or *Freude und Leidskuchen*. Another variation of *Blechkuchen* is *Streuselkuchen* (crumble-topping cake), a cake also made from sweet yeast dough and topped with crumbs of flour, sugar, and butter. There are other varieties of *Streuselkuchen*—some are filled with a vanilla cream, topped with fruits, nuts, or any combination of tasty morsels that impart a crumb-like topping.

German bakers make *Käsekuchen* as a cheese sheet cake more often than the traditional round cheesecake. German bakers use quark in their cheesecakes, a soft cheese made from pasteurized cow’s milk. Similar to other cheesecakes, *Käsekuchen* are frequently topped with fruits or nuts before baking. Yet another *Blechkuchen*, *Zwetschgenkuchen* is a sheet cake, most often made with yeast dough (it can also be made with a more traditional batter, using baking powder as the leavening agent). After the dough or batter is placed in the pan, it is topped with halved *Zwetschgen* (Italian plums) and a crumb mixture of sugar, flour, and butter. The city of Augsburg claims to have created the *Zwetschgenkuchen*, and it remains a signature cake of the city.

The Bavarians serve their apple cake, *Apfelkuchen*, not only with afternoon coffee but also as an after-dinner dessert or morning treat. Bavarians use vanilla sugar (a perfect combination of sugar and vanilla, usually used in small quantities) in their *Apfelkuchen* because it imparts a distinctive, authentically Bavarian flavor.

The apples are cut into quarters, carefully split lengthwise almost to the bottom of each quarter section, then “fanned out” and set into the cake batter, creating a visual masterpiece and delicious *kuchen*. Vanilla sugar is also a critical ingredient in *Ausstecherle*, the light, delicate, rich, German butter cookies. German bakers tend to use basic dough of butter, flour, sugar, eggs, and vanilla sugar to make different shapes of cookies decorated with nothing at all or with myriad toppings of fruits, nuts, chocolate, colored sugar sprinkles, or jams or jellies.

A regional specialty known throughout the world is *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*, Black Forest cake, a fancy confection made of layers of chocolate sponge, with whipped cream and sweetened sour cherries between the layers (an example of the German flair for combining sweet and sour flavors mentioned earlier). The layers are typically sprinkled with a local cherry liqueur or schnapps, and the top layer is covered with whipped cream and garnished with curls of dark chocolate. The origin of the Black Forest cake is unknown, but some suggest it was created in Berlin, not near the Black Forest as one might suspect, in the 1930s. Others believe that the cake was created in the city of Bad Godesberg, in 1915, by pastry chef Josef Keller (1887–1981), and others may or may not know who created the cake but they believe that it got its name from the traditional costume worn by women in the Black Forest—a black dress, white blouse, and hat with red pompoms. Black Forest cake became a famous elegant dessert throughout Europe in the last few decades of the 20th century.

About two-thirds of the German population are Christian, but nearly all the citizens celebrate the Christian holidays with traditional food. Christmas Eve is the time for giving gifts, ringing church bells, decorating trees, and enjoying the magic of the Twelve Days of Christmas, which begin at midnight and end on the Epiphany. Christmas *Stollen* dates back to the early 15th century, so it is a long-standing Christmas traditional bread, which originally was more or less flavorless because it was made with flour, yeast, oil, and water, since Advent was a time to fast, and butter was not at that time allowed by the Catholic Church during Advent because it was an animal product. Responding to supplications from the local nobility, Pope Innocent VIII eventually gave the bakers permission to use butter in the *Stollen*, in his famous “butter letter” of 1490, but only certain upper-class citizens could enjoy the buttery bread—without paying a fine. The pope’s actions irritated Martin Luther, of the Saxon state of the Holy Roman Empire, who was especially irked at not being allowed to eat butter: “For at Rome they themselves laugh at the fasts, making us foreigners eat the oil with which they would not grease their shoes, and afterwards selling us liberty to eat butter and all sorts of other things,” Luther wrote in 1520, complaining that because of the Church’s prohibitions “the common people take such great offense, thinking it is a greater sin to eat butter than to lie, to swear, or even to live unchastely.” When the Protestant persuasion prevailed and became the dominant religious influence, largely as a result of Luther’s protests,

butter was used again not only on the tables but also in the recipes. Today, *Stollen* is a delicious, flavorful, Christmas bread made in a big round loaf with bits of candied fruits, zest of citrus fruits, nuts, marzipan, and aromatic spices such as cinnamon and cardamom.

German cookbooks are filled with dozens of Christmas cookie recipes; some plain, like butter cookies, and others are made from different types of dough with various spices, including cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, orange and lemon peels, and vanilla.

Lebkuchen are one of the most popular traditional German Christmas cookies, similar to soft gingerbread cookies, usually flavored with honey and spices, which, food historians suggest, date back to the 12th century. The glaze, with a touch of lemon, completes the flavor (again, an example of a sweet and sour combination). Sometimes *Lebkuchen* are rolled out and cut with cookie cutters, and sometimes they are dropped by teaspoonfuls.

Pfeffernusse are a version of *Lebkuchen*, appropriately called “pepper nuts,” because of a generous dose of black pepper in the nutmeg, ginger, cardamom, cloves, honey, and lemon and orange zesty mixture which flavors the dough. When removed from the oven, the rounded balls are rolled in spiced (sometimes plain) confectioners’ sugar. *Pfeffernusse* are very hard morsels and are usually “dunked” in coffee, tea, or a beverage of choice. *Pfeffernusse* are one of the oldest known cookies in Germany, also dating back to the 12th century, although some food historians suggest that they were originally Dutch. What we do know, however, is that there are many varieties of *Pfeffernusse*, and the favorite recipe (and the only “true” *Pfeffernusse* to many) is the one passed down along with family recipe traditions.

Aachener Printen, another type of *Lebkuchen*, sweetened with syrup instead of honey, is unique to the city of Aachen, and how that happened was a twist of history. The name itself is now a protected designation of origin, which means that only bakeries in the area of Aachen can legally call the



Lebkuchen, popular traditional German Christmas cookies dating back to the 12th century, are enjoyed in a wide variety of flavors, shapes, and icings. (Annilein/Dreamstime.com)

special *kuchen Aachener Printen*. Firmer than other gingerbreads, the cake-like biscuit dates back 350 years to the days when Belgian bronze workers brought their favorite ginger cakes to Aachen. The Aachen bakers were relentless in their pursuit of the recipe for this new delicacy. Originally, the *Printen* appeared to have been baked in wooden molds called *Spekulatius*. In Aachen, the bakers pressed the raw dough into their elaborately carved molds, the process of *printen* or imprinting. The methods changed when Napoleon arrived in Germany in the early 19th century, and access to the important ingredients of cane sugar and American honey ended. The bakers improvised with beet sugar and syrup, and from then on, because the new mixture did not lend itself to be pressed into molds, the *Printen* were baked and cut into the squares, becoming the beloved biscuit-like cakes that are famous today.

Besides *Printen*, Aachen also prides itself on its sweet traditional Easter bread, *Poschweck*, which dates back to the Middle Ages. Butter and sugar cubes or chunks of crystallized sugar, along with raisins and walnuts, are kneaded into the dough before baking. Originally *Poschweck* was a gift from the bakery to their regular customers. In the Aachen Baker Edict of 1547 the city leaders mandated the bakers to bake this Easter bread and give it away for free. Several strikes by the bakers against this practice, during the 18th and 19th centuries, were not successful, but finally, in 1888, the bakers received permission to bake and sell the bread, which continues to be made locally, but now it is sold instead of given away.

In addition to *Poschweck*, many other German sweets are on the Easter table. Dyed eggs and chocolate bunnies are everywhere, signaling the end of winter and the beginning of the Christian season of Easter and spring. The *Osterlamm*, Easter Lamb, is a traditional symbol of Jesus, the Lamb of God. It is made either with yeast dough or with a rich, buttery batter, baked in a lamb-shaped mold and is always popular, whether dusted with confectioners' sugar or frosted and covered with coconut to mimic lamb's wool.

World's Tallest and Longest Cotton Candies

Feldkirchen bei Straubing, Germany, holds the world record for the tallest cotton candy, 17 feet and 10.57 inches, spun out on July 13, 2013. The record for the longest cotton candy, 4,593 feet and 2 inches, is held by Kocaeli Fuar Müdürlüğü, of Izmit, Kocaeli, Turkey, made on July 10, 2009. The Turkish candy floss weighed 661 pounds. Seventy of Kocaeli Fuar Müdürlüğü staff participated in making the cotton candy.

Guinness World Records. Accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>.

What defines “comfort food” is open to debate, but there is no debate about the comfort German cakes and cookies bring to those who are fortunate enough to be able to enjoy them—alone by themselves, with good German wine or beer, or as part of a meal. Meticulously made, beautifully presented, and truly appreciated, German sweets are delicious additions to any event, showcasing as they do their country and culture.

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Greece

Baklava, the sweet treat most commonly associated with modern-day Greece, tastes delicious in any language. *Glykismata* is the Greek term for desserts and pastries, perennial favorites at Greek festivals both in Greece and around the world. Greeks are famous for desserts and pastries, especially those created with honey, *phyllo* (meaning “sheet”), chopped nuts, and custard. Various desserts and pastries come with Greek names, including *galaktoboureko*, *kourabiedes*, *melopita*, *melomakaronia*, *milopita*, *koulourakia*, *viaourtopita*, and the list goes on.

Few cuisines on earth use honey as does the Greek. Honey, in Greece, comes from the gods. In ancient Greece, golden honey was said to be food for the gods. It was also said that the beautiful nymph Melissa, whose name comes from the Greek word for “honeybee,” fed honey to the infant god Zeus in a cave on the east end of the Greek Island of Crete. Athenians later honored Zeus Melichios, the “honeyed” or “kindly” one. Crete has produced honey since prehistoric times, and beekeeping in Greece likely arrived early on via its initial contacts with Egypt. From Crete, the largest and most populous of the 2,000 or so Greek islands, comes



Baklava, the sweet treat most commonly associated with modern-day Greece, is traditionally cut into diamonds and served with a whole clove in each piece. This ever-popular pastry took on local shapes, tastes, and textures as it spread throughout much of the world. (Costasz/Dreamstime.com)

one of the world's oldest written honey recipes, a recipe recorded by the Greek Stoic philosopher Chrysippus of Tyana who taught in Athens in the third century (*ca.* 280–207):

In Crete they make a little cake which they call *gastris*. This is how it is done: sweet almonds, hazelnuts, bitter almonds, poppy seeds: roast them, watching them carefully, and pound well in a clean mortar. After mixing the nuts knead with boiled honey, adding plenty of pepper. It turns black because of the poppy. Flatten out into a square. Now pound some white sesame, work with boiled honey, and stretch two *lagana*, one below and the other above, so that the black is in the middle, and divide into shapes. (originally quoted by ATHENAEUS 647f; quoted in Dalby and Grainger 1996, 80)

Honey and sesame seed candy was a common sweet treat eaten by ancient Greeks. Some suggest Chrysippus of Tyana's recipe sounds like modern-day *pasteli*, which, although it has a name of Italian derivation, is a very favorite traditional Greek honey and sesame, and sometimes nutty, chewy hard bar eaten as a snack. It is sweet and vegan, hence appropriate for the 40-day Lenten period preceding Easter. Although modern Greece is "pretty secular," the Orthodox Christian tradition has

deep roots and continues to influence contemporary cuisine. During a fasting period (*nistia*) like the days before Easter or Christmas, Orthodox Christians are supposed to avoid eating meat, dairy, and eggs. The acceptable foods for fasting are called *nistisima*, meaning, practically, that they are vegan. Some foods like *pasteli* are always vegan; others like *baklava* can be made either vegan if you use oil as shortening, or non-vegan if you use butter. Others have suggested that what Chrysippus of Tyana described was sort of a proto-*baklava*, but critics of that idea point out that although *gastris* and similar ancient cakes contained a filling of nuts, honey, and ground sesame, they lacked the specialized pastry dough in what is today commonly accepted to be *baklava*. In modern Greece, *lagana* is a flat bread, about an inch thick, eaten on the first day of Lent, but in any event, the ancient reference by Chrysippus of Tyana to *lagana* is unlikely to have any connection with the modern bread.

Some Greek honey treats are identified with the prefix *meli*, meaning honey, as in *melopita* (honey pie) and *melomakarona* (spiced honey macaroons with crushed walnuts, a Christmas tradition). Honeyless versions of sweet treats, of course, appear, such as the *finikia*, a honeyless, non-dairy type of cookie similar to the *melomakarona*, made with orange zest and/or juice, rolled after baking in a mixture of cinnamon, sugar, and finely ground walnuts.

Milopita is a moist and tender apple cake with cinnamon, so good that it is often eaten for breakfast. The god Dionysus, according to some accounts of Greek mythology, introduced the apple to mortals. *Diples*, a favorite traditional Christmas honey-roll turnover, are long, thin, deep-fried crispy dough strips made with flour, water, and eggs, rolled up and dipped in honey syrup, with a sugar, cinnamon, and finely ground walnut garnishing. *Diples*, in the Peloponese region, a favorite from the southern Byzantine region of Mani, are also made for special occasion events like weddings, engagements, baptisms, and name days, the day in the liturgical calendar of the saint whose name you commemorate.

Tragemata

Food writer historian Joanne Chen points out that sweet treats have always been about human relationships. Chen notes that the Greeks referred to the sweets eaten after a banquet as *tragemata*, “what one chews alongside wine,” with participants casually drinking and picking at the sweets—“a social vehicle to enjoying each other’s company, unencumbered by the formality of the main course.” Their treats for the picking likely included nuts, honey, dried fruits, and an early form of cake (essentially porridge baked dry by the sun).

Chen, Joanne. *The Taste of Sweet: Our Complicated Love Affair with Our Favorite Treats*. New York: Three Rivers, 2008, 87–88.

Name days in the Greek Orthodox Church, of which most Greeks are members, are very important festival days calling for special sweet treats that include a striking array of appetizers, cakes, and fancy desserts. Some name days correspond to major holidays (e.g., Christmas is also the name day for Christine and August 15, the feast of the Dormition of Virgin Mary, is the name day of Maria), but most are not national holidays. People celebrate name days like a birthday without candles on the cake, with a party or gathering at their house, where, of course, they serve plenty of desserts and treats.

With most Greeks belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church, the liturgical calendar takes on special importance, with Easter—determined by the Julian calendar—being the most revered and celebrated holy day of the year. Easter brings with it *tsoureki* (sweet Easter bread), *koulourakia* (butter-based sweet pastry twists), and *avgoules* (Easter cookies). In Greece, there is no Easter without the traditional *tsoureki*, a three-strand braided sweet yeast bread made of eggs, milk, and butter, with a red-colored cooked egg braided into the center of the dough. Traditional loaves are flavored with *mastic*, the ground-up dried resin of the local mastic tree, and the slightly bitter *mahlab*, the powdered seed kernel of the stone of the St. Lucie cherry, having a taste reminiscent of bitter almonds. *Koulourakia* are a plain, but traditional, slightly sweetened, usually round-twisted or S-shaped butter cookie, generally brushed with an egg-milk mixture and sprinkled with sesame seeds. *Avgoules*, butter-sugar cookies made with eggs, orange juice and zest, and vanilla, are fashioned with the dough twisted and wrapped around a red-colored cooked egg. They are popular ritual treats offered to guests in an “Easter basket” and used in the tradition of cracking the “red egg” in celebration of Christ’s resurrection.

Koulourakia is a general word used to describe small treats, as well as the twisted butter cookie treat so popular at Easter. The small-treats *koulourakia*—which tend to be simple and not too sweet—are served at Christmas and other major feasts in the Greek Orthodox liturgical calendar, along with an array of sweet treats, including the *melomakarona* and *diples*, and other more common treats such as the simple, small, round almond sugar cookie known as *kourabiedes*, filled with almond pieces and coated with confectioners’ sugar. New Year’s Day—also St. Basil’s Day—brings with it *vasilopita*, a New Year’s Day sweet yeasted bread-cake containing a coin or other hidden treasure, the finder of which is said to enjoy good luck in the coming year—a custom similar to that found in many parts of the world. For people in Greece who cannot find things, *Fanouropita*, or St. Fanourios’ cake, is the cake to take to the church on August 27. Made completely of Church-regulated fasting ingredients and thus containing no dairy, eggs, or animal products, the cinnamon- and clove-flavored spiced raisin cake is baked as an offering to St. Fanourios, the Greek Orthodox patron saint of lost items, to help one find lost items. Sharing the blessed cake with seven friends, in seven different houses, with each saying “May

God forgive St. Fanourios’ mother and rest her soul in peace,” it is said, will help the creator of the cake find the lost item(s). Participants are free to eat the cake after their incantations, with no known harm affecting the outcome. No one knows for what St. Fanourios’ mother needs the prayers, but all enjoy the cake in spite of it.

And all enjoy a wide variety of other, more secular, chopped-nut treats. With nuts abundant in Greece—walnuts, hazelnuts, and almonds—it is no surprise to see nuts appear so copiously in their sweet treats. *Karidopita* (a rich Greek walnut cake), *amygdalopita* (a basic Greek almond cake), and *kourabiedes* (shortbread cookies with confectioners’ sugar and almonds) are enjoyed throughout the year.

Because Greece is a mostly mountainous country, producing dairy products is an especially important part of the agricultural sector. The main beneficiary of this in the sweet treats world are custards and yoghurt-based treats, such as the traditional *galaktoboureko*, a favorite semolina-based creamy custard baked in *phyllo*, drenched with a lemon or orange syrup, a classic dessert treat similar to the *phyllo*-with-custard *bougatsa* which is a treat sprinkled with confectioners’ sugar and cinnamon and enjoyed at breakfast throughout Greece.

Today lemon-honey syrup is used in many Greek pastries after baking; the lemon is added for flavor and to help keep the honey from crystalizing. All desserts with syrup are called *syropiasta*—*galaktoboureko* and *baklava* are among them. Not all are made with *phyllo*, but all are soaked in syrup. *Kataifi* is made using a thread-like dough of the same name, often with a filling of chopped nuts, as with *baklava*. Another is *ravani*, a lemon-flavored semolina cake sweetened with simple syrup flavored with lemon zest. The syrup does not always have honey like the one used in *baklava*; often the syrup used in *ravani* is a mixture of just sugar, water, and flavoring agents.

Loukoumades, named from the Turkish word *lokma*, meaning “mouthful” or “morsel,” is a round deep-fried pastry donut-hole-like treat soaked in honey, commonly spiced with cinnamon and occasionally sprinkled lightly with nuts, a famous sweet treat which was honorifically served to winners of the Greek Olympics. *Yaourtopita* (Greek yoghurt cake) and *portokalopita* (a Greek yoghurt-based sweet orange *phyllo* cake) are especially refreshing treats for the summer months, eaten cold, with whipped cream or ice cream. *Dudurmas* or *kaimaki*, an ice cream made with *mastic* and *salep*—a starchy orchid-tuber flour used as a thickening agent which gives the ice cream a “stretchy” quality—is popular, especially in the north. *Mastic* is a sweet aromatic licorice-like resin used for flavoring, the same way it is used in Greek Easter breads. *Mastic* is known locally as “tears of Chios,” as it comes from mastic trees on the Island of Chios. Must from wine is used not only in Greek must cookies (*moustokouloura*) but also in *moustalevria*, a creamy-gelatinous grape pudding-like treat made of naturally sweet fresh *mousto* (grape must)—juice from pressed grapes before fermentation—mixed with semolina flour, boiled until thick, and eaten warm or chilled, often topped with chopped

walnuts or sesame seeds, and cinnamoned to taste. Puddings made from rice, like thick and creamy *rizogalo* (Greek “rice-milk” pudding with egg yolks, vanilla, sugar, and cinnamon) are simple but popular traditional treats enjoyed throughout Greece. Like *moustalevria*, the sugar- and cinnamon-flavored treat can be served warm or cold. The popular cinnamon and sugar combination was introduced to the region by Arabs, in the eighth century.

Greece has long known about sugar. The first reference to sugar in classical literature is attributed to General Nearchus of Crete, commander of Alexander the Great’s army in 327 BC, who came upon it in what is now the Punjab region of Pakistan and India. And Greece has long had access to some sugar, especially after about AD 1000 when Arabs installed the first “industrial” sugar refinery on the island of Crete, an island they called by the Persian word *Qandi*, meaning “crystallized sugar” or “hard candy made by boiling.” The Persian-Arab name today is more generally recognized in its English counterpart “candy.” Greek Cyprus likewise had a long tradition of sugar making, one dating back to as early as the 13th century, when it was one of Europe’s first major sugar producers. Crete and Cyprus both played important historical roles in the early spread of sugar to Europe and eventually also to the New World.

After a large meal and as snacks throughout the day, Greeks enjoy both their world-class sweets and whatever fruits are available in season. Sometimes fruits, such as oranges or figs, are served with yoghurt and topped with honey and nuts—a delicious and healthy treat anytime of the day. More elaborate Greek sweets are festive foods, or foods for an afternoon treat, or a gesture of hospitality. Greeks also enjoy “spoon sweets” (*glika tou koutaliou*), sweet stewed whole fruit or fruit preserves—labeled as “preserves” in specialty shops in the United States—served with a spoon to visitors during the day or early evening, also as a gesture of hospitality. “Spoons” are usually whole fruit preserves made of unripe fruit (e.g., figs and cherries) but they can also be fruit peel (e.g., orange and bergamot), or shreds (quince), and even nuts, like whole young walnuts (including the shell before it hardens, and the green outer coating). Spoons can be made from almost any fruit; Greek orange spoon sweets (*gliko koutaliou portokali*) and other slightly sour fruit spoons are popular. They are simple to make—usually just fresh fruit, often whole fruit, slowly stewed in a honey or sugar syrup, sometimes with a little lemon juice. They are handy to have around when unexpected guests arrive, and they go well with a fresh cup of double-sweet Greek coffee.

A major recurring question in this part of the world is, “Who invented these sweet treats?” These questions are often an important part of one’s cultural pride and perennially they are matters of light-hearted discussions. From time to time these questions even germinate public debate. In 2006, Greek Cypriots and the Turks became engaged in “The *Baklava* War,” for example, over the question of

who was the inventor of the beloved iconic oh-so-sweet honey, nut, and *phyllo* pastry. The so-called *Baklava* War started when a European Union poster showcasing “national desserts” of its member states featured *baklava* for Cyprus. Turkish *baklava* makers protested Greek Cypriot’s claims that the super-sweet dessert is their creation. Turkey’s state minister and European Union chief negotiator objected. Public protests were scheduled in Istanbul’s historic *Sultanahmet* district. Banners proclaimed, “*Baklava* is Turkish, we will not allow the Greek Cypriots to feed it to the world.” A Turkish commercial *baklava* producer vowed, “We will go all the way to Brussels [the de facto capital of the European Union], and we will let the EU ministers taste real *baklava*.” The president of the *Baklava* and Dessert Producers Foundation of Turkey announced, “It was time for Turkey to stand up and claim its national treasures.” Overnight, the dessert which had been the sweetest unifying treat among all the countries of the Mediterranean and Middle East had suddenly become the most divisive. Everyone loves their *baklava* and wants to claim it as their own. In the sweet treats world even more complicated and politically sensitive questions arise, like who makes the *best baklava*, regardless of who made the *first*.

But perennially appearing questions like “who made it first?” reflect, in part, the historical importance of Greek sweets. And the answers to the questions are often most difficult to sort out. Scholars are not sure the extent to which the Byzantine Greek culture early on influenced the nomadic Turks, how much Persia influenced the Turks and tribal Arabs, how much early Arab peoples influenced both, and the other cultures in the area, how much the Ottomans influenced the Greeks when Greece was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, and so on. One can throw Italy and Spain into the mix as well—as well as the fact that generally influences are two-way—and the historical lens gets clouded. Not all Greek sweet treats come with Greek names, and not all of the Greek-named sweet treats are singular inventions. What anthropologists call “diffusion” and “adaptation” have been at work in the Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and North African lands that have been crisscrossed by lucrative trading routes and trampled by armies for thousands of years. This is one of the reasons why, in the 21st century, one sees, for example, sweet treats in Greece known by Turkish and even Persian-based names.

About 61 percent of the 10.8 million Greek people live in urban areas, with 3.25 million living in Athens, the capital, and a little over 800,000 living in the northern city of Thessaloniki. Hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, those who have the money have international and commercial sweets available to them in the restaurants and in the stores. Recently, however, times have been challenging in Greece, and through it all traditional homemade sweet treats never fail to provide comfort in trying times.

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H

Hong Kong

On July 1, 1997, the small British-administered region of Hong Kong, located on the south coast of China, became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. It made the agreement that China would not impose its socialist economic system on Hong Kong, and that Hong Kong would enjoy a high degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign and defense affairs, for the next 50 years. About 94 percent of the Hong Kong people are Chinese, most of whom are Cantonese-speaking, and all of whom are urban. With its 7.2 million people packed into an area about six times the size of Washington, D.C., Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. As a major international city of commerce, it has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Many aspects of today's Hong Kong culture, including most of its sweet treat favorites, are Chinese with a British overlay, having an international flavor.

What sweet treats will the Hong Kongers enjoy between now and the expiration date of their SAR shelf life in the year 2047?

Five native food writers discussed a selection of 40 Hong Kong food items “that make us rather not live than live without”—an interesting variation on the “sweet treats to die for” theme normally heard (DeWolf et al. 2010). Thirteen of the selections were sweets. Hong Kong-style French toast topped the list of food items they reportedly cannot do without—two pieces of toast slathered with peanut butter or *kaya* (coconut egg) jam, soaked in egg batter, fried in butter, and served with still more butter and lots of syrup—the perfect comfort food combination of simple sweet and savory flavors and soft and crispy textures. Other notable sweet treats include more traditional Chinese fares—two cakes and a sweet bun, two puddings, a milk curd and an egg tart, a sweet tofu soup, a sweet paste, and a jelly—and from the English came two sweet teas.

Named for the crust's resemblance to the fruit, the popular “pineapple bun” (*boh loh baau*)—a flaky, crusty, sugar-and-egg-yolk coated, firm-on-the-outside, soft-on-the-inside pineapple-less bun—is said to be “the holy grail of what may generously be termed the Hong Kong school of baking” (DeWolf et al. 2010). Other noteworthy Hong Kong sweet treats include miniature wife cakes, a flaky-skinned pastry made from pork lard, and a firm, chewy almond paste and sweet winter

melon filling. Miniature Hong Kong wife cakes are a small local version of Chinese sweetheart cakes (*lou pho piang*) served at weddings on the mainland, where they are a symbol of fertility. The small golden brown egg cakes are crackly on the outside and spongy on the inside.

Bowl puddings remain popular, including a mango pudding in mango sauce with extra mango chunks added. Spicy, creamy, soupy ginger-juice milk curd—a timeless custard-like Cantonese treat—serves as a Hong Kong wintertime dessert at its best. *Geung tsap dun nai* (“ginger-collides-with-milk”), made by gently simmering sweetened milk and then mixing it with fresh ginger juice causing the milk to curdle, is known for its soft pudding-like texture. Grass jelly dessert is a regional jelly-like treat typically either served chilled in a bowl or topped with plenty of mixed fresh or canned fruits and condensed milk. Also known as leaf jelly, it is made by boiling stalks and leaves of an East Asian member of the mint family (*Messona chinensis*) with potassium carbonate and starch, then cooling the liquid to a Jell-O-like consistency. It is traditionally served with sugar syrup. Hong Kongers also love lotus seed paste, a classic luxurious Chinese dessert ingredient made from dried lotus seeds which are first soaked, then stewed in water, and then ground to a paste and passed through cheesecloth. Sugar is then added, and after being dry-cooked in a huge wok to develop the flavor, a velvety lotus seed paste results that can be stuffed in fluffy white buns.

Hong Kongers from all walks of life enjoy afternoon tea, a legacy of British rule. Hong Kong’s rich egg custard tarts—rated number 16 on CNN’s “World’s 50 Best Foods” list—are a legacy of British teatime custard tarts, adapted to local Chinese tastes, one version having a flaky puff pastry shell, and another a sweet shortbread crust (CNN 2011). The world-class flaky pastry provides a much-loved contrasting texture to the “jiggly, trembling custard.” Milk tea itself is said to be a transparent symbol of English traditions fused with Chinese tastes. Milk tea is made with a special blend of black Ceylon tea mixed with evaporated milk. A good cup is bitter, full-bodied, and velvety smooth. The pineapple bun is said to be the perfect complement to milk tea—especially if you have the bun with a thick slab of butter sandwiched in the middle, a celebrated Hong Kong comfort food combination.

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Horn of Africa

(Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia)

Referred to in ancient times as the “Land of the Berbers” (*Bilad al Barbar*), the Horn of Africa contains the modern-day countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti. Much of the region includes the fabled “Land of Punt,” and “The Land of the God” (*Ta-Netjer*), important trading partners with ancient Egypt, which later became important in Egyptian fables and legends. “The Land of the God” also featured most prominently in the historically important Christian legends of the mid-15th century and the Portuguese explorations in search of the mythical “lost” Christian Kingdom of Prester John—explorations which ultimately brought sugar to all of the Western world, thereby changing the world of sweet treats forever.

Ethiopia, formerly known as Abyssinia, has been around seemingly forever. Other countries of the Horn are comparatively newborn. Eritrea, formerly under the control of the Ottoman Empire, became an autonomous region within the Ethiopian federation but emerged as an independent country in 1993. Somalia became a separate country in 1960, uniting what had been British Somaliland with Italian Somaliland. Djibouti was born of French Somaliland in 1977. Regional strife and conflict continue in all four countries, some oriented toward autonomy and/or independence. Politically, the region is anything but sweet.

The Horn of Africa, in general, and modern-day Ethiopia, specifically—considered to be the oldest area of the world inhabited by humans—was home to ancient kingdoms rivaling those of Rome, Greece, Persia, China, and India, with roots going back some four millennia. Ethiopia, now one of the most populous countries of Africa, in the 19th century was only one of two African nations to remain an independent recognized country in face of the land assaults by colonizing European nations, albeit it was briefly occupied by Italians (1936–1941). Ethiopia’s human roots date back 400,000 years.

In the world of food, northeast Ethiopia is the home of coffee, thought to have been first used by the Oromo peoples, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and parts of Somalia (making up over one-third of the population of Ethiopia). Legends, of course, describe its discovery in detail. They *are* legends. Coffee (*Coffea arabica*), until the 15th century, was a wild berry eaten rather than infused in drink. Coffee cultivation on small evergreen bushes first appeared across the Red Sea in neighboring southern Arabia, and coffee-drinking as an infusion most likely began among the mystical Islamic Sufis in what is modern-day Yemen. Venetian merchants brought coffee-drinking to upper-class Venice, and eventually to coffeehouses (in 1645), and from there it spread to the rest of Europe. Coffee itself spread in modern times to become one of the most traded agricultural commodities in the world, with its caffeine-laden berries now cultivated in over 70 countries. And, of

course, it is used for infusion and flavoring in innumerable sweet treats throughout the world. Ethiopia remains currently fifth in the world in coffee production, its exports accounting for almost three-fourths of the activity at neighboring Djibouti's port container terminal.

Ethiopia, for the most part, remains traditional and, in the world of sweet treats, coffee *is* its traditional sweet treat, along with honey and ripe fruits. Ethiopia is the 10th largest honey producer in the world, and *tej*, home-brewed honey-based wine, is the national drink of the country. Ethiopians, in general, do not eat desserts. Asnakech, who grew up in Addis Ababa, explains:

The traditional Ethiopian meal is served on a large platter that can serve about six people at the same time. The platter is draped with *injera* (crêpe-like bread) and the family and guests eat from the same platter. Various stew dishes are portioned out onto the *injera* and those who are eating are supposed to tear pieces of *injera* and scoop the stews. *Tella* is a home-made honey-made beer [*Tej* a honey-made wine] that is usually consumed with the meal. Because the meal is so dense with stews and the bread, coffee is considered a sweet treat after a meal. Coffee is served after every meal of the day. It is traditionally served with a teaspoon of home-turned butter, sugar and/or honey. The coffee is served after meals ceremoniously. It's roasted and grinded-up in front of guests, and then served with roasted barley *kolo* [an Ethiopian nut-like grain snack], or chickpea crackers, *dabo-kolo*. (Asnakech, personal communication, 2013)

Asnakech's daughter, Saba Andualem, goes on to explain:

Because coffee is an Ethiopian original and gave stimulation, it was the go-to for Ethiopians. Coffee *is* our sweet treat. My mother's family puts roasted coffee bean berries in home-made clarified butter because the coffee berry skin gives the butter a sweet taste. But coffee is also consumed separately, which is why [with honey or sugar] it is considered a sweet treat in Ethiopia. Coffee too, as a sweet treat, is available to children anywhere in Ethiopia, even at infancy.

In neighboring Eritrea the *injera*, the classic Ethiopian flat bread, is traditionally served with *tsebhi shiro*, spicy peanuts in a butter and tomato sauce.

There is a difference between the urban national capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, and the rural areas. Saba notes:

Addis Ababa is the capital so it's more globalized. Addis Ababa is more developed in a sense of there being more buildings, more restaurants, more tourists, more schools. Busy parts of Addis Ababa, for example, usually have

fruit-flavored sweet treats, but those are brought in from outside by businesses in the interest of making money from tourists; traditionally, to what is considered traditional today, there are no flavorings of coffee in any sweet treat. Coffee flavorings are not familiar to Ethiopian culture. That involves syrups and sugars usually, and the coffee is so available organically and so entwined in the culture there isn't need to mimic it. (Andualem, personal communication, 2013)

Ethiopian-born Marcus Samuelsson, one of the world's preeminent celebrity chefs, straightforwardly points out that in Ethiopia, "there is no cultural tradition of dessert" (Samuelsson 2006, 316). Fruit, he suggests, is the one common denominator sweet treats in all warm climates. "The greatest fruit in the world can be found year round, so there's no need to make sweet treats—they literally grow on trees" (Samuelsson 2006, 300). Saba Andualem agrees with Samuelsson: "Traditionally, in rural areas today, sweet treats for children are considered fruit from just outside their homes, especially dates. When I eat in Ethiopia my favorite sweet treat in the rural areas are the fruit from the trees outside, dates, and *dabo kolo* [chickpea crackers]. Also, though this didn't originate in Ethiopia and was picked it up from the neighboring Middle East, *baklava* is pretty popular in restaurants, so whenever I'm in Addis Ababa that's one of my favorites too! And OF COURSE coffee!"

And, of course, as Marcus Samuelsson also observes, in the pastry shops of Addis Ababa they sell beautiful frosted cakes, some of which have inspired his own world-famous Ethiopian adaptations. Saba points out that these are of outside influence:

Today, because of the outside influence and more globalization of cuisine, there are cakes available at restaurants in Addis Ababa . . . and candy. Even the sweet and more so globalized version of "*sombusa*," pastry, what is called "*destaye*," is also new and is more-so created towards accommodating the typical American restaurant go-er or one with a western cuisine preference. The original and traditional Ethiopian triangle-shaped pastry is a similarly fried pastry filled with meat and onions or spinach and lentils. Any sweet filling is more-so new age and more-so because of outside Western influence. (Andualem, personal communication, 2013)

The "sweet fillings" of the *destaye* dough pastry shells that Saba talks about are raisins, pistachios, almonds, grated coconut, and cardamom. "The rural areas are the countryside of Ethiopia and so they are agricultural based. They are more traditional because of less mix up in types of people who inhabit the area" (Andualem 2013). And they remain more isolated to this day.

Although Ethiopia has largely been isolated from the outside sweet treat world, because of its mountainous terrain and particular political history, the other countries of the Horn have not remained so sequestered, and the colonial Italian, French, and British influences can be seen in their respective selections of sweet treats and the European-inspired customs surrounding them. In Ethiopia itself—except for tourists and other foreigners largely found in Addis Ababa—sweet treats remain traditional and self-defined to consist of coffee, honey, sweet fruits—particularly dates—and snack grains—probably not all that much different from the sweet treats eaten there 400,000 years ago by our earliest ancestors.

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Hungary

“If ever the Hungarian nation behaved well in the past 1,100 years, it is probably because it would have been useless for anybody to tell them, ‘Go back where you came from.’ Nobody knew where *that* was—the Hungarians themselves still argue about it,” George Lang wrote in *The Cuisine of Hungary* (1971). *Magyar*, the Hungarian language spoken in the region since the ninth century, is a complicated Uralic type with ancient roots not useful in tracing Hungarian origins. Both Eastern and Western traditions have influenced Hungarian history, culture, and cuisine. From the Asiatic Magyars (Hungarians) came the specialties like *gulas* (goulash) and *pörkölt* (stews), and from the European Magyars came the baking traditions. As time passed, as you might expect, the imaginative and creative Hungarians adapted recipes to local tastes and ingredients.

There are many subcultures in Hungary—the Roma and the Czango, for example—all with distinct linguistic and cultural characteristics and identities. They each exhibit wonderfully rich histories, traditions, and cultures in this east-central European country bisected by the Danube River. Hungarians are intelligent, creative, and practical. They are mathematical wizards, world-renowned physicists, inspired poets, famed musicians and music educators, admired farmers, and gifted winemakers. Their handicrafts are beautiful, carefully detailed, and colorful. Their

creativity in the kitchen and elsewhere has no bounds. No one, for example, has to date bested the famed Hungarian illusionist Harry Houdini. It is no surprise, then, that Hungarian cuisine is an amalgamation of East and West, rural and urban, nomadic and sedentary, and ancient and modern. It could well be said that Hungarians *invented* “fusion cooking.”

Elek Magyar, in *The Gourmet’s Cook Book*, creates a delicious view of Hungarian cuisine today (1970). Yes, it has been famous for centuries, since the time the Hungarians made the land of four rivers their home, but their tastes have become more refined and more diverse over the years. Traditionally, Hungarians ate meals that consisted of pork, beef, mutton, poultry, and game, including fish, often accompanied with a rich sauce, frequently flavored with paprika and served with cottage cheese noodles or dumplings. They still do eat those meals, and meals that also include lighter fare and salads, and, always, sweets.

Over 500 years ago, in 1490, when Hungarian King Matthias died, his empire collapsed and that ultimately led to a Turkish invasion, an invasion that radically altered the boundaries of Hungary. Hindsight sheds some light on the effects of this turbulent time in Hungarian history. Turkish cooking utensils and techniques entered the kitchens of the common people. The nobility hired French chefs, whose talents further developed the sophistication of Hungarian cuisine. According to George Lang, “The new style consolidated the ancient Asiatic heritage, King Matthias I’s introduction of the Italian Renaissance, and the mellowing effect of the French kitchen; and this amalgam should be considered the foundation of the modern Hungarian cuisine” (Lang 1971).

That amalgam is obvious in the comments of Professor Borsányi László, an always-hungry Hungarian anthropologist, and his wife, Oláh Gabriella, an editor and excellent cook and baker, when they wrote that there are many varieties of sweets, including pastries made from one piece of dough, pastries made in layers, donuts, cakes, and crêpes, not to mention cookies, pasta desserts, and puddings. The suggestion of multiple kinds of sweets, and the sweet treats proudly touted by Hungarians themselves in cooking blogs, is testimony to the diverse linguistic and cultural history of the Hungarians.

Sweetened noodles may sound bizarre to the Western ear, but just imagine fruit-stuffed dumplings with ground nuts, or poppy seed; or noodles tossed in butter with a bit of lemon juice and lemon zest, topped with powdered sugar and walnuts; or noodle strudel pie. These tasty noodle desserts are satisfying, practical, use local ingredients, and are affordable. Now, let your mouth water over the thought of sweet cream cheese dumplings—another dessert made from available ingredients.

Palacsinta are the distinctly delicate, delicious Hungarian version of crêpes or pancakes. The varieties of *palacsinta* are testimonies to the creativity of the

Hungarians. Often rolled, they hold jam, sweet cottage cheese, cocoa powder, walnuts or poppy seeds, vanilla or chocolate cream, or they get a dousing of *palinka* (traditional fruit brandy) for flambéing, or they might have sweet fillings of apples, plums, apricots, or the famous sour cherries in between each *palacsinta*. Visitors continuously marvel at what the creative Hungarians make from flour, sugar, eggs, and a few fruits.

Dozens of donut recipes exist in Hungarian kitchens and cookbooks, many, of course, flavored with fruits. Typically, the donuts have no holes; rather, they have a “crater,” which holds jelly or chocolate pudding, or whatever one desires, and a final dusting of powdered sugar.

*Linzer*ek suggest the Austrian influence (the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the historic union between the crowns of the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary, from 1867 to 1918, and the Austrian city of Linz was known for its pastries). There are linzer tarts and linzer shortbreads with nuts or jam. The famous Gerbeaud Slice, the layered delicacy from Budapest’s 125-year-old legendary Gerbeaud Café, is reminiscent of the Austrian coffeehouse delicacies.

Sütemények egy tésztából are pastries made from one unbroken piece of dough (not layered) and usually have a fruit or mincemeat filling, more an elegant strudel than a pie. Historically, the Turks brought the flaky *phyllo* pastry to Hungary in the 17th century. Instead of the honey and nuts used in Turkish pastry,

the resourceful Hungarians filled the *phyllo* with their own ingredients, including apples, cherries, and poppy seeds, to make an extraordinary strudel. “Hungarian strudel,” *vargabéles*, a noodle strudel pie made with curd cheese, remains a perennial national specialty.

In Hungarian cuisine culture, *tortak*, the tortes or cakes, are not only delicious but are also visual works of art. Toward the end of the 19th century, József C. Dobos, a master chef and owner of a delicatessen in Budapest, created a legendary cake that would stay fresh longer than the other cakes at a time when refrigerators were not available and iceboxes were difficult, if not impossible, to keep cool in hot weather. The famous, signature Dobos torte consists of seven very thin layers



Gerbeaud Slice (*Zerbó*), traditionally eaten at Christmas, has become a popular delicacy during Hungarian celebrations and special occasions year-round. (Amacistock/Dreamstime.com)

of sponge-like cake, each baked individually (not thin slices of a larger cake). Then, a new ingredient, created by Mr. Dobos, probably “borrowed” from the French, chocolate buttercream, coated each of the layers. The magic touch, however, was the caramel glaze on the top, which was not only delicious but also helped keep the cake moist and fresh.

As far back as the 15th century, at the wedding celebration of King Matthias Corvinus and his bride, Beatrix, the daughter of the King of Naples, the *pièce de résistance* was a chessboard with all the pieces made from marzipan. Records indicate that the marzipan, along with other fine confectionaries, came to Hungary through Princess Beatrix’s Italian connections.

Marzipan is valued because baking artisans can make it into dramatic, delicious miniature sculptures. The delicate pieces, made by Hungarian marzipan artists to this day, are always handmade. A small store in the heart of Budapest makes exquisite, marzipan delicacies. The Szamos family members, the confectioners who run the shop, were some of the first in Hungary to make marzipan from an original recipe of almonds and sugar and market the flowers and sculptures for special events.

Another marzipan dynasty is Szabo marzipan. In Budapest’s Hilton Hotel, attached to Buda Castle and next to Matthias Church, there is a Szabo Marzipan Museum that displays marzipan sculptures of Matthias Church, Fishermen’s Bastion, and the famous Chain Bridge across the Danube, several Harry Potter characters, and many other curious mini sculptures.

Elek Magyar (1970), in *The Gourmet’s Cook Book*, suggests kneading equal weights of ground almonds and sugar until doughy, resting the dough for an evening, shaping it into miniature works of art (with the precision of a surgeon), and drying the tiny masterpieces at room temperature, to express one’s own culinary and artistic talent.

Many Hungarians associate sweets with a story or a name with historical significance. For example, a favorite pastry called *Indianer* translates as “Indian or Moors’ heads.” *Indianers* are balls of jellyroll, sliced in half, with whipped cream in the middle, with the sponge ends dipped in chocolate, resembling turbans. In the early 1800s, the Hungarian count Ferdinánd Pálffy de Erdőd was the director of the *Theater an der Wien*. To appeal to the public and draw more attendance, the count engaged an Indian magician to entertain the theatergoers. When the apparently disinterested public still did not race to the performances, Pálffy hired his Hungarian cook to create a new, novel pastry. The *Indianer* was born, so to speak, and was distributed to the theater audience. It was a brilliant idea, it packed the theaters, and the *Indianer* became a classic Hungarian pastry.

János Rákóczi created *Rákóczi túrós* (baked cheesecake *Rákóczi*) for the Hungarian Restaurant at the 1958 World Exposition in Brussels. Cheesecake, baked on a pastry base, decorated with intricate meringue latticework and apricot jam remains an exquisite showpiece now found in nearly every coffeehouse.

Rigó Jancsi is a chocolate-flavored sponge or jellyroll, sandwiched together with a thick chocolate mousse, and then glazed in chocolate frosting, a delicate pastry with a somewhat scandalous story attached to it. Rigó Jancsi was a renowned virtuoso Hungarian gypsy violinist. As the story goes, toward the end of the 19th century, he was playing in a Paris restaurant where a Belgian count was dining with his beautiful, young, American wife. Rigó's music, passion, and hypnotic gaze worked its magic on the young woman. She put her wedding ring on one of Rigó's fingers, and left her Belgian husband and two young children to follow Rigó Jancsi. There are variations of this story, of course, and no one really seems to know how to connect the sweet treat to the events; but, as stated earlier, many Hungarian pastries and cakes have an interesting story or namesake.

Hungarian cake shops are found everywhere, and they are big, small, elegant, modest, expensive, affordable, famous, or simply a local hangout. The cake shop is a gift from the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, a gift that has remained virtually unchanged for over 200 years. Amazing! The cake shop employees serve their patrons with both traditional and more modern cakes, gateaux, and pastries. In winter, chestnut purée is the attraction that matches summer's ice cream. These establishments have been able to stay in business for so long because their customers are fussy, and know and appreciate a beautifully executed pastry or cake with fine ingredients and an individual touch, not to mention sweet treats made with pride.

The Hungarian repertoire of sweet treats and desserts ranges from sophisticated and elegant to simple and practical, but their sweet treats are always deliciously prepared and artistically presented. The history, the stories, and the cake shops like Gerbeaud's and Ruszvurm's exude rich traditions. If you order a chocolate confection in Gerbeaud's, called Kugler, for example, you will find that it is named after Henrik Kugler, the original owner of what became Gerbeaud's. His name lives on, as do the names of many others. If you are in a cake shop, ask about what you are eating, or go to the Marzipan Museum to learn about historic structures and figures.

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I

Iceland

With minimal investigation, one finds evidence of Scandinavian culinary tradition in Icelandic sweet treats due to the very early settlement of Norse peoples in this small North Atlantic island country. Historians tell us that in the eighth century, a mariner, sailing from Norway to the Faroe Islands, got lost and the winds blew him to the east coast of what is now Iceland. This “discovery” brought Norse settlement to Iceland, and, for the most part, Norway claimed authority over Iceland until the 14th century. Eventually, Denmark became the dominant power, and in 1602, the king of Denmark forbade Iceland to trade with any country other than Denmark. This trade monopoly had a profound Danish influence on the culinary traditions of Iceland—from early diets of dairy, meat, game, and preserved food to modern tastes with an emphasis on fresh, natural ingredients.

In the 18th century, the Danes published a cookbook in Icelandic that introduced the inhabitants of Iceland to the cuisine of Denmark, although Danish merchants had been sharing favorite recipes long before the appearance of the written cookbook. Icelanders quickly learned the art of pastry making from the Danish bakers who had moved to Iceland from Denmark. Legend tells us that some Danish pastry-making traditions have endured in Iceland longer than they did in Denmark, possibly because there were fewer outside influences to dilute traditional recipes and methods.

Iceland became an independent republic in 1944 but remains closely connected with Denmark. However, because it is a small island, Iceland imports most of its fresh fruits, except for berries. Like the Danes, Icelanders make many of their sweet treats and desserts with fresh berries, dried berries, or frozen berries, garnished with local dairy cream.

When the first Danish bakers came to Iceland, besides bringing their techniques for making Danish pastries, they developed their own breads and pastries. One of the local favorite sweets is *snúður*, a light, fluffy cinnamon roll lightly iced or glazed with melted chocolate. There is also a sweeter variety of *snúður*, made with a date filling and penuche frosting. Nearly every kitchen has a version of *skúffukaka*, a chocolate cake, frequently referred to as brownies, because the cake is typically baked in a flat pan, is a single layer, and is frosted with a thick, chocolate icing.

Now that the ingredients are more easily imported, many varieties of cakes similar to the Scandinavian varieties appear in the Icelandic culinary repertoire.

However, *skyrkaka*, *skyr* cake, is a unique Icelandic sweet. *Skyr* is a thick, smooth, rich-flavored, high-protein thicker-than-yoghurt dairy product, actually a cheese made only in Iceland and known in Iceland since medieval times. *Skyr* cake, similar to cheesecake, is served in homes and fine restaurants alike. Icelanders eat *Skyr* cake, the signature Icelandic dessert, plain or garnished with berries.

In Iceland today, the sweet treats are plentiful and natural—both traditional and modern. There are apple cakes, sponge cakes, cookies, and pastries. There are holiday breads, everyday breads, and candies. Icelanders eat fresh fruits or fruit jams, jellies, tarts, and fillings. Nearly every day there are new sweet innovations on this remote island in the Atlantic Ocean between Norway and Greenland, and every year midwinter Icelanders celebrate food innovations at their five-day Food and Fun Festival highlighting Icelandic-ingredients-only dishes. The festival sweets—a mandatory category of the Food and Fun Festival’s world-class competition—like the island’s heritage desserts, routinely present some of the very best of the world of sweet treats—naturally.

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India

Indian cuisine is colorful, vibrant, aromatic, healthy and diverse. No matter where you go, no matter who you are, and no matter what you do, in India, the colors, flavors, and fragrances will stimulate the visual, olfactory, tactile, and taste senses. India is a large country, with great variation among the people and the regions. One of the world’s older civilizations, it dates as far back as the third millennium BC, when legend tells us that the Dravidians (groups of people whose languages are believed to be traceable to ancient Sanskrit) inhabited India. Beginning about 1500 BC, Aryan tribes infiltrated from the north and essentially pushed the Dravidians into the mountains and jungles from the north to the south. For the next several centuries, other tribes, dynasties, sailors, and merchants enhanced the already sophisticated Indian science, culture, and art. In the 16th century, Europe took notice of

this culturally rich subcontinental area, and by the 19th century, Great Britain had colonized India. Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru led years-long successful nonviolent protests against British rule that eventually achieved the desired result in 1947—*independence*. Recently, political strife, overpopulation, and poverty have continued to be important factors in national politics, but economic growth and a preponderance of creative young intellectuals have been overriding forces behind India's emergence as a global power.

The climate in India varies from the temperate north to the tropical monsoon weather in the south. The land is mostly flat or rolling plains, except for the desert in the west and the Himalayas in the north. Today, India has two major ethnic groups: 72 percent of the population are Indo-Aryans and 25 percent are Dravidians (evidence of its early history), and the remaining 3 percent are of Mongolian or other descent. About 81 percent of the population is Hindu, 13 percent are Muslim, and the remaining 6 percent are Buddhist, Sikh, Christian, Jain, and others. Forty-one percent of the population speaks Hindi, one of 15 official languages and 1,500 minor languages. India has 28 states whose borders have been drawn along linguistic and cultural lines. Climate, geography, ethnicity, religion, and language all influence culinary habits and tastes, which include omnivores, vegetarians, vegans, those who do not eat beef and beef products, and those who do not eat pork and pork products, and all contribute to the immense diversity of Indian cuisine.

Food historians suggest that sugarcane may have arrived on the Indian subcontinent as early as 6000 BC, when most of the world was using honey as a sweetener, having followed migratory trade routes from New Guinea (Mintz 1985, 19). According to Alan Davidson, the earliest known reference to sugarcane is in a love poem in the Indian sacred Hindu text, the *Atharva-veda*, probably dating from 1000 BC, where sugarcane is used as a symbol of sweetness and attractiveness (Davidson 2006, 766). At about the same time, food historians suggest that the Indians were the first to produce sugar by boiling the juice of the sugarcane. By the sixth century BC, sugar production in India was sophisticated enough for Sanskrit texts to refer to several varieties of sugar, some fine, some rough, some with different levels of sweetness. It is not surprising, then, to learn that sweet Indian cuisine dates back to before the birth of Christ. So began the Indian gift of sugar to the world.

Linguists trace the word “sugar” to the Indian Sanskrit *sarkara* (meaning also “gravel” or “sand” or “a gritty substance”), which is referenced in documents that date back to around 400–350 BC. A few years later, in 326–327 BC, Nearchus of Crete, commander of Alexander the Great's army, “discovered” sugar when he came upon it in what is now the Punjab region of India and Pakistan, and subsequently the knowledge of sugar, as well as sugar itself, spread to the Western world through Persian and the Mediterranean countries. Even then, in the West,

sugar refinement long remained largely “a secret science, passed master to apprentice” (Cohen 2013, 86). The history of food, and especially sweet treats, was thus changed forever.

Indian sweets are delicately flavored with “soft,” pleasant, aromatic spices. It is necessary, therefore, to tease out a brief history of the spice trade from a complex, convoluted, and long history to appreciate any discussion of sweet treats in India. The history of spices is so ancient that they were found in the tombs of the Egyptian Pharaohs. At one time spices like black pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg were as valuable as gold and silver. In the early Middle Ages, the Arabs and the Chinese dominated the spice trade. Later, in 1497–1499, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama forged a direct maritime route from Europe to the Indian Ocean, by way of the Cape of Good Hope, eventually opening up the *Carreira da Índia* (“India Run”) which became vital to Western Europeans’ future spice/sugar trade (at that time, sugar was considered mainly a spice and medicine). Da Gama landed in Calicut, on the west coast of India, which ultimately led to the Portuguese control of the spice trade on the Malabar Coast of India. In 1631, the first known use of *jaggery* was recorded. *Jaggery* (from the Portuguese *jágara* and Sanskrit *sarkara*) is the raw, course sugar made from sugarcane or date palms and is still valued today for its rich flavor. Toward the end of the 16th century, the Portuguese control of the spice trade was lost to the Dutch and the English. By the 1800s, Britain had control over all that was Dutch or Portuguese. India became a shining jewel in the crown of the British Empire.

Indian culinary tastes are diverse; they have grown from four different regional styles: in the north are the culinary regions of Banaras, Kashmir, Mughlai, Punjab, and Rajasthan, whose cuisines are more agricultural, with a diet that includes wheat and meat, usually goat and lamb, flavored with onions and coriander. Southern Indian cuisine includes Andhra, Kannada, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, and tends to be vegetarian, with a fondness for coconut. The Bengali and Assamese influences are in the east, resulting in fewer spices, with more fruits and rice, and Gujarati, Maharashtra, and Malwani make up the western tastes where more fish is eaten, more chilies are used, and coconut is abundant.

Because of the centuries-old availability of buffalo milk, Indians use dairy products generously in their cuisines. Indians have the highest per capita consumption of dairy (buffalo milk and cow milk) products in the world. Indians use fresh milk, or they reduce it to a creamy substance. With additional cooking, a paste-like substance emerges, which is a base in many recipes. Alternatively, the Indians combine the milk with an acid (lemon juice) to create *paneer*, a curdled cheese, another base used in Indian confections. (Some suggest the curdling technique was a contribution of the late 16th- or early 17th-century Portuguese, while others suggest a Persian or Afghanistan origin). Indians use another dairy product, *ghee*, in their cooking. When unsalted butter is heated, the water evaporates, and the milk solids

caramelize. What is left is pure butterfat with sweet, nutty overtones, the finest *ghee*. *Ghee* is a sacred food, and Indians use it in many rituals from birth to death.

More than 4,000 types of rice grow in India. It is not surprising then that the evolution of North Indian desserts included milk, cream, cottage cheese, or yoghurt with rice, and garnishes of dried fruits and nuts. *Kheer* is one, very old, but still popular form of rice pudding, easily made—green cardamom and pistachios flavor the basic ingredients of rice, milk, and sugar. Making *kheer* is mandatory every September, when Hindus all over India thank *Ganesh*, the revered god who rights wrongs and brings good luck. *Shahi tukra* is another dairy-laden dessert—sumptuous bread pudding prepared with a reduction of whole milk and sweetened condensed milk, flavored with cardamom and raisins. *Kulfi* is “Indian ice cream.” *Kulfi* is not churned like American ice cream; it is a reduction of sweetened condensed milk, extremely dense and creamy, and can be made with a variety of flavorings, including pistachios, cardamom, saffron, rose, and mango.

The mango is, without question, the most beloved fruit in all of India. With more than a thousand varieties of this fleshy, juicy, aromatic fruit, every region has its supply of mangoes, which vary in shape, size, and color. Indians eat some mangoes when they are ripe and some when they are green and “rough.” Mangoes are universally considered the fruit of the gods and are enjoyed as the most wonderful of treats—eaten fresh, juiced, or in a sweet mango *lassi* (a sweetened yoghurt, mango and cardamom flavored smoothie that originated in Northern India and is now enjoyed not just in all of India but in all of the world).

The word “sweet” in India means “not spicy.” For the most part, this is true. From the sweet, mildly aromatic, milky, ricey desserts of the north to the smooth, soft, cheesy treats of the east, one finds the same gentle sweetness. Take *rasgullas*, for example. *Rasgullas* are the traditional sweets in Orissa, a state on the east coast of India, just south of Bengal. In the city of Puri in Orissa, the *rasgulla* has been the traditional offering to the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, for over 700 years. Although



Mangoes, considered the fruit of the gods, are enjoyed as the most wonderful of treats—eaten fresh, juiced, or in a sweet mango *lassi*. (Marcin Lukaszewicz/Dreamstime.com)

no one knows for sure, in the mid-19th century, a man named N. C. Das is said to have modified the traditional, highly perishable *rasgulla* to stay fresh longer. He made a ball from curdled cheese, which he dropped into boiling sugary syrup. When the Bengali people employed Orissa's Brahmin cooks in the Bengal kitchens, the Orissa sweets, including *rasgullas*, not only became part of the Bengal diet but also spread throughout the region. Today, *rasgullas* are sweet cheese balls kneaded with a bit of semolina flour and then boiled in light sugar syrup. *Rasgullas* are desserts enjoyed by people the world over, and Indians consider them a national sweet dish.

Bengal is also an eastern state, and Bengali people love their sweets; their lives revolve around the sweets that define rites of passage—birth, marriage, and death, all which unfold in the making of *sandesh*. Properly made, *sandesh* is a multistep process with two recipes, one for making the *paneer* (the cheese), and the other recipe combines the freshly made *paneer* with other ingredients. Experienced cooks press the mixture of *paneer*, sugar, cardamom, and rose water, into molds in which they place a pinch of pistachio and almond pieces. Making *sandesh* requires skill and practice, and those who have mastered the art are in demand to make the confection for life's rituals.

Gulab jamuns, another dessert from the eastern region, are “heaven in your mouth” or “happiness in your spoon.” *Gulab jamuns* are to Indian sweets what shoes are to Italian fashion. Imagine the lightest, sweetest, most beautifully colored donut ball possible, fried to a golden color, and then soaked in rose water-scented syrup. Divine, simply divine, some might say. The Mughals, a Muslim dynasty that began their rule in India in 1526, brought colorful silk fabrics, peacocks, jewels, and *gulab jamuns* to India. The Mughals ruled until the mid-19th century when the British Raj became the ruling power. The Mughals lost their power, but *gulab jamuns* continue on with a commanding presence.

An Indian dessert that is an important element in the Hindu culture is *payasam* (or *kheer*). South Indians serve *payasam*, a pudding made of rice, sugar, and milk, at life cycle rituals and ceremonies, but most importantly, at Hindu weddings; some believe that the marriage is not complete until the *payasam* is served. The ancient tradition is still honored today, although today there are dozens of varieties of *payasam*; different assortments of fruits, nuts, and aromatic spices embellish the rice pudding.

There is an ancient legend about why the best *payasam* is found in the Ambalapuzha temple, located in southern India. Lord Krishna (the eighth incarnation of the supreme Hindu god Vishnu) took the form of a wise old man and challenged a king to a game of chess. The wise old man (Lord Krishna in disguise) told the king that if he (the wise old man) won, he wanted rice on each square on the chess board as the prize, beginning with one grain in the first square and doubling the number of grains in each successive square. The king, the legend goes, smirked at the request for a few grains of rice as the prize, when, obviously, the old man could have asked

for much more, so the king accepted the challenge. Of course, Lord Krishna, in the guise of the old man, won the game. As the prize of the rice grains on the chess squares increased exponentially, the kingdom's supply of rice was depleted before the board was filled. In his goodness, Lord Krishna shed the avatar of the old man and told the king that from that moment on, he would have to serve *payasam* at no cost to all the pilgrims and visitors who came to the temple of Ambalappuzha. Today, *payasam* remains embedded in the Hindu culture and continues to be served to all who visit the temple of Ambalappuzha.

Western India is home to another style of sweets. In the state of Gujarat, like other favorite sweets made of milk, a thick and creamy yoghurt mixed with exotic dried fruits is a traditional favorite. *Shrikhand* is a very popular, very practical, very elegant addition to Indian cuisine, used as a complementary sweet to savory curries or breads as often as it is eaten as a sweet dessert; some consider it one of the national sweets of India. *Halwa* are sweet puddings known throughout India, often made with shredded carrots, but the *halwa* in the western India, made with browned flour, sugar, and a combination of mild spices, is traditionally given to new mothers after the births of their babies to restore strength and help produce milk. *Halvas* take on many flavors—from milk and flour to carrots, pumpkins, and apples—depending on the region and available ingredients.

Indian sweets are very different from European or American sweets. The textures, flavors and the ingredients are different. Besides sugar and rice, cooks use large quantities of milk, yoghurt, and cheese, and the variations range from fudgey pieces of *sandesh* to *laddu* (a word traced to Sanskrit, meaning “small ball”). Many desserts include ground almonds and ground pistachios, similar to Western marzipan, and groundnuts (peanuts) garnish multiple confections. Sweets are not always used for desserts; they can be a complement to a savory dish or a snack with tea. They are used as offerings to gods and in religious rituals. However and wherever Indian sweets are eaten, they are beautiful, vibrant, mild, and diverse, like the Indian people themselves.

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Indonesia

On July 31, 1667, in one of the key small events of world history, the Dutch traded their North American colony of New Amsterdam for England's first overseas colony, the tiny island of Run in what is modern-day Indonesia. The colonies changed hands and the event changed the world, including the sweet treats world. The English renamed their new colony after the Duke of York—New York. The Dutch continued dominating the world's spice trade, at least for a time, and controlled Indonesia until 1949. At the time of the Dutch-English trade, the highly fought-over little nutmeg-rich island of Run, less than two miles long and two-thirds of a mile wide, was part of the East Indies Banda-Maluku Island group—the famed Spice Islands—which were the primary source of nutmeg, mace, and cloves until the mid-19th century, having earlier been a crucial location in the international spice trade from the fifth century BC

Today, in Indonesia, the fourth most populous country in the world, one can discover both traditional and modern sweets. Included in Indonesia's 13,500 islands are Java, Sumatra, Bali, Timor, and parts of Borneo and New Guinea. About half of Indonesia's 251 million people live on Java, the world's most populated island. Eighty-six percent of the Indonesians are Muslims—making Indonesia the largest Muslim country in the world—and thus sweet treats in their lives are most strongly influenced by their religious beliefs. The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur'an* and honey; hence honey, early on,

took on religious and medicinal as well as culinary importance in Indonesia as in other Muslim countries. Indonesia has had honey for so long that they evolved their own species of giant honeybees. Muslim Indonesians' use of honey-related treats generally follows other Muslim countries. Along with their rice, however, they also enjoy steamed bee larvae mixed with coconut meat.

The Dutch introduced wheat-flour pastries and layer cakes early on, but, in the absence of a means of baking other than cooking in leaves over a trench with hot stones, cakes and pastries were not overly popular until modern ovens became available to middle-class city dwellers in the 20th century. Today about half of the population lives in urban areas, with just over 9 million living in the capital city of Jakarta. Hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, individuals who can afford to do so enjoy international and commercial sweets readily available.

Fresh fruits are Indonesians' usual desserts, as is common in tropical and subtropical areas around the world, with Indonesians in general favoring bananas, oranges, mangoes, papaya, melons, pomelo, tamarind, the giant jackfruit, and the praised-and-damned durian. The large oval durian fruit, an acquired taste and smell, praised by some for its taste and cursed by others for its odor, has been variously described as smelling like stale vomit, sewage, and civet cat, but the taste, if one can get past the smell, is said to be sweet, creamy, and luscious.

Looking somewhat like a very large durian, the normally 10–60 pound jackfruit can be as large as 110 pounds, making it the largest tree-borne fruit in the world, and in Indonesia making it a valuable fruit, eaten raw when ripe, included in cakes and custards, prized for its roasted sweet seeds, and cooked when young to make *gudeg*, green jackfruit sweet stew. *Gudeg*, a favorite in central Java, is made by boiling young jackfruit and palm sugar (*gula kelapa*) for several hours in coconut milk (not to be confused with coconut *water* that is inside of young coconuts). *Gudeg* appears in several regional varieties and is of varying sweetness.

Gula jawa, a tasty, minimally processed, natural dark brown Javanese coconut palm sugar, is widely prized in Southeast Asian cooking. Traditionally made from the sap of the Palmyra sugar palm, the date palm, or the sugar date palm, *gula jawa* is nowadays also commercially made from other palm varieties and is mixed with cane sugar. *Gula jawa* is a traditional Javanese palm sugar made in a manner similar to maple sugar in Canada and the United States, by tapping the sap of the trees and boiling it through to its sugar stage. It is believed that palm sugar has been used in Indonesia for millennia, although it is difficult to tell because, as the noted food historian Alan Davidson notes, the written food history of Indonesia is essentially blank.

What is not blanked out is the fact that coconut is and has been a main sweetener in Indonesia for a long time. Indonesia is the world's second largest producer of commercial coconut, second only to the Philippines. Davidson goes on to note that Indonesians have a love for sourness delicately balanced by sweetness, and that the

balance is derived largely from raw sugar or coconut milk. Tastes, of course, vary, and in some areas, such as central Java, sweetness dominates. Coconut milk is often used as a cooking medium, as with the *gudeg*. Apart from providing a sweetening cooking liquid, coconut is a main ingredient in an array of sweet treats, as is essentially the case throughout the coconut-growing world. Regular milk and other dairy products are not commonly used.

A regional favorite sweet is *onde-onde*—round, crisp, and chewy fried, boiled, or steamed sticky rice flour pastry coated with sesame seeds, known elsewhere in Asia as “sesame balls.” Indonesians fill the large central *onde-onde* hollows, which are caused by the expansion of the dough, with sweetened green mung bean paste. *Onde-onde* are traditional *kueh*, popular bite-sized snacks or dessert foods which are generally steamed rather than baked or boiled. *Kuih* or *kueh* or *kue* all refer to bite-sized snacks very popular in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Kueh* come in dozens of varieties and are often given as gifts and used in special ceremonies. A Javanese favorite is *wingko*, a traditional hard sweet pancake-like snack made from sweet coconut and sugar. *Kolak*, a sweet made with palm sugar and coconut milk, and any one of many flavorings, is popular during Ramadan *Iftar*.



Indonesians traditionally fill the large central hollows of their crisp and chewy bite-sized *onde-onde* with sweetened green mung bean paste. Known elsewhere in Asia as “sesame balls,” this widely popular treat takes on many regional flavors. (Erwin Purnomo Sidi/Dreamstime.com)

Sweets other than *kueh* and fresh fruits are generally eaten in the afternoon, especially when visitors call. And the visitors find the full range of Indonesian sweet treats popular. Many favorite treats of Indonesia are also popular in the Netherlands. The Dutch became quite fond of Indonesian sweet treats during their 350-year stay. Except for the Dutch, what the world understands as “Indonesian food” is for the most part the food of the islands of Sumatra and Java. Java, of course, is home to the famed “Java Man” of Trinil, *Pithecanthropus erectus*, who arrived there about 500,000 years before both the English and the Dutch. The small neighboring island of Flores is home to the equally famous “Hobbit,” *Homo floresiensis*, a tiny prehistoric human who became extinct possibly as recently as 12,000 years ago. What sweet treats did “Java Man” and “The Hobbit” eat? The answer would be most likely honey from those giant bees and sweet fruits—just like Indonesians today.

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Iran

Legend has it that Darius the Great of Persia discovered sugar growing near the Indus River while on a military campaign to North India in 510 BC. The “King of Kings” (550–486 BC) brought “the reed which gives honey without bees” back to Assyria (present-day northern Iraq), where it later appears in Sassanian texts and in medicines and sweet treats of the Persian Empire. Historians credit the Sassanians of the last pre-Islamic Iranian Empire (AD 224–651) with inventing the process of refining sugarcane juice into hard sugar. Sugar plantations probably appeared in Persia (also known as Iran since 1935) about AD 600. Sugar was wholeheartedly welcomed, as a spice, medicine, and sweetener by the Persian culture, famed for its sweets since Classical times.

The fact that Persians knew about and were using sugar was discovered by Nearchus, an officer and close friend of Alexander the Great, after defeating Darius III (the last king of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia) in 334–331 BC. It was likely that Nearchus revealed sugar’s existence to the West as his writings are the first

known reference to sugarcane that appear in Western literature. Until about AD 600 sugar refinement remained largely “a secret science, passed master to apprentice” (Cohen 2013). It was the Abbasid Arab Muslims of the Baghdad Caliphate, who invaded and conquered Persia in AD 636, who were the major catalysts in spreading both sugar and the Persians’ bountiful use of spices, milk, and nuts in their confections.

Through their contact with Persia, the Arabs, for a long time, had known about and used different kinds of sugars. And they traded “sweet salt,” as sugar was known to the Arab overland caravan traders of the time, along with other luxury items in lucrative exchanges. Wherever they went, the Arabs and Arab traders brought sugar and the technology for its production with them. Persia sat in the center of trade routes with both China and India, and Africa. In short, as the distinguished sugar historian Sidney Mintz noted, sugar followed the *Qur’an*, the sacred book of Islam. People who could not afford to buy sugar simply made do with honey, dates, or raisins as sweeteners. The Islamic-Arab Empire became the second greatest sweet-eating civilization of the times, after India, and the Middle East remained the main conduit for sugar until the 17th century.

Sugar spread from India through Iran, and Iraq, along with the vocabulary for sugar and sugar production and names of sugar-based sweet treats. Thus, it is with the Sanskrit word *sarkara*, via the Persian word *shaker*, coming to English through the Arabic word *sukkar* that we today identify the sand-like crystalline Indian-Persian-Arab sweet as *sugar*. And we have Persian *qand* (plural *qandlar*), a hard candy made by boiling cane sugar, which we recognize in English as *candy*.

One of the earliest versions of hard candy to find favor in Europe was *pennet* or *penyde*—a word derived from the Persian *fanid* via the Arabic *penid*. *Pennet*—a simple stick of soft, pulled white candy, sometimes formed into a twist—was thought to be good for common colds as well as consumption. Today, sticks of rock candy are still usually flavored with peppermint or oil of wintergreen, both of which have medicinal connotations.

Before sugar, well back into prehistoric times, and perhaps even to the days of its resident Neanderthals, most people turned to native fresh and dried fruits for their sweet treats, supplemented with honey—as is the typical pattern around the world. Native fruits included apricots, grapes, Iranian melons, mulberries, nectarines, and peaches. Lemons, oranges, orange blossom water, rose water, and rice were later imports. The most popular and typical dessert in modern-day Iran continues to be fresh fruits—the traditional fruits and quinces, pears, limes, pomegranates, cherries, barberries, plums, persimmons, medlars (an unusual reddish-orangish-colored apple-like aromatic fruit eaten when nearly squishy), rhubarb, raisins, and currants. Pomegranates, an ancient and contemporary symbol of fertility, are thought to have originated in the vicinity of eastern Iran. They are eaten fresh or used in cooking, and their sweet juice is popular in a number of treats.

The Persian Empire incorporated what is now modern-day Iran and parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Asia, and North Africa. The area of the modern-day country was known as Persia until 1935, when it became Iran in official political contexts. At the time of the Arab conquest in the seventh century, most citizens followed the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism, the Persian state religion and religious philosophy, but with the Arab conquest most people became Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur'an* and honey. The Prophet Muhammad's favorite sweets were simply honey, dates, and *hais*, a mixture of curds, dates, and clarified butter. Hence honey, dates, and sweets, in general, took on religious, medicinal, and culinary importance in the Muslim world. Although Iran today is a 98 percent Muslim nation, only about 2 percent of the population speaks Arabic; Persian (*Fārsi*) is the official language, spoken by 53 percent of the population, with Turkic dialects spoken by 18 percent, and Kurdish by 10 percent.

Today, sweets beyond fruits, honey, and nuts reflect the long history of sweets-loving peoples that inhabited the region. One can find on the streets of Tehran, the capital, and regional urban centers, sweet treats recognizable from the Persian-Ottoman past—often still called “Persian food”—as well as other treats, such as French-inspired pastries, the typically Iranian saffron-and-rose water-flavored ice cream (*bastani-e za'farani*), and other treats common in the urban centers of the Middle East. Most (71 percent) of Iran's 79.8 million people live in urban areas.

Typical desserts of stuffed sweet pastry—made of sugar and sugar syrup; rice or rice flour; dates; wheat or chickpea flour; flavored with rose water, saffron, and/or cardamom; and garnished with almonds and pistachios—can be found virtually everywhere. Traditional Iranian sweets include things like *qotab*, a deep-fried almond-filled cake prepared with flour, almonds, powdered sugar, vegetable oil, and cardamom, known especially from the desert city of Yazd, in the geographical center of Iran, a center of modern-day Zoroastrian culture. Yazd is also known for its creation of *pashmak* a “wool-like” confection made from sugar and sesame, resembling sheep's wool (and hence the name), that is enjoyed with fruits, cakes, ice creams, puddings, and other desserts or, like cotton candy, is eaten on its own. Other more cookie-like treats are also common, like the delicate shortbread-like traditional Persian butter cookie, *nane shirini*. The northwest Iranian Azerbaijan city of Tabriz is known for its *qurabiya*, an almond shortbread-type cookie said to be from seventh-century Persia—shortly after the use of sugar became relatively common in the region—customarily placed on top of a cup of tea for the steam to soften it before eating.

In addition to the special sweet treats associated with Muslim holidays, especially Ramadan, sweets in Iran honor the Persian New Year, *Nowruz*, “New Day,” a feast which has been celebrated on the first day of spring for 3,000 years

in Persia (Iran), accompanied with 13 days of celebration. Originally the holiest Zoroastrian religious festival of the year, it is now the most important holiday in Iran. It is celebrated in many ways but always with sweet treats. Family, neighbors, and friends visit one another, usually with short reciprocal house visits, and exchange gifts. One must, for these visits, have pastries, cookies, fresh and dried fruits, and special nuts on hand, which are typically served with tea or a sherbet drink. Rituals during the 13-day festival are symbolic, many following the teachings of Zarathushtra, the founding Prophet of Zoroastrianism. Seven items are set on the *Nowruz* table, the *haft-seen* or the seven “S”s, seven being a sacred number in Iran for thousands of years, representing the “Seven Eternal Laws” and the “Seven Angelic Heralds of Life”: rebirth, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, patience, and beauty.

A large bowl of *samanū*, a not-too-sweet sticky pudding-like dessert, made from germinated wheat kernels, is a traditional dessert dish on the *haft-seen* table, one symbolizing affluence. It is said that *samanū* was first made by Fatimah, the revered daughter of Prophet Muhammad, and for centuries many have vowed to prepare it every year in her remembrance. Traditionally, women, and only women, make *samanū* during the night, cooking it from late in the evening until daylight, singing distinctive songs the night through, distributing the *samanū* in the morning to the relatives, friends, neighbors, and those who helped in its preparation.

On the same table with the *samanū* and other special ritual objects, people place seven special sweets, because, according to a 3,000-year-old legend, the mythological King Jamshid of the first golden age in Iran’s history discovered sugar on *Nowruz*:

These seven sweets are *noghls* (sugar-coated almonds); *Persian baklava*, a sweet, flaky pastry filled with chopped almonds and pistachios soaked in honey-flavored rose water; *nan-e berenji* (rice cookies) made of rice flour flavored with cardamom and garnished with poppy seeds; *nan-e badami* (almond cookies), made of almond flour flavored with cardamom and rose water; *nan-e nokhodchi* (chick-pea cookies), made of chick-pea flour flavored with cardamom and garnished with pistachios; *sohan asali* (honey almonds), cooked with honey and saffron and garnished with pistachios; and *nan-e gerdui* (walnut cookies), made of walnut flour flavored with cardamom and garnished with pistachio slivers. (Iran: *Nan-e Nokhodchi* 2013)

With a properly set table and proper Zoroastrian meditations, Iranian prosperity awaits you in the New Year. Try one or more of the seven sweets for good luck at the next summer solstice. If that does not work, try some “problem-solving nuts” (*aujil-e moshkel-gosha*) at “The Night of Birth” festival (*Yaldā* or *Shab e Cheleh*), a Zoroastrian celebration of the Winter Solstice which has been celebrated for

thousands of years. “*Aujil* is a mixture of seven dried nuts and fruits: pistachios, roasted chick peas, almonds, hazelnuts, figs, apricots and raisins (*keshmesh*), the number seven being auspicious” (Eduljee 2011).

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Iraq

A Sumerian cuneiform text from ancient Mesopotamia gives us the first recipe for making what is thought to be a cake—a treat for the temple or palace: use 1 *silá* [a little more than 3 cups] of “noble fat” [probably clarified butter], 1/3 *silá* of white cheese, 3 *silá* of first-quality dates, and 1/3 *silá* of Smyrna raisins. The recipe assumes that excellent flour will be added (Nasrallah 2013). Another Babylonian cake recipe from the time of the great king Hammurabi (*ca.* 1792–1750 BC), possibly the archetype recipe of fruitcake, calls for flour, dates, butter, white cheese, grape syrup (or possibly wine must), minced apples, and figs. Figs have always been important in Mesopotamia, first recorded in the third millennium BC in the tablets of the ancient Sumerian city of Lagash, in southeastern Iraq. Still other ancient cuneiform tablets of the time feature pastry making. The world’s first recipes for sweet treats assume that one knows what to do with the ingredients and, presumably, cooks knew about adding flour when flour is not listed. Deriding the neighboring nomadic Bedouins of the Arabian Desert, both the ancient and contemporary Mesopotamians have a saying: “If you gave them flour, eggs, and honey for a cake they would not know what to do with them.” That is to say, the Bedouins would not know the basic things about civilized food, and therefore about civilization itself.

Sumer, the “Land of Civilized Kings,” was the first civilization in ancient Mesopotamia, the area of what is now modern-day Iraq. Mesopotamia, as the Greeks called it—meaning “Land between the Rivers”—was essentially composed of Babylonia in the south—the “Cradle of Civilization” of the Western world, located in the fertile plain between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers—and Assyria in the arid and chilly north. In ancient times, around 1894 BC, Babylon was the largest city in the world and was centrally located on important trade routes. It was thus a

gathering point of people with varying culinary ideas and traditions. Some scholars suggest that not only did ancient Mesopotamia have the oldest cuisine in the world but also the ultimate origins of Middle Eastern cuisine are Mesopotamian. The earliest developments of the Neolithic Revolution began in Mesopotamia around 10,000 BC. The first domesticated milk-producing animal, probably the goat, appeared in Mesopotamia by about 8000 BC.

Iraq has been home to more than a dozen civilizations since the earliest days of the Sumerian city states. The sweet treat and culinary highlight of them all occurred during the Islamic Golden Age of the Abbasid Caliphate (AD 750–1258), the third of the Islamic caliphates, when the Muslim capital moved first from Makkah to Damascus, then to Kufa, and finally to Baghdad in AD 762, where it quickly became the center of the Muslim world. By the 10th century, Baghdad was again the largest city in the world. The Prophet Muhammad’s sweet tooth was simple and humble. The poor ate what the Prophet ate. But the upper class of Baghdad was obsessed with food—fancy and exotic foods. At least four caliphs spent time in their kitchens. Reading and writing about food became an upper-class passion. Sweet treats became a popular subject of poets.

Professional sweets makers thrived in their Baghdad pastry shops. They embraced the Persian sweet taste of sugar and the liberal use of spices, milk, and nuts. Cookery books from the 10th to the 13th centuries extol hundreds of sweets. *The Book of Recipes (Kitab al-Tabikh)* alone gives 90 recipes for sweets. *The Book of Recipes*, the oldest known Arabic cookbook, generally attributed the 10th-century scribe Ibn Sayyar al-Warraaq of Baghdad, records the recipes of “kings and caliphs and lords and leaders” of the ninth-century Baghdad courts. Cookery books today still reflect Persian influences transmitted by early Arab authors. And Persian-derived names and terms abound in medieval Arab cuisine.

Today, these sweet treat traditions continue, modified by time. “What now passes for Muslim cuisine,” notes historian H. D. Miller, “is a greatly simplified and changed version of what was available in Baghdad during the time of the caliphs” (Miller 2007). In the definitive work on the history and foods of Iraq, *Delights from the Garden of Eden*, the award-winning food writer Nawal Nasrallah, a native of Iraq, devotes four chapters of the second edition to sweet treats: “Desserts: Puddings and Ice Creams,” “Desserts with Syrup,” “Cakes and Confections,” and “Cookies and Sweet Pastries.” Nasrallah (2013) has half of a chapter on jams. “Desserts with Syrup”—originally desserts with honey—is nowadays an Iraqi category by itself, requiring its own chapter.

Nasrallah quickly points out that, as a rule, Iraqis do not eat desserts on a daily basis. The rich and sweet Arabian desserts are usually reserved for special religious and social occasions. Fresh seasonal fruits are almost always the choice after a main meal or between meals, with sweetened tea normally satisfying one’s sweet tooth. Favorite fruits include dates, figs, watermelons and cantaloupes, grapes, nectarines

and apricots, pomegranates, peaches, mulberries and jujubes, and a variety of citrus fruits. Almonds, walnuts, and pistachios are also common favorites.

With Iraq officially being a Muslim society (97% Muslim)—about two-thirds Shia and one-third Sunni—religion plays an important part in Iraqi sweet treats. From Islam’s earliest days, dates, honey, and sweets, in general, took on religious, medicinal, and culinary importance in the Muslim world. The holy *Qur’an* promises dates as one of the blessings in paradise. For this world, the Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur’an* and honey. Muslims break their dawn-to-sunset fasting each day of the holy month of Ramadan with an evening meal called *Iftar*, featuring sweet dishes and desserts. Iraqi Muslims, as most Muslims, break their daily Ramadan fast with fresh or dried dates, in commemoration of the Prophet’s own breaking of the fast with one of his much-loved foods; the Prophet favored dates, honey, and *hais*, a mixture of curds, dates, and clarified butter. The month of Ramadan fasting ends with the all-important three-day joyous celebration called *Eid al-Fitr*, the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival. In Iraq, Nasrallah notes, the religious month of Ramadan is associated with *baklava* and *zalabia*.

Baklava is the most widely known confection of the region, a dessert foreshadowed in Iraq by the delicate pastry called *lauzeenaj* made in imperial Baghdad—“the thinnest of the thin bread” fried in almond oil, perfumed with mastic and rose water, and “well stuffed with almonds and sugar” (Kronld 2011). Today’s rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multilayered, honey- or sugar-drenched, diamond-shaped *phyllo* pastry with chopped nuts appears regularly in Iraq, as it does in all countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, and in parts of Asia.

Zalabia, crispy, golden, translucent, rosette-shaped fritters, are thought to be of Baghdad origin, most likely named after a ninth-century Iraqi-Kurdish musician, Ziryab, an influential trendsetter in the Arabian Córdoba court of Al-Andalus (Andalusia). In earlier days, the treat named after him was known as *Ziryabiyya*.

Ziryab/Ziryabiyya

Why Do We Eat Dessert Last?

Zalabia, known originally as *Ziryabiyya*, are crispy, golden, translucent fritters thought to be of Baghdad origin, most likely named after a ninth-century Iraqi-Kurdish musician, Ziryab, an influential trendsetter in the Córdoba court of Al-Andalus, responsible for introducing the tradition of serving foods in succession

at a meal, rather than presenting them all at once. Ziryab, in all likelihood, is responsible for our eating dessert at the end of our meals, although a full-fledged sweet course was not typical in Western Europe until perhaps the 18th century or later (after sugar became more affordable). Before that, sweets appeared intermittently throughout only lavish meals.

Kleicha cookies—the most traditional and the national cookie of Iraq—can be traced back to the ancient Mesopotamian *qullupu* pastries—the “trademark cookie” of the Mesopotamian region made with wheat flour and sesame-oil dough filled with raisins or dates and baked in a charcoal- or wood-fired domed clay oven called a *tannour*, which is like the Indian *tandoor*. Up until rather recently *kleicha* were made in large batches, twice a year, for religious holidays, and baked at the neighborhood bakeries (as cookies often were up until the late 1950s). With the advent of modern gas stoves, homemade cookies (*biskit*) and cakes (*ka’ak*) of all kinds became common. The Arabic *ka’ak* (“cake”) can refer to different kinds of baked goods. Today, the “rather dry” *kleicha* cookies traditionally made with clarified butter (*dihin hur*) come in various shapes and with or without various fillings. Sweet discs (*khfeftyyat*) are favorites, as are the half moons filled with nuts and sugar (*kleichat joz*), and the molded ones stuffed with dates (*kleichat tamur*); all are scented with cardamom and sometimes rose water. *Kleicha* cookies are closely associated with both of the main Islamic feasts, the *Eid al-Fitr* Sweet Festival, and the *Eid ul-Adha* Festival of Sacrifice which takes place after the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah. Visiting and gifting mark *Eid al-Fitr* celebrations. Nasrallah suggests *mann al-sama* (“heavenly sent manna”)—an exclusively Iraqi candy—or the popular well-known chewy *halqoum* (Turkish delight) for *Eid al-Fitr* gifting, and for other special occasions like graduations, circumcisions, and birthdays.

Both the Bible and the *Qur’an* reveal that God provided manna for the Israelites during their 40 years of travels in the desert. It reportedly looked “as coriander seeds,” and “the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (Numbers 11:7; Exodus 16:31). Manna biologically is an edible sweet substance seasonally appearing on a wide range of desert plants. In Iraq, the manna, once miraculously sent from God, is now generally purchased already cleaned, and is then usually flavored with cardamom, kneaded with nuts, and shaped into small balls. Iraqi Christians make their own version, *mans al sama*, to celebrate their religious holidays.

Today, two-thirds of the 31.9 million Iraqis live in urban areas, with 5.8 million living in the capital city of Baghdad, 1.5 million living in Mosul, and about 1 million living in Erbil and in Basra. Hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, those who can afford them have some international and commercial sweets available.

In ancient times as now, Iraq offered hundreds of types of rich and sweet candies, cookies, puddings, ice creams, and cakes. Today, many sweet treats, if not most, are direct descendants of the many hundreds of sweets of the golden days of the Baghdad caliphates.

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Ireland

The Atlantic Ocean pounds the west of Ireland on three sides, and the Irish Sea is only somewhat milder on the eastern Dublin side. From the Wicklow Mountains to Galway Bay, from the Cliffs of Moher to the tropical zones of County Cork, the contrasts of geography, geology, and climate in Ireland belie the unity of Irish culture, tastes, and food.

Ancient Irish people subsisted on cereals, dairy, and an abundance of honey. Nearly every household had hives in their gardens, and wild bees were plentiful in the many woodlands. Honey was so important and bee management so critical to the ancient Irish people that bees were an officially regulated part of their culture. A set of laws called the Brehon Law, “Bee-Judgments,” predated the Iron Age and remained in effect until King James I, in 1603, “received” the Irish people under his protection and subjected them to the administration of English law. The Brehon Law demonstrated the significance of the culture of bees and honey in its detailed descriptions of the rights and obligations of beekeepers.

Mead, a sweet, alcoholic, honey wine, probably claimed the largest amount of honey. Reported to be the oldest alcoholic beverage in the world, mead was a delicacy for the Irish and was consumed almost exclusively at celebratory meals. Fermented honey and water turned this sweet drink—often enhanced with herbs and spices and finished by sweetening even more with additional honey—into mead. Honey also sweetened mashed sloe berries, boiled in water, and buried in an airtight container for several weeks, until they aged enough to become a drink similar to wine.

As for other uses of honey, P. W. Joyce, in *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* (1920) wrote that milk and honey made a soothing beverage, and lard and

honey made a tasty condiment. And honey, of course, was commonly used at the table as a sweetener, either pure or in the comb. Joyce wrote that frequently, at home meals, each place at the table had its own miniature honey pot, sometimes made of silver, into which the Irish dipped their food. Honey also sweetened their cakes, made from corn and wheat flours, although these special cakes were a delicacy.

Two events altered the Irish cuisine and, ultimately, the Irish peoples' ways of life forever. The first event was the introduction of the potato. The potato came to the British Isles from South America in the 16th century. By the beginning of the 18th century, the potato was the staple of the Irish diet, until blight ruined the potato crops between 1845 and 1850. Ireland was small, a poor country with poor people who could not manage this natural disaster. These *anni horribiles* were the years of the Irish Potato Famine; estimates are that in the country of about 9 million, over 2.5 million people either died from hunger, malnutrition or emigrated to North America. Eventually, the blight was controlled (but not eliminated). Ireland still produced potatoes for which they were famous, but they never exclusively depended on them again.

It is important to frame the second major event in terms of the political relationship between England and Ireland. For most of the Middle Ages, the British Crown ruled Ireland as a separate kingdom. Although the area they controlled was initially around Dublin, the British gradually extended their reach, and in 1603, the year that Queen Elizabeth I died, and King James I took the throne, a victory over the Irish in Ulster gave Britain complete control of the island. Later, in 1921, 26 of the 32 counties in Ireland seceded from the United Kingdom and became the Irish Free State, and later, in 1949, the Republic of Ireland. While the politics of secession were going on, the Irish sugar industry, an industry that earlier brought resources and hope to an impoverished nation, was fighting for its life.

By the mid-18th century, the 120 sugar refineries operating in Britain should have made sugar affordable to the average citizen, including the Irish people, but “the Crown” taxed sugar so highly that only the aristocrats could afford the sweetener. In the mid-19th century, Ireland saw potential in producing sugar from sugar beets, and this, too, resulted in historical challenges. Ireland's first sugar beet factory was located in the Irish midlands in 1851; it failed after only 10 years. Several decades later, in 1926, there was another attempt to resurrect the sugar production company, this time in the city of Carlow. By 1933, the Irish Sugar Manufacturing Company was in financial trouble; however, the government at the time saw potential in the industry and tried to save the sugar beet business in Ireland. It established *Comhlucht Siúicre Eireann*, the Carlow factory, to operate as a manufacturing and trading concern, and the industry was reborn. The government built four factories in all—in Carlow, Mallow, Tuam, and Thurles. Then, about 25 years ago, Tuam and Thurles shut down. In 2005, the European

Union Sugar Policy reform forced the closing of the Carlow factory and then, as recently as 2006, the Mallow factory shut down, a decision based, apparently, on faulty data.

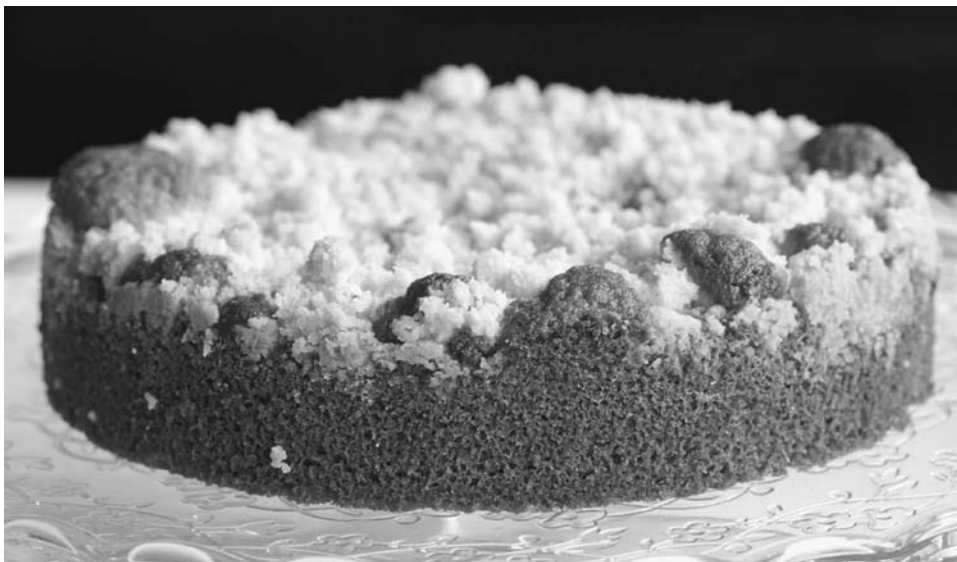
So, in the end, Ireland had plenty of potatoes, and not so much sugar. But, resourceful people that they are, the ever-creative and practical bakers and cooks made sweet variations of potato cakes, scones, and pancakes. Combinations of mashed and grated potatoes make boxty, which is either a savory dish or a dish sweetened with honey, syrup, or butter and jam. Mashed potatoes are an ingredient in cakes that bake up as a slightly dense, very moist cake with cinnamon, nutmeg, and nuts. Potato scones—simply made from mashed potatoes, flour, bacon fat, or butter, and a bit of salt, baked into mouth-watering scones that are sometimes fried, sometimes baked, and always best served warm, with butter and jam or honey—are great sweetened comfort food!

Besides sugar, Irish use the original sweeteners of dried fruits in recipes like *barmbrack*, leavened bread traditionally served at Halloween. *Barmbrack* contains raisins, currants, and other bits of dried fruits, which, before they are added to the dough, are soaked in tea. Children customarily gather at Halloween to enhance a traditional fortune-telling ritual by wrapping small symbolic tokens in wax paper, baking them in the *barmbrack*, and serving the pieces with the surprise tokens to an unsuspecting family member or friend.

Fruitcakes are an enduring tradition in Ireland. Initially, the tradition most likely had to do with the availability of fruit as a sweetener, and with having to “bake” the cake in a cast iron pot over an outdoor fire, a method that produced “heavy” cakes. (It was not until about the mid-20th century that indoor ovens became commonplace.) Irish cooks used whatever ingredients were locally available; there are many recipes for fruitcakes, baked in modern ovens. One of the classic fruitcake recipes, adapted to more modern times, is made with Dublin’s famous, inimitable, Guinness Stout.

Rhubarb, by itself, is eye-popping, lip-smacking, and sour, but locally available. Rhubarb is a seasonal plant that does not require a lot of room to grow; it grows in harsh conditions and spreads easily, so it was common for people in urban environments to grow rhubarb (as opposed to apple trees, which require more room). Add some sugar or honey to diced rhubarb, and some flour/butter dough for the topping, and you have a nice traditional rhubarb crumble. An array of berries is also always locally available, in season, and Irish meals are colorfully embellished with special treats like lovely, beautiful, summer puddings made with artfully arranged fresh bread and the fresh fruits.

Distinctive 21st-century Irish alcoholic specialties augment earlier mead-based sweet treats. Using local ingredients and different combinations of clear fresh water, herbs, barley, Irish heather, cream, and/or honey, Guinness Stout, Irish whiskey, and their now-famous liqueurs like Irish Mist and Bailey’s Irish Cream, the Irish



Springtime in Ireland brings fresh, tender rhubarb, perfect for rhubarb crumble, often enjoyed with a cup of tea as a mid-afternoon treat or for dessert. (Sabina Pensek/ Dreamstime.com)

develop sweet treats that they market internationally. Helen Walsh (1992), in, *Irish Country Cooking*, reminds us that Guinness is a sweet, thick, rich, dark flavor that blends well with meat and main dishes. Locals use Irish whiskey for flambéing desserts and flavoring cakes, besides enjoying it in their well-known great sweet after-dinner drink, Irish coffee. Their soothingly sweet after-dinner liqueurs Irish Mist and Bailey’s Irish Cream make many sweet puddings and sauces even more irresistible.

There were no royalty in Ireland to affect the evolution of sweet tastes and treats. Traditional Irish food grew from poverty, and was delicious, nutritious, unpretentious, and practical. Now, as in other parts of the world, the Irish cuisine is modern, diverse, is made from fresh, local ingredients, and is served with classic gourmet flair. “Fusion” in cuisine is the word of the day, and many traditional local recipes have “fused” with modern ingredients and with other cultures. Bailey’s Irish Cream cheesecake is one example—a fusion of Bailey’s Irish Cream liquor and New York style cheesecake. Or the Irish have adopted and adapted sweets from other places—as in Bavarian apple cake. From Bailey’s Irish Cream cheesecake to Bavarian apple cake, from crêpes to trifle, dining and enjoying the multinational sweet culture of Ireland remains a testimony to the creativity, practicality, and culinary love of the Irish—for good taste in food and in dining. In Ireland, one can often hear

the Gaelic *Slainte!* the enthusiastic toast of the Irish as they join to share and enjoy their magnificent sweet treats at the table—“To Your Health.”

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Israel

Israel, of the biblical land of Canaan, became a modern independent nation-state in 1948, with Hebrew as the official language and Arabic used officially for the minority population. Israel is about three-fourths Jewish, both culturally and in terms of religious orientation, with the non-Jewish population being mostly Muslim Arabs. Religious dietary laws for most people in Israel (*kashruth* for the Jews and *halāl/ḥarām* for the Muslims) are primary determinants of diet, expressing religious and cultural traditions that are blended with regional Middle Eastern cooking. Those traditions tend to have varied food customs, as after the establishment

of Israel as a modern independent nation, immigration increased dramatically and included two main groups: Sephardi Jews of the Iberian Peninsula and their descendants and Ashkenazi Jews from the Rhine Valley and further east, from Germanic and Slavic areas, and their descendants. Most ancestors of the Sephardi Jews from the Iberian Peninsula lived in Muslim Al-Andalus (Andalusia) between 711 and 1492, an area then dominated by Muslim Moors and Arabs and their cuisines. Ancestors of the Ashkenazi Jews, on the other hand, had experiences with the people of the Baltic and neighboring countries and their cuisines. The result in modern-day Israel is a genuine Israeli fusion cuisine.

In the biblical land of Canaan, nomadic Semitic-speaking peoples, including ancestors of both Jews and Arabs, adapted to the Middle Eastern desert areas, meaning, for sweet treats, they primarily had access to ripe fruits, especially figs and dates, in addition to honey. Canaan was, after all, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” Honey to the ancient desert nomads, and still to this day, meant three things: honey produced by honeybees, a honey made from dates (*silan*), and the “fresh honey” of manna. And, according to both the Bible and the *Qur'an*, people ate sweet manna that God miraculously provided for the Israelites during their 40 years of travels in the desert. Manna looked “as coriander seeds,” and “the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (Numbers 11:7; Exodus 16:31). Less miraculously, the renowned Scottish food writer Alan Davidson points out, manna is an edible sweet substance that seasonally appears on a wide range of desert plants, although it is not scientifically clear whether manna is exuded by the plants as a result of insect wounds or is a secretion of the insects themselves. Manna is still important to desert populations today, including some of the more than 100,000 Bedouins living in Israel. Three kinds of manna important for food include the honey-like tamarisk manna (consisting of glucose and fructose, and today gathered commercially by Kurds in neighboring Iraq), camel’s thorn or “chalk manna” (primarily sucrose), and “earth fat” manna produced by lichen (containing the sugar trehalose; a manna made into a sort of jelly and a sweet bread by Syrian Bedouins) (Davidson 2006, 479).

Although Mosaic Law forbade the use of honey as a sacrifice (Leviticus 2:11), honey remained ritually and culinarily important to the ancients. Today, honey, mostly of the bee type, remains important in the sweets and in the religious rituals of Israel. Sweetness is the main theme in the two-day celebration of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, and it is tradition to eat foods with honey to usher in a sweet New Year. The Rosh Hashanah festival dinners typically symbolically begin with apples dipped in honey and ritually end with honey cake, *lekach*, a classic Ashkenazi dessert having many versions, with ancestry possibly going back as far as ancient Egypt. Between the honey-dipped apple and the festival-ending honey cake, one finds many honey-based sweet treats, such as the traditional *teiglach* (“bits of dough”), small, sticky, crispy pastry balls or knots boiled in ginger-spiced

honey or honey syrup—a preparation style from the days when ovens were scarce or nonexistent. The *teiglach*, also eaten on festive occasions such as weddings, are typically served stacked high in a pyramid shape. Variations, of course, exist. In the evening of the day after Passover, as part of the Jewish *Mimouna* celebration, hosts set out a thin crêpe called *mofletta*, with fruits, confectionery, and pastries for visitors. *Moflettas* are traditionally eaten warm with butter and honey, but syrup or jam is also used. Drizzled with honey, *challah*, a traditional Jewish yeast bread with great religious and cultural significance, is served during non-Passover festive occasions.

The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur'an*—the sacred book of Islam—and honey. One of the Prophet Muhammad's favorite sweet treats was honey and dates, hence both honey and dates became important and took on a religious, medicinal, and culinary importance to Muslims following *sunnah*, the way of life prescribed and modeled by the Prophet. Sweets are central in the observance of the month-long fasting of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims break their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan fasting each day of the month with an evening sweets-filled meal called *Iftar*. The month of daily fasting ends with the all-important three-day joyous feast of



Lekach, a classic Ashkenazi honey cake having many versions, with ancestry possibly going back as far as ancient Egypt, remains important in Rosh Hashanah traditions of the Jewish New Year. (Igor Usatyuk/Dreamstime.com)

Eid al-Fitr—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival. Visiting and gifting mark the feasting, and during *Eid al-Fitr* Muslim hosts offer sweets to visiting relatives and friends. Popular sweets include *katayef*, a small sweet pancake-like pastry; *kanafeh*, a soft cheesy honey-soaked pastry from the West Bank Palestinian city of Nablus; *hareeseh*, a popular moist cake-like dessert, and the ever-present *baklava*—a rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multilayered, honey- or sugar-drenched *phyllo* pastry found throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

In addition to honey, other biblical sweets are also important today, particularly figs, dates, pomegranates, and sesame seed candies. Fresh fruits and fruit cups are often the snacks and desserts of choice in Israel, as they are in the countries of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Africa in general. Dates, figs, grapes, pomegranates, berries, apples, pomelos, oranges, lemons, bananas, and grapefruits are all popular. Dried fruits—especially dates, figs, and raisins—were and are also significant in desert climates as they are easy to prepare—just leave them out in the sun—and they are inexpensive or even free, lightweight, easy to store, easy to transport, and close to indestructible. For these same reasons, compotes became a staple of both Jewish and Muslim kitchens.

The Prophet Muhammad’s love of dates made them especially important to Muslim people. Muslims even today traditionally break their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan daily fast with dates, in commemoration of the Prophet’s own breaking of the fast. Dates and figs are among the world’s oldest cultivated crops, with the cultivation of figs going back beyond 9,000 years B.C. in the neighboring Jordan Valley, another part of Canaan. Dates and pomegranates are two of the promised Islamic “Blessings of Paradise,” and dates, figs, grapes, and pomegranates were among the important “Seven Species” (*shivat haminin*) of the land of Israel (Deuteronomy 8:8). Figs, dates, grapes, and pomegranates figure prominently in Holy Scriptures, as foods and as symbols, and remain popular today, both fresh and as ingredients in sweet treats. Restaurants featuring “biblical” ingredients, such as The Eucalyptus Restaurant in Jerusalem, are also popular.

What does The Eucalyptus serve for dessert in their “Kings and Prophets feast”?

The answer would be a “Jerusalem honey cake,” followed by “milk and honey”—sesame cream with *halva* and date honey.

In part, because of immigration, many of the modern sweet treats of Israel are not that different from those of contemporary neighboring Middle Eastern, Andalusian, and North African peoples. Take *baklava*, for instance, which is served at celebrations and important events, and prepared and enjoyed especially by Jews who came to Israel from Arab countries. Virtually every country in the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa enjoys and praises the honey-laden *phyllo*-nut-filled treat, each one having its own variation on the *baklava* theme (and seemingly half of them claiming ownership of invention). One Israeli version, *matzoh baklava*, is

Figs

Ancient Gugal figs are of a variety that could not have reproduced on their own. Figs discovered in the Jordan Valley near the city of Jericho, Israel, in 2006, in an early Neolithic village called Gilga, date back to 11,200–11,400 years, making them one of the earliest deliberately cultivated plants, and one of the first known examples of agriculture, marking the beginning of the “agricultural revolution.” The nine small, ripe figs discovered show signs of having been dried for human consumption. Since before recorded time, most likely since the days of Adam and Eve, figs have been important to sweet treats of the region.

Guinness World Records. Accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>.

even made with the unleavened *matzoh*—“bread of affliction” dough traditionally eaten by Jews during Passover—rather than classical *phyllo*.

The dough in the end makes little difference. The real and important difference in Jewish sweet treats is cogently pointed out by Clifford A. Wright, the dean of Mediterranean foods: “Jewish recipes, as we [have seen] could as easily be part of the local non-Jewish cuisines. What so often makes them Jewish, besides their being served at religious occasions, is the fact that Jewish cooks make them for a population who recognizes them as part of their culinary culture” (Wright, 1999). And the same could well be said for most peoples and cultures who so beautifully integrate their sweet treats of life into their life’s religious and philosophical world views.

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Italy

Everyone knows that Italy is the “boot” of the Mediterranean. Not everyone knows that the country of Italy is only a little over 150 years old. But it has a long, colorful, and historically important past, dating back thousands of years. Before it was united

as a modern nation-state in 1861, Italy was composed of a number of regional states and kingdoms. In ancient times, it was ruled by several classical civilizations, including the great Roman Empire.

Italy has a rich, deep culinary tradition. In fact, it has several of them, most following the footprints of the ancient independent kingdoms, each with its own sweet treat customs. While today there is a politically unified Italy, there is no single “Italian cuisine”—except perhaps in the minds of Americans. Today’s sweets and foods, in general, reflect the history, geography, regional cultures, and language groups of modern-day Italy. Food writers point to at least 19 culinary regions of Italy and note that, especially in Italy, food is a major part of local and regional identity.

The “boot” of Italy is tucked in between the Alps and three seas and is culturally divided North-South by the River Po basin—from the Alps to the foothills of the Apennine mountain range, which divides Italy East-West and forms a “backbone” of the peninsula. The islands of Sicily and Sardinia are part of modern-day Italy, albeit that Sicily historically and in modern times often seems to be a country in and of itself. In general, the more densely settled North is more industrial and prosperous, while the South is poorer and more agrarian. While Italian is the official language of the country, a French-like language is spoken by a small number in the Valle d’Aosta region of the northwest; German is the primary language in the northern Italian Alpine region of Trentino-Alto Adige, and Slovene is heard closer to Slovenia, in the Trieste-Gorizia area.

In the Trieste-Gorizia region, one finds *gubana*, a classic Friulian Slavic-like snail shell-shaped leavened cake roll made with flour, eggs, and honey, and filled with walnuts, pine nuts, and raisins—with the edges of the *gubana* slices “anointed” with a bit of locally produced *grappa* (a local grape-based distilled beverage made from the solid remains left over from wine making). *Gubana* was originally a Christmas and Easter cake of the poor, if the poor had any cake at all, but it was one the village of Cividale chose to serve to Pope Gregory XII upon his visit in 1409. Today, it remains a Christmas and Easter special treat, although it regularly, in addition, appears at local festivals throughout the year. In Friuli, one also finds *presnitz*, a typical winter puff pastry-like treat rolled around a filling of walnuts and sometimes almonds, raisins, candied fruit, and cloves, and then curved like a ringed snake-like sausage. Locals created *presnitz* in the 19th century to celebrate the visit of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria and Queen of Hungary, wife of Franz Joseph I, to the Miramare Castle near the regional capital of Trieste. Today, *presnitz* is especially popular at Easter.

The neighboring Veneto and the sweet-treat epicenter city of Venice provide contrasts in themselves. Venice was a major world player in the early sugar and spice trade. The lagoon city of Venice, famed for its *Carnival* first held there in the 11th century, is quite different from the rest of Veneto. Their *Carnival* highlights deep-fried sweet dough treats intended to be eaten on the go, include *galani* (twisted dough strips, the easiest *Carnival* treat to make at home, known as *crostoli* in other

parts of Veneto); *fritole* (sweet yeast-risen donut hole-like filled and sugared fritters, served in a number of forms), the “undisputed queen” of *Carnival* treats and the one with the greatest number of variations; and *crapfen* (filled donuts with origins in the Middle Ages). Names and shapes of *Carnival* treats—and treats in general—change even from one city district to another—*zaleti*, in Murano, for example is *buranelli* in Burano—a pattern common throughout Italy. The *frittelle di Carnevale*—the Venetian *Carnival fritole*—in one form or another, and with one name or another, is found throughout Veneto.

Non-Carnival sweets include *fugazza Vicentina* (a special Eastertide *brioche*-type sweet yeasted cake made with iris root and orange rind), and *pandoro*, a famous leavened sweet confectioners’ sugar-dusted Christmas cake made in Verona, typically flavored with lemon zest.

The Trentino-South Tyrol region, having been part of the Austrian/Austrian-Hungarian Empires, and Holy Roman Empire for 1,000 years, was an important location for the Roman Catholic Church, especially during the Counter-Reformation. It is not surprising, therefore, to find *strudel* and *zelten*, featured desserts of the German-speaking region of South Tyrol. *Zelten*, a German word in the local dialect meaning “rarely,” is so-called because it is traditionally eaten in Trentino only at Christmas, as is *pandolce*, sweet, leavened bread with dried candied fruits. *Zelten* is a rich traditional fruitcake, with each family guarding its recipe, but in general they are studded with nuts and dried fruits and flavored with spices and *grappa*. *Strudels* are many but, with what are thought to be some of the best apples in all of the Mediterranean area, *Apfelstrudel aus Südtirol* (apple strudel of South Tyrol) is a clear local favorite.

Lombardy to the west, in the rich Po River Valley, was historically influenced by the Austrians, Swiss, French, and even Spanish. Milan, dominant in the region since the 15th century, is, like Venice, known for its *Carnival*, with “particularly opulent” desserts. The regional Christmas cake, *panettone*—much like Verona’s *pandoro*, but traditionally containing candied fruits and raisins—is baked and served in paper. In recent times, almonds, custard cream, and chocolate bits have been added to the cake, which is dusted with confectioners’ sugar and served with *mascarpone*, a famous rich, soft, delicate, ivory-colored cows’ milk curdled cream developed in the region 400 or 500 years ago. A sweet Easter cake, *colomba di Pasqua* (Easter dove bread), one of the best-known Easter breads of Italy, is studded with candied orange peel and coated with a sugar-nut syrup, and, of course, baked in the shape of a dove. The Renaissance era lavish feasts of Mantua are legendary and were staged to inspire the awe and admiration of the guests; their sweets were an integral part of their strategy. Famous sweet treats of the region include the very crumbly *torta sbrisolona* (Mantua crumb cake) and a light and delicate late 18th-century *torta paradiso* (paradise cake) of Pavia, an Italian classic with a long shelf life, made with sugar, eggs, flour, butter, lemon zest, vanilla, and potato starch.

All Souls' Day is traditionally celebrated throughout Lombardy with the “bread of the dead” (*pane dei morti*), a dense, moist, almond-shaped, confectioners' sugar-dusted cookie with a chewy inside, generally made with macarons, raisins, dried figs, almonds, egg whites, cinnamon, and cocoa. All Soul's Day also features hard bone-shaped lemon- and almond-flavored cookies dusted with confectioners' sugar, for its old-bone appearance, known appropriately as “bones of the dead” (*ossa dei morti*). Lombards traditionally placed *pane dei morti* around the house to ensure that familial spirits returning for the All Souls' Day festivities caused no harm. *Pan de mei* of Lombardy, a rich sweet millet bread traditionally seasoned with dried elderflowers (today also made with cornmeal), serves the same ritual protection purpose on St. George's Day (April 23), but, in addition, aids in assuring a prosperous growing season.

The mountainous northwestern French-speaking region of Vale d'Aosta is “Frenchified” just as the Trentino and Südtirol regions are Germanized. Some suggest that Vale d'Aosta represents mountain cuisine at its best, albeit somewhat Spartan and intensely regional. *Mele al forno*, baked apples, are a favorite, along with their small Martin Sec pears, which are often baked with red wine and cloves, and served topped with whipped cream. Vale d'Aosta is said to produce the best chestnut honey in Europe.

The Piedmont region, south of Vale d'Aosta—home to Carlo Petrini, the International Slow Food Movement, and the world's first University of Gastronomic Sciences—also has French influence and tends to feature peasant dishes. The Piedmont region is also the home of European sweet chocolate bars, as it was here, not in Switzerland, that the famed Swiss-born Philippe Suchard created the first sweet chocolate bars in Europe. Turin's famous *gianduia*, or hazelnut chocolate, was also created here. During the French occupation in 1807, finding it difficult to order cocoa powder because of an embargo, a local pastry chef blended milk and hazelnuts to make the now-famous and iconic confection. Hazelnuts have long been popular in Piedmontese confections. In the 1960s, Piedmont confectioners Giovanni and Pietro Ferrero—owners of the famed Ferrero confections company rated by Forbes in 2009 as the most reputable company in the world—introduced a hazelnut chocolate spread Nutella to the world (Kneale 2009). Earlier on, Piedmontese pastry chefs created their most typical dessert, *bunet*, an ancient rich chocolate mousse made with amaretto-flavored macarons, eggs, milk, and sugar. Stuffed peaches and *bicerin* (“small glass”), a centuries-old three-layered hot coffee with milk and chocolate drink, are also notably native to Turin.

To the south of Piedmont, one finds the mountainous northwest coastal strip of Liguria, home to historically prominent and important Genoa, its capital. Home to Christopher Columbus, a sugar merchant and world explorer, it was a major player in the history of the spread of sugar production and trade. Seafaring Genoa dominated commercial traffic in the Mediterranean by the 11th century and became

one of four Italian maritime republics that controlled trade with Asia and Africa (the others were Venice, Amalfi, and Pisa) in competition with the Arabs and with Byzantium. The Ligurian cuisine is the cuisine of seamen, favoring salty, savory foods over sweet. Nevertheless, Ligurians eat a lot of fruits, up to 30 percent of their daily caloric intake. A typical Ligurian dessert is traditional *latte dolce fritto* (Ligurian sweet fried milk), milk “cookies” fried in locally abundant olive oil with grated lemon rind. Of humble origins *latte dolce fritto* is a thick milk-based cream left to solidify and then cut in pieces, which are breaded and fried. It is said to be one of Italy’s best, albeit simple, sweet treats.

Emilia and Romagna, to the east of Liguria, take their names from ancient Roman roads of a region defined by the Po River Valley and the Apennine mountains. Today it is one of Europe’s richest regions, serving as a center for food and automobile production. Faenza, a town famous for ceramics in the south-central region, is said to be the birthplace of Italian candied fruits and fruit cup medleys. Candied fruits appear in ancient traditional treats such as *pan pepato* from Ferrara, a rich Christmastide dried fruit-and-nut dessert made with almonds, candies, and sweet spices. Freshly ground pepper appears in earlier versions of *pan pepato*, hence its name, “peppery bread.” In general, the area is known for its simple desserts, including, for example, *mistocchine*, fried chestnut and wheat flour dumplings.

Emilia-Romagna is also known for its meats, including various kinds of salami, appropriately so, as the capital is the city of Bologna. In the sweet treats world, a more recent *salame di cioccolato* (chocolate salami) is a popular, appropriate-for-the-region dessert. A traditional holiday treat, *salame di cioccolato*, is made of crushed butter cookies, butter, sugar, eggs, orange liqueur, pistachios, cocoa, bittersweet chocolate, with a dusting of confectioners’ sugar added for effect. Rolled up and tied into a sausage-like ring, it makes a fine sweet chocolate dessert “sausage,” often served at Easter in Emilia-Romagna.

Tuscany, in west-central Italy south of Emilia-Romagna, is well known for its leading role in culinary development during the Renaissance under the Florentine Medici family. And its culinary fame has endured. Although recipes vary, of course, one of the more popular sweet treats throughout Italy is the ancient *panforte*, literally, “strong bread,” a specialty of Sienna, since as early as the 13th century, a town south of Florence where cake is known as “bread.” Outsiders, seeking to clarify, sometimes call *panforte* “Siena cake,” and have described it as a cross between fruit cake, candy, and honey cake. Either as “bread” or as “cake” or “candy,” it is a popular delightfully dense rich hard-but-chewy treat made with flour, honey, hazelnuts, almonds, chopped candied citrus peel, citrus zest, cocoa (added since the 1800s), and ground cinnamon and other spices, dusted with confectioners’ sugar. Sieneese tradition calls for a “bread” of 17 ingredients, one for each of the town’s old districts. *Panforte* was listed in 1370 as an important confection for the Venetian *Carnival*. *Panforte* and other Tuscan sweets, such as *cantucci*, the hard, oblong,

twice-baked almond biscuits from Prato, known more properly as *biscotti di Prato*, and *ghiottini*—a *cantucci* crisp almond cookie descendent—are traditionally eaten at the end of a meal, dipped into a glass of sweet Tuscan dessert wine, *vin santo*.

Legend has it that *tiramisù* (meaning literally “pick-me-up”)—the coffee-soaked sponge cake or ladyfingers (*savoiard*i) with *vin santo*, Sicilian Marsala wine, or brandy, layered with mascarpone cheese and grated chocolate—was also invented in Sienna, on the occasion of a visit by Grand Duke Cosimo de’ Medici III (1642–1723), in whose honor the venerable dessert was called *zuppa del Duca* (“The Duke’s soup”). The grand duke’s chefs brought the recipe back to Florence, as the legend goes, and from there the popular treat spread to England. Some legends, it turns out, are just legends. *Tiramisù*, though popular throughout Italy and the world since the early 1980s, was more likely invented in the city of Treviso, Veneto, sometime in the 1960s.

Legendary—and true—*zuccotto*, another cake treat made with a sponge cake or ladyfinger base, originated in Florence. This almond and chocolate cake is made with hazelnuts, almonds, and maraschino liqueur. Whether or not its shape was actually inspired by Brunelleschi’s famous dome in Florence, as some suggest, is anybody’s guess.



Zuccotto, a legendary treat made with a sponge cake or ladyfinger base, originated in Florence. Whether or not its shape was inspired by Brunelleschi’s dome is anybody’s guess. (Frank Wieder/Getty Images)

In Umbria, southeast of Tuscany, St. Francis of Assisi used to bring honey and wine to the bees, to help them get through the winter. What is now Umbria is also the birthplace of St. Benedict and his twin sister St. Scholastica, and St. Clare of the religious Order of Poor Clares. It is also a haven for heavenly sweet treats.

Although pagan in origin, by ancient Christian times, villages and towns had festivals known as *sagre* dedicated to their communities' patron saints. Today *sagre* are popular and frequent throughout Italy, paying homage to specialties for which the villages are known, and to the patron saints that look after and protect them. Food items are often the focal points of Italian *sagre*. In Perugia, the capital of Umbria, a major *sagra* is held for its famous *torciglione* ("twisted spiral"), an Italian donut-sort-of treat (*ciambella*), which in Umbria takes the form of a spiral-shaped cake made with sweet almonds or pine nuts, egg whites, and sugar, made in the shape of a snake coiled around itself, with an almond or piece of candy (*confetto*) sticking out to represent its tongue, and coffee beans for its eyes. In Umbria, *torciglione* is a traditional Christmas cake, with family recipes still being passed from mother to daughter.

One other Christmas specialty of Umbria includes diamond-shaped *pinoccate*, pine nut cakes made of melted sugar and pine nuts, which include a white version made with sugar only, and a brown chocolate version made with cocoa.

The city of Perugia hosts the annual nine-day Eurochocolate International Chocolate Exhibition, usually in October, one of the largest chocolate festivals in Europe, drawing nearly 1 million participants. The local Perugina confection company, now owned by Nestlé, is Italy's most well-known chocolate firm. They are best known for their *Baci*, chocolate "kisses" filled with hazelnut.

In the laidback lesser-known rural region east of Umbria on the Adriatic Sea, in the historic borderlands of the former Papal States known in English as the Marches, the home cooking of peasants' mothers' and grandmothers' still reigns supreme. And what might *nonna* be cooking these days as a sweet treat? Most likely something like *ciambellotto con i funghetti all'anice*, a ring-shaped cake with aniseed, or it might be what in the Marche capital city of Ancona is known as *caciuni*, in the form of a thin baked bread-dough crescent, filled with matured *pecorino* (sheep's) cheese, egg yolks, breadcrumbs, sugar, and grated lemon rind. Elsewhere in Marche, grandmothers might be calling this treat *piconi*. Either way, before baking the *piconi* in the oven, *nonna* scores the ravioli-like treats on top, in the shape of a cross, so that melted cheese will ooze out during baking. When the *piconi* are out of the oven, she will brush them with a little beaten egg. She will use very little sugar, because once, many years ago, sugar was a precious commodity to be used sparingly. In fact, she will more likely use their local honey or any of the famed honeys from the Marche region. In other parts of Marche, others prepare a smaller sweet dough version of *caciuni*, which, in the place of the egg yolks and ricotta, they use purée of chickpeas, and they fry the little *caciuni* instead of baking

them. Their version includes grated chocolate, cinnamon, and almonds. They all, of course, enjoy the fruits of the region.

Other treats, like elsewhere in Italy, are made for the *Carnival*; religious festivals; and for special occasions linked to births and deaths; and the celebrations of different seasons. For the *Carnival*, in the olden days, *nonna's nonna* made *bostrengo* the traditional way, with the blood of a pig—a peasant food. Now virtually no one eats *bostrengo* that way, and the treat that was once a blood pudding (*sanguinaccio dolce*) evolved into a simple dense rice bread-pudding-like sweet made with chocolate, boiled rice, dried fruits, sugar, and pine nuts, a sweet treat headlining the annual three-day *sagra* in August, in the northern Marche medieval town of Apecchio.

Just 30 miles north of Apecchio, in the tiny independent little country of the Most Serene Republic of San Marino, *bustrengo* is a traditional Christmas cake made with honey, nuts, and dried fruits. The Sammarinese, however, are most famous for their *torta tre monti* (“cake of the three towers”), a cake made of layers of thin wafled wafers joined together by chocolate or hazelnut crème, and covered in chocolate fondant—the name is based on “The Three Towers of San Marino” located on the three peaks of Mount Titan, and which are depicted on their national flag.

Everyone knows that all roads lead to Rome, and when in Rome, one should do as the Romans do. And what do the Romans and Laziali citizens do for sweet treats? In Lazio, the district of the City of Rome, the favorite dessert is said to be *maritozzi*, leavened sweet oval dessert buns made with honey, raisins, pine nuts, and candied orange peel and most often filled with fresh whipped cream. *Maritozzi* used to be made only for Easter but now they are available year-round.

Mostly because Rome encircles the tiny sovereign theocratic city-state of Vatican City, the world headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, Rome is a destination of pilgrims, visitors, and tourists—one of the great destinations of the world. Rome is said to have more visitors than permanent residents. As one can imagine, the “Eternal City” has world-class sweet treats of every kind, Italian and non-Italian alike. A perennial favorite of the world visitors is *gelato*, an ice-cream-like sweet treat most often said to be from Sicily, which is famous throughout the world.

Throughout Italy *gelato* and other sweet treats, as well as other fare, are prepared under the spiritual protection of St. Francesco Caracciolo (1563-1608), the Patron Saint and Protector of Italian Cooks. St. Francesco was born in Villa Santa Maria in Abruzzo, in the mountainous region of former Abruzzo-Molise, just east of Rome, historically a land of poverty. Isolated through the reigns of nine civilizations, the people are consummate locavores, relying on both local ingredients and local self-sufficiency inspiration. Locals prefer sweets with almonds—sweet treats wonderful enough to inspire poets. *Parrozzo*, an igloo-shaped cake-like Christmas treat made from a mixture of crushed almonds, sugar, butter, flour, and eggs and coated in chocolate, is a specialty of the central coastal city of Pescara, and so

Gelato

Gelato, a type of Sicilian dense “ice cream,” inspired by Arab (*sherbet*) which was introduced to Italy in 1559 along with a technique that used ice and salts in the freezing process, was originally probably just a simple treat of fruit juice and snow from a mountain. Early on, Sicilians made their *sorbetto* with snow from nearby Mount Etna by adding wine, wine must, and honey. Eventually, they added butter and cream, with perfect results: *parfait!* *Gelato* emerged eventually, and *gelato* making diffused to Tuscany and then to Paris in the 17th century, and from the French Court it spread to the world. By the 1770, it is generally said, an Italian, Giovanni Bosio, had set up a *gelateria* in New York City. *Gelato* differs from regular ice cream in that it has a higher butterfat content, between 10 and 16 percent, contains almost no air (unlike its American counterpart), has a silky texture due to its method of manufacture, and has more intense flavors, which, because *gelato* is not frozen as hard as regular ice cream, are “deep” and “rich.” Traditional *gelato* flavors include pistachio, chocolate, lemon, strawberry, and *stracciatella* (a vanilla base with integrated chocolate shavings). Italians enjoy *gelato* as an afternoon or evening snack, rather than as a dessert but, in parts of Sicily, people eat *gelato* for breakfast. Today, in Italy, there are over 36,000 *gelato*-making facilities, mostly small producers, and 37,000 *gelateria*. In 2011, Italians spent over \$3 billion on *gelato*. In 2012, Italy opened the Carpigiani *Gelato* Museum in Anzola dell’Emilia, near Bologna, the world’s first museum of *gelato* culture and technology, the same town where the *Gelato* University was established in 2003 to further the art and science of *gelato* production, to train *gelato* entrepreneurs, and to promote *gelato* worldwide.

wonderful that it inspired the modern poet Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863–1938) to immortalize the treat in a poem called “*La Canzone del Parrozzo*” (“The Song of *Parrozzo*”). *Parrozzo* was originally a sweet version of the peasants’ corn bread, called *pane rozzo*.

The well-known *confetti* from Sulmona, the birthplace of the famous Classical Roman poet Ovid, is a confection basically of brightly colored sugar-coated almonds, traditionally presented as token gifts on weddings and other special occasions worthy of poetry. This appetizing *confetti* can be eaten plain, or used as decoration, or made into candy floral arrangements, or crafted into works of art, or simply be there to serve as inspiration for poetry, which, technically speaking, is also true of the paper versions of *confetti*. The original *confetti*, the plural of the sweetmeat *confetto*—dating back to 1815—was a small candy traditionally thrown during Italian carnivals.

Croccante (“crunchy”), a typical crunchy (of course) Christmas Eve sweet treat from the area around the northern city of Teramo, is said to have been prepared in the same way for 2,000 years. *Croccante* is a sort of almond-brittle sweetmeat type

of nougat made from almonds and caramelized sugar, often flavored with lemon. Teramo is also known for its *pepatelli*, spicy biscotti-type Christmastide cookies made with fine bran, almonds, and honey, and flavored with orange zest, cocoa powder, and black pepper, traditionally dipped in reduced wine (*vino cotto*) and eaten at the end of a meal. The city of Lanciano is known for its *bocconotti* (“small bites”), a traditional half-moon-shaped cake-like cookie stuffed with almonds, grape or black cherry preserves, and chocolate, a treat good enough to inspire young poets.

Molise split from Abruzzo-Molise in 1970, making it the newest region in Italy, but one which takes pride in its ancient treat traditions such as its special sweet-savory *mostarda d’uva* (a “grape mustard” jam made with local grapes), *peccellate* (pastry filled with grape syrup, jams, honey and nuts), *cippillati* (a crescent-shaped pastry filled with sour black cherries and jam), and the sweet donut-shaped red-wine-flavored biscuits known as *ciambelline*, or “wine biscuits.”

St. Francesco Caracciolo is also the patron saint of the coastal city of Naples, in the region of Campania, where desserts are of special importance. Tourists and natives alike find it almost impossible to pass up sweet treats like the ever-present light *babas* oozing sweet *limoncello* liqueur, *struffoli* (small fried balls of dough dipped in honey), *raffoli* (cream-filled sponge topped with confectioners’ sugar), and *mostaccioli* (almond honey cookies). Eastertide finds them enjoying *pastiera* (Easter pie), the traditional Neapolitan Easter pastry, a seasonal treat made with ricotta cheese which is so good that people traditionally eat it right out of its round baking pan. The springtime *pastieras* are made with guarded family recipes, but all versions, everybody knows, are made with eggs and cooked wheat—symbolic ingredients celebrating the return of spring, new life, and the risen Christ. By tradition, *pastieras* are cooked no later than Holy Thursday or Good Friday. St. Joseph’s Day, March 19, brings with it the typically Neapolitan *zeppole*—“St. Joseph’s Day Cakes”—sweet deep-fried donut-like fritters with or without a variety of fillings.

Puglia, the relatively flat “heel” of the Italian “boot,” enjoys simple and natural desserts, with a penchant for honey, nuts, and dried fruits. With almonds aplenty in that region, many desserts, quite naturally, are almond-based, and treats are often combined with either regular honey or *miele di fichi* (fig honey), and sweetened ricotta cheese. Bari, the regional capital, and Brindisi were important seaports during the days of ancient Greece and Classical Rome, and some suggest that even today pastries, cakes, and fritters echo tastes of ancient Greece and the Orient. *Bocconotto*, puff pastry with a filling of almonds and cherries, said to have originated in the southernmost district of Salento, is a typical Puglia favorite. *Pasticciotto*, a sweet-crust pastry filled with custard and baked in the oven—a regional favorite—is listed on the national food product list of traditional foods by the City of Lecce as its official typical cake.

The mountainous region of Basilicata at the instep on the “boot of Italy” is a relatively poor land and one historically having few tourists. In the culinary world, it is relatively unknown, even in the many historical Italian cookbooks, some of which date back to the 13th century. Basilicata is, however, a land known for its honey produced from citrus, chestnut, eucalyptus, sunflowers, and thyme. Almond toffee is a typical dessert in the region, other than fruits.

Calabria, the toe of the boot of Italy, is best known in the world of sweet treats for its *‘nzuddah (mastazzolu)*, a sweet pastry of Arab origin made with flour, caramelized honey, anisette, butter, and other flavorings. A festival treat, especially at the feast of Our Lady of Consolation, they are usually adorned with colorful decorations and come in many shapes. During the Christmas holidays they appear in the shape of fish, a universal Christian symbol. Other favorites include deep-fried, honey-sweetened pastries, like *scalidde*, fried honey-sweetened fritters which are sausage-like in appearance.

In Sicily, as in Naples, desserts are a main attraction of the regional cuisine. *Cassata Siciliana* is a noted traditional centuries-old Palermo sponge cake layered with sheep’s milk ricotta cheese, served at Sicilian celebrations such as weddings. Marzipan (from the Italian *marzapane*), a sweet, pliable mixture of almond paste, sugar, and sometimes unbeaten egg whites, was molded into various confections early on by Sicilian pastry chefs from the almond paste introduced by the Arabs who first arrived in AD 827. Marzipan confectionary art and sculpture is now found throughout the world. In Sicily, on All Saints’ Day, November 1, one can, for example, find “bones of the dead” made of almond paste and sugar, part of the celebration of the Roman Catholic holy day, as with the “bones of the dead” cookies in Lombardy. On St. Joseph’s Day, March 19, one can find a number of other sweets made of sugar, marzipan, and chocolate. One can find sweet marzipan art year-round and throughout the world.

Layers of *gelato* can be substituted for the layers of ricotta in the *cassata*. *Gelato* is a type of dense Sicilian higher-butterfat intensely flavored silky-textured “ice cream.” In 1686, the Sicilian pastry chef Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli opened the famous *Café Procope* in Paris, not necessarily the first in France, but one that is noted early on, which served *eau glacées*. It still stands today and is said to be the oldest restaurant in continuous operation. In Italy, *gelato* is often an afternoon or evening snack, rather than eaten as a dessert, but, in parts of Sicily, people enjoy *gelato* for breakfast. Today, Sicily offers delicious and varied frozen desserts, including *granita*, a slightly granular semi-frozen dessert made with sugar; water; and various liquid flavorings, such as fruit juice, almond, mint, wine, or coffee. Favorite flavors and textures vary among cities and regions.

Sicily also maintains favorite traditional desserts, with special ones on festival occasions, as elsewhere in Italy: *muffolette*, *sfinci*, *buccellati*, *mustazzoli*, *cuccidati*,

benedettini, and the list goes on. And typical traditional Sicilian cookies remain favorites: *cuddureddi chini*, *mastrazzoli*, *sciauni*, and the list goes on.

Sweet treats on the Island of Sardinia, as in Sicily, are extraordinary and are largely based on semolina wheat, *sapa* (cooked must), honey, almonds, candied fruits, and orange peel.

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J

Japan

Washoku means “harmony of food.” It describes the Japanese philosophy of eating and nourishment. *Washoku* menus are strongly influenced by seasonal foods and accompanying seasonal food cultures (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) as well as the artistic sensibilities of food itself: flavor, appearance, color, scent, sound, and symbols. It refers to food, things, and attitudes that are truly Japanese—not Chinese, not Western, or not from any other country or culture. To practice *washoku*, which applies to all Japanese food, including sweets and desserts, one must be acquainted with five principles: five colors, five tastes, five methods of preparation, five attitudes toward dining, and the five senses that are stimulated by food. The number five is prominent in many Buddhist traditions, and in *washoku* it applies to Japanese views about food itself, food preparation, and food presentation. Five colors ensure a balance of nutritional value and aesthetic presentation: red, yellow, green, black, and white. At any meal, five tastes balance among the foods of five colors: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami, an ancient taste with a recently assigned name. (Umami, “deliciousness,” is that flavor which is not any of the others, sometimes described as savory. It is the taste of the molecule glutamate. The fifth taste was, in previous times, spicy.)

Allowing that food should be enjoyed as fresh and natural as possible, the first acceptable method of presentation is to serve food raw, followed by four other methods of preparation: simmer, fry, steam, and roast (or grill). Buddhist tradition shapes the five attitudes toward food and dining—it reminds one to respect all those who produce, cook, and serve the food, to behave in such a way as to be worthy of the food, to enjoy the food without anger or bitterness, to eat the food for spiritual as well as physical health—to continue the journey toward enlightenment. Not only should the food have a pleasing taste and smell, but it must also be a visually aesthetic experience, appealing to the eye, a chromatic work of art.

It should be no surprise, then, that the five senses are considered in food production, preparation, and dining. This principle is dramatically seen even in the elaborate preparation of children’s box-lunches, the *bento*, home-packed meals typically created for children by their mothers. Texture stimulates the sense of touch, critical to the preparation and eating of the food; the dishes and utensils used in the experience are of equal importance, as people hold them in their hands; they are gently

touched and handled, so shape is also an element of sight and touch. Children are persistently taught and shown the importance of all five senses from their earliest days.

As for the fifth sense, one might ask how hearing fits the dining experience. It appears that the more elaborate the meal, the quieter the conversation—certainly not a Western concept. However, to give honor to the chef and show appreciation for the food, quiet reverence allows the diners to savor each taste of food, to absorb the entire aesthetic event, and to take time to enjoy the experience with quiet appreciation, pleasure, and mindful conversation.

Japanese cuisine evolved over the past 2,000 years. The archipelago claims about 10 percent arable lands among the mountainous regions, where sugar beets, some fruits, vegetables, and, of course, rice grow. The Japanese staple food, rice—the center of the meal—came from the Korean peninsula and other Asian regions in about 400 BC, possibly earlier. In the Shinto faith, each grain of rice is a symbol for the soul of one person. In recipes where rice is used, the millions of grains of rice represent the convergence of millions of souls.

About the same time (400 BC), Japan and China exchanged scholars and promoted trade between the countries; China introduced soybeans and wheat, which also became fundamental to the Japanese diet. By about AD 600, Shintoism and Buddhism had become the primary religions of Japan—meat and its by-products were discouraged and so dairy products were rarely eaten. Today, in Japan, most people identify with both religions, resulting in a population that is about 84 percent Shinto and 71 percent Buddhist.

In the eighth century, it is said, a Chinese Buddhist priest introduced sugar to Japan in the form of a hard, black, substance made from boiling sugarcane. At that time, only the high-ranking citizens used it and primarily for medicinal purposes. From about the 16th century onward, there were some European influences on food and diet, compliments of the Dutch and the Portuguese traders, but rarely was there any mention of sugar, honey, or sweets among ordinary citizens. It was not until

Godiva Chocolates: Small Is Beautiful

Food writer historian Joanne Chen reports that in Japan, smaller Godiva chocolates are more popular than the larger ones. When Godiva first opened in Japan, business picked up when it *decreased* the size of its chocolates. Japanese, not impressed with the bigger-is-better American-style approach to sweet treats, wanted more delicate, visually appealing sweet treats, with explanations, in their box of chocolate.

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the 20th century that access to sugar became more common, albeit, compared to the West, sugar is still used with discretion.

The “sweet” of the five tastes of Japanese food may be in the form of a complementary sweet bean paste or fresh fruits, but rarely is it in the form of sugar or honey. In ancient Japanese writings, there is no mention of bees or honey as they relate to food; bees are occasionally represented in ancient Japanese art as they relate to the peony flower. Nevertheless, Japanese people do appreciate *okashi*, the “sweets” that they enjoy with tea, not as dessert, but well after the meal has ended. *Okashi* is a derivative of a word meaning “fruit.” Japanese people enjoyed fruits in the past and they enjoy them today as a snack or sweet treat. Since the arrival of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the 16th century, *okashi* refers to any sweet, including small, European style cakes and confections and *wagashi*.

An art form, intended to stimulate the five senses, *wagashi* dates back to 300 BC, when *wagashi* meant a delicate piece of fruit, a berry, a nut, or a seed; in other words, a treat. *Wagashis* evolved into different forms of rice cakes, influenced by Buddhist philosophy. Eventually, in the later part of the 16th century, the introduction of sugar spurred further evolution of *wagashis*, which have come to represent the essence of Japanese culture. Three primary ingredients that are fundamental to most *wagashis* are red and white *azuki* beans made into paste; *kanten*, a gelatinous substance made from seaweed; and *wasombonto*, a very old, smooth, delicate, aromatic, finely ground sugar. The beauty, detail, balance, and perfection of each *wagashi* are the essence of the exquisite edible art that continues to evolve.

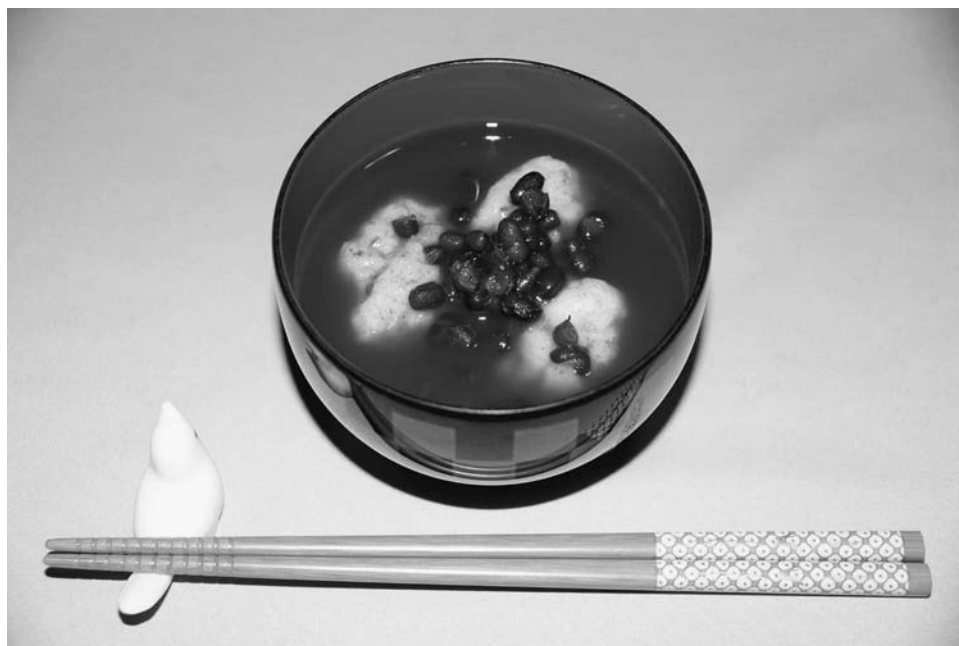
Red bean *mochi* and green tea *mochi* are two of many rice cakes made from *mochigome*, short grain sticky rice pounded and molded into delicate shapes, and then eaten immediately, or grilled, or deep-fried. Japanese people traditionally make *mochi* in a ceremony, *mochitsuki*, where the pounding of the rice with mallets is a rhythmic element in the ritual of preparing the traditional Japanese New Year food. Two stacked, round *mochis* (*kagami-mochi*, “mirror *mochi*”), garnished with bitter orange, are traditionally placed on the family Shinto altar as an offering at the New Year. Nowadays, *mochis* are commercially made, fresh or packaged, and are available in Japanese stores all over the world.

Edamame, translates as “stem bean,” is appropriately named, as it was traditionally sold in bunches while still on the stem. *Edamame*, in Japan, date back at least to the 13th century when a Buddhist saint, Nichiren Shōnin, wrote a thank-you note to a parishioner in gratitude for the gift of *edamame* left at the temple. *Edamame* became a staple food about 250 years ago, during the Edo period, with the rise of urbanization. *Zunda mochis* are covered with mashed *edamame* (green soybeans) paste. In addition to the *edamame*, the paste contains a pinch of salt, sugar, and water. People in the Tohoku region (the northern part of Japan) have the tradition of making *zunda mochis* in times of celebration and gathering.

Ohagi and *botamochi* refer to the sweet rice balls made with sticky rice covered with red *azuki* bean paste (with sugar); both are prepared following the same cooking method and with same ingredients. *Ohagi* are the sweet rice balls usually made in autumn; its name comes from the Japanese bush clover *hagi*. *Botamochi* refers to the sweet rice balls usually made during spring and early summer, and the name appropriately comes from the spring flower *botan*. People commonly eat *ohagi* or *botamochi* as sweet dessert during *Higan*, the Buddhist memorial services commemorating ancestors, which occur during the spring and fall equinoxes.

Oshiruko, a sweet *azuki* bean soup, served hot, is usually mixed with sticky rice chewy dumplings, *mochis*, or sweet boiled chestnuts. There are two types of *oshiruko*, each with different preparations; one is made with finely crushed smooth paste, and the other is a mixture of the *azuki* bean paste and coarsely crushed *azuki* beans. People enjoy *oshiruko* during winter, especially at the New Year outdoor gatherings.

Every Japanese meal is an aesthetic encounter. A meal is art, culture, beauty, and discipline. The place of sweets and treats rests in the culinary, cultural, and religious history of Japan, and in the balance of color, taste, methods of preparation, stimulation of the senses, and nourishment of the physical and spiritual being



Japanese enjoy traditional *oshiruko* (sweet *azuki* bean soup) during winter, especially at New Year gatherings, served hot with *mochis* (rice cakes). (Courtesy of Takehito Kamata)

of all who partake in the confections. Only time will tell how Japanese cuisine will sustain its core values, its essence, with the increased urbanization, globalization, and commercialization of the country and the world—and especially in the face of the continued ubiquitous dominance of high fructose corn syrup in the world of for-profit sweet treats—a product of a process developed in Japan.

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Jordan

In ancient times, Jordan was part of Canaan, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” When the Romans invaded the southern highlands of the region, ancient Judea, in the first century BC, thick forests of Judean date tree palms covered the Jordan River valley from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the shores of the Dead Sea in the south. The region’s dates were famous throughout the ancient Roman Empire for their succulence and sweetness. Even before that, figs were prominent in the area. Archaeological discoveries in the early Neolithic village of Gilgal I in the Jordan Valley not only revealed figs dating from earlier than 9,000 BC, but they also suggested that figs may have been cultivated a thousand years before the domestication of cereals and legumes, possibly making figs in what is modern-day Jordan one of the earliest forms of agriculture in the world.

“A land flowing with milk and honey” is a metaphor of all good things. And good sweet things in modern-day Jordan still contain milk products, honey, dates, and other fruits. Goats, one of the first domesticated, or at least managed, milk-producing animals, appear in archaeological record of the early Neolithic village of Ain Ghazal, near Amman—the capital and largest city of Jordan—about 7,500 B.C. Domesticated sheep appear about a thousand years later. Beekeeping and large-scale

honey production in the region goes back to 900 BC, and honey gathering thousands of years before that. Dates, date molasses, and other native fruits have been important since almost the beginning of time, and for sure since the beginning of written history.

Since the days of the Muslim caliphates (starting in the 7th century) and the Ottoman Turks (starting in the 16th century), Islam has been a major cultural factor in the lands of Jordan. Modern-day Jordan is an Islamic nation with 92 percent Sunni Muslim followers of the Prophet Muhammad, and sweets are a most important part of that heritage. The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur'an*—the sacred book of Islam—and honey. Prophet Muhammad favored honey and dates, so from earliest days of Islam honey, dates, and sweets in general, took on religious and medicinal as well as culinary importance in the Muslim world.

Sweets are central in the observance of the month-long fasting of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims following *sunnah* (the way of life prescribed and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad) break their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan fasting each day of the month with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with dates in commemoration of the Prophet's own breaking of the fast. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals. The month of Ramadan fasting ends with the all-important three-day joyous feast of *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival. Offering sweets and gifts to visiting friends and relatives marks the feast of *Eid al-Fitr*.

A main offering is *katayef*, a well-known Ramadan sweet in all Arab countries. *Katayef* is a small sweet pancake-like pastry cooked on one side, filled with clotted cream, unsalted cheese, or sweetened goat cheese, or nuts (pistachios, walnuts or cashews), and folded in half and baked or deep-fried until lightly brown. Jordanians also especially enjoy their version of *muhallabiya*, a common Arab sweet creamy rice pudding, during Ramadan. Locally important for Ramadan is *warbat*, a Jordanian original, a sweet triangle-shaped baked *phyllo* filled with *ashta* (a special Middle Eastern clotted cream), and drizzled with *atar* syrup (rose water or orange blossom water and honey or sugar), and sprinkled with ground pistachios.

Other popular Jordanian sweets include *kanafeh*, a soft cheesy honey-soaked pastry from the West Bank Palestinian city of Nablus. The orange-colored Jordanian version, made into a half-inch thick circle about two feet in diameter, then baked in a flat pan, is eaten for breakfast but is primarily considered a dessert and a sweet treat for special occasions. *Hareeseh*, a popular moist cake-like dessert, is made with semolina, yoghurt, honey or sugar, topped with an almond, or coarsely crushed pistachios, and drenched in *atar*. *Hareeseh* is served as dessert after a meal, and along with tea in the afternoon. *Baklava*—a rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multilayered honey- or sugar-drenched diamond-shaped *phyllo* with chopped nuts—is prepared

regularly in Jordan, as it is in all countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, and in parts of Asia.

As in most countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, and countries throughout much of Africa, fruits are often the most popular sweets and a most popular dessert. Especially popular in Jordan, next to dates and figs, are grapes, pomegranates, melons, oranges, apples, peaches, cherries, bananas, and lemons.

More than three-fourths of the 6.5 million Jordanians live in urban areas, and almost half of them (2.8 million) live in the capital city of Amman. Hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, those who can afford it have international and commercial sweets available, including “Jordan almonds”—sugar-shelled brightly colored M&M-type almond-centered candies. Some suggest that Jordan almonds probably originated in ancient Rome, where honey-covered almonds were commonly eaten at festivities. In the United States, “Jordan almonds” can—according to the FDA (Food and Drug Administration)—be from anywhere in the world, as long as they *look like* real Jordan almonds—long, thin, slender, and rather smooth kernels. In Jordan they eat the real thing, the ones that *taste like* the sweet treat of classical times. Otherwise, Jordanians tend to prefer their traditional favorites, the honey-drenched floral-scented pastries and fresh and dried fruits that have satisfied their ancestors’ sweet tooth for thousands of years.

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Kanafeh, a soft cheesy honey-soaked pastry popular throughout the Levant, is eaten for breakfast in Jordan but is primarily considered a dessert and a sweet treat for special occasions. (Dave Bartruff/Corbis)

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K

Korea (North and South)

Koreans enjoy a healthy diet, eating as they do appropriate amounts of food from the seas, their fields, and their gardens. They do not compromise flavor, texture, or color in preparing and serving food that is not only healthy but also attractive. Koreans season their foods with sweet peppers, green onions, soy sauce, ginger, sesame, bean paste, and a few others spices and flavorings, always ideally combined in perfect balance.

A 1953 armistice following a decade of conflict formally divided the country into North Korea and South Korea. The tastes and culinary culture of the Korean people did not divide when their country did, but since the armistice, South Koreans have had many more financial resources, economic reforms, and opportunities than North Koreans, and consequently they have had more and better access to a greater variety of foods. Five tastes influence the Korean cuisine: salty (salt and soy sauce), sweet (beet sugar, honey, and sweet potatoes), sour (vinegar), bitter (ginger), and hot (chili peppers and mustard), and five colors contribute to food preparation and presentation: red, green, yellow, white, and black.

Traditionally, sweet endings to a meal are not a daily occurrence; sweet treats are rather served with tea, at special events and celebrations, and rarely, as snacks. For sweet treats, Koreans enjoy honey; sugar; rice cookies; and steamed rice cakes with nuts, dates, or red beans. They enjoy dried fruits, especially persimmons. One of the more unusual fruits is *jujube*, also known as a red date or Korean date, which, when dried, looks (but does not taste) like the soft Medjool dates commonly cultivated in the United States and Mexico.

Westerners know Korean *chapssal* as glutinous rice (which is a misnomer as it has no gluten), sticky rice, or sweet rice, the preferred short grain variety used most often in Korean sweets, especially rice cakes. *Yaksik* is a popular sweet rice pudding-like treat made with glutinous rice cooked in brown sugar and water, with *jujubes*, chestnuts, soy sauce, pine nuts, and raisins. Of course, there are variations; some use honey, rather than brown sugar, and others add cinnamon or other flavorings. *Yaksik* is traditionally served at *Daeboreum*, the Great Full Moon Festival celebrating the New Year of the Korean calendar. *Yaksik* was also a favorite banquet dessert of the famed Korean Royal Court Cuisine of the Joseon dynasty that ruled Korea from 1392 to 1910.

Hotteok are more-than-sweet stuffed pancakes, thought to be a treat of late 19th-century Chinese immigrant merchants. Koreans adapted *hotteok*, sweetening it up and making it with sweet rice flour and yeast, which give it a unique taste and texture. Usually, the cook stuffs the *hotteok* with a cinnamon sugar or honey mixture or a sweetened red bean paste. Koreans especially enjoy *hotteok* in cold weather, served fresh with the warm sweet filling oozing out. *Hotteok* are a popular South Korean street food.

Koreans love sweet rice cakes—slightly sweet, soft, chewy confections. Surprisingly, the primary ingredient is frozen sweet rice flour. (The frozen sweet rice flour, frozen to retain freshness, has more moisture; dry plain flour, with less moisture, cannot be substituted for frozen rice flour.) The frozen rice flour is mixed with a small amount of dried sweet rice flour, a bit of sweetening of the cook's choice, raisins (which might be the sweetener), and water. The mixture is thoroughly blended and then placed in a vented pan in a steamer. When the chopstick inserted into the cake comes out clean, the cake is done. It is delicious, chewy, with no fat added, and as sweet as the cook desires.

Songpyun, one of the many Korean *tteok* (rice cakes), are usually small, lightly colored, half-moon-shaped, delicious, dumpling-like rice cakes that Koreans traditionally serve and exchange during *Chuseok*, the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival.



Koreans enjoy sweet *hotteok* pancakes, a popular street food, especially in cold weather, served fresh with the warm, sweet filling oozing out. (Yaoyu Chen/Dreamstime.com)

The hand-molded half-moon shape is a reminder that life is still not complete; there is much to be done to achieve “full moon” status. Cooks gently shape the dough into small round balls, with indentations containing a small amount sweet bean paste or sesame seeds with honey. The *songpyun* are then sealed and are placed on long pine needles, which line the steamer. While steaming, the pine needles impart a delicate fragrance to and a lovely imprint on the *songpyun*.

Yakgwa (“medicine cookie”) is another harvest festival treat, one possibly dating back a thousand years. The fried dough balls which taste a little bit like flavored hot glazed donuts, are made with wheat flour; sesame oil; and a variety of flavorings, including sesame, cinnamon, and ginger, and are usually cut into flower or chrysanthemum shapes with cookie cutters. They are deep-fried, and then soaked in honey syrup. *Yakgwa* translates to medicine cookie due to the relatively generous amount of sesame oil and honey among the ingredients. Honey-soaked *yakgwa* is, certainly, one of the sweetest medicines in Korea, one which is now often considered a confection rather than a dessert.

Korean cuisine is balanced, healthy, and wholesome. There are many sweets and desserts, all of which create an identity different from other East Asian countries, and much of that identity connects to the dining traditions. Yes, it has elements of Chinese and Japanese cuisines, but the meals are a special combination of colors and tastes; distinctive rice is the foundation of meals and many sweet treats, and the Korean etiquette of dining passes from generation to generation. Korean sweet treats are embedded in a culture that savors flavors, a cuisine that balances modern tastes with traditions, and where visual beauty of the food reflects the beauty and character of the Korean people. One can only hope that as the Western styles of cooking and fast-food diets creep into the urban areas, the bowl of rice with a range of flavors, textures, and ingredients will prevail.

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L

Lebanon

The lands of modern-day Lebanon, on the eastern Mediterranean seaboard bordering Syria and Israel, have always been attractive to sovereigns, merchants, and traders, sitting as they do at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Settled in about 3000 BC by the sea-faring Phoenicians, the lands were successively occupied by numbers of people, most prominently the Arabs in the 11th century and the Ottoman Turks from 1516 to 1923, but invaders also included the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Lebanon became independent in 1920 but was administered by the French until 1946. Lebanon's 4.1 million people live in one of the smallest countries in the world.

Lebanon's eastern Mediterranean coastline has been fundamental to its history, with the coastal cities of Tripoli, Beirut (the capital), Sidon, and Tyre playing key roles in widespread trade. As early as 1000 BC, Phoenicians from Tyre were trading spices and other commodities along what became the famed Silk Road trading networks, to Europe, Asia, and Africa. Lebanon is part of the region known as the Levant, the "crossroads of western Asia, the eastern Mediterranean and northeast Africa," along with the modern-day countries of Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and parts of southern Turkey—all former Ottoman Empire countries that share a long history of changing foreign rule. The Levant is often considered the birthplace of Western civilization, including as it does much of the famed "Fertile Crescent."

Muslims make up about 60 percent of modern-day Lebanon, while most others are Christian; they are the main religious groups in a country that has for centuries been a refuge for religious minorities. Arabs constitute 95 percent of the population of Lebanon, with Arabic being the official language. Since the days of the great Arab Caliphate of the Umayyads in the seventh century, Muslims have celebrated Ramadan and *Eid al-Fitr*, among other faith-based holidays. Christians celebrate Christmas, Lent, and Easter holidays, as well as many saints' days.

Religions as well as economic differences separate people in Lebanon, as do two high mountain ranges running roughly north to south, separated by the very fertile Bekaa Valley with a long narrow coastal strip on the west—geography which tends to isolate communities in three climate zones. Beirut and the urban coastal areas, in general, are more prosperous than the poor hinterland villages traditionally subsisting on agriculture. As early as the late 19th century, people from the mountainous

hinterlands, mainly former Christian refugees, began to migrate to Beirut and other coastal cities, where the inhabitants were mainly Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians. There they encountered Ottoman cooking traditions, and, essentially, modern-day Lebanese cuisine and sweet treats were born.

Lebanese, in general, share ancient Middle Eastern sweet treat traditions with their Levantine neighbors, especially Syria—and vice versa. Lebanese sweets and pastries are, for the most part, their versions of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean sweets. Lebanese love *baklava*—a rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multi-layered *phyllo* pastry with chopped nuts—a sweet-treat favorite of virtually the entire Arab Mediterranean—usually associated with Greek cuisine, but in its most popular present version most likely a product of the Ottoman Turks. Lebanese often serve *baklava* prepared with pistachios, and drizzled with rose water syrup, rather than in the well-known Greek manner with walnuts and honey. *Barazeh*, a Syrian specialty which is also popular in Lebanon, are small light and crumbly cookie-like sweets coated on one side with toasted sesame seeds and the other with slivered pistachios. Larger *barazeh* are prepared and are available on streets during Ramadan. Another Syrian treat favored in Lebanon is *karabeej*, small sweet pistachio-filled cinnamon semolina cookies flavored with *mahlab*, an aromatic spice made from cherry pits. *Karabeej* served with the Lebanese cream *natef*—an elastic meringue-like bitter-sweet tasting topping made with syrup, egg whites, and soapwort root, and sprinkled with cinnamon—is a local favorite. Other Arab Middle Eastern special occasion treats are also popular in Lebanon, such as *maamoul bi ajwa* (*ma'amoul*), a golden crumbly cookie with a walnut, pistachio, or sweet date filling.

Sweets are central in the observance of Ramadan, the month of dawn-to-dusk fasting, during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims following *sunnah* (the way of life prescribed and modeled by the Prophet Muhammad) break their Ramadan fasting each day of the holy month with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with dates in commemoration of the Prophet's own breaking of the fast. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals. The month of Ramadan fasting ends with the all-important three-day joyous feast of *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival.

At Easter, Christian families enjoy *ma'amoul* made with *samneh* (sheep butter) and a sweet syrup called *atar* made with rose water and orange blossom water and honey or sugar. And they also enjoy a special *ka'ak*, a larger version of a year-long favorite, traditionally a round sweet anise bread made with *mahlab*. In the Muslim world, this is known as *ka'ak el Eid*. Christmas in the Christian world is celebrated with *bûche de Noël*, a French filled-and-frosted sponge cake-type Christmas treat shaped like a yule log—a sweet introduced during the days of the French administration of Lebanon, along with *flan*, buttery croissants, and caramel custard.

But even apart from the French influence, pastry making is one of the legendary trades of Lebanon, and the great capital of pastry and other sweets is the city of Tripoli, a coastal city north of the national capital, Beirut. Tripoli is famous for its sweet shops, especially for a sweet called *halawet el jibn* (a specialty of the north)—a soft dough made with rose water and orange blossom water, filled with a sweetened, creamy cheese, and topped with ground pistachios and *atar* and served with *ashta* (a special Middle Eastern clotted cream) and rose jam.

Lebanese enjoy a now-traditional popular crispy *phyllo* pastry called *znoud al-sit*, a local sweet made famous in 1881 by Abdul Rahman Hallab from Tripoli. *Znoud al-sit* in Arabic means “lady’s upper arms.” *Znoud al-sit* is a *phyllo* rolled into a cylindrical shell and filled with *ashta* and steeped in *atar* and topped with finely crushed pistachios, orange peels, jelly, and/or more *ashta*. Abdul Rahman Hallab is also famous for his *mafroukeh*, another traditional Lebanese dessert popular at Ramadan, made of layered semolina, caramelized sugar, and butter, drenched in *atar* and topped with *ashta* and ground and roasted almonds, pine nuts, and pistachios. The coastal city of Sidon, south of Beirut, is famous for a variety of local sweets but especially a delicious crumbly butter cookie-like treat known as *senioura*.

Lebanese-inspired treats popular throughout the Levant include *nammoura*, a brown-topped eggless semolina and yoghurt sugar cake, made with *atar* and topped with almonds. Anthropologist Claudia Roden suggests that the most popular Lebanese dessert is their version of *muhallabiya*, a creamy pudding made of ground rice, milk, sugar, and *atar* and topped with honey syrup and garnished with a large amount of coarsely chopped almonds and pistachios.

Lebanon is a cosmopolitan, albeit war-torn, country, with most people (87 percent) living in urban areas. Before the civil war (1975–1990), Beirut was often referred to as “the Paris of the Middle East.” As with people in other urban areas of the world, people who can afford them have international and commercial sweets available, especially the people living in the larger cities along the more affluent Mediterranean coast.

Meals in Lebanon are traditionally finished with an offering of fresh fruits and *ahweh* (Lebanese coffee), a strong, thick, heavily sweetened Arabic-style coffee often flavored with cardamom or orange blossom water. Or one can have an *ahwah baida*, a coffee-less “white coffee,” invented in Beirut—boiling water with a drop of sweet-scented orange blossom water, with honey or sugar optional. Alternately one might be offered *arak*, Lebanon’s national alcoholic drink, a colorless potent distilled spirit made from sweet white grapes, flavored with aniseed that turns cloudy-white when water is added. With *ahweh* or *ahwah baida* or *arak* or tea, Lebanese serve popular fresh fruits after dinner; melons, apples, oranges, tangerines, persimmons, grapes, and figs are common. And, of course, because it is so ingrained and important to their culture, they offer traditional sweets as well. Lebanese seldom eat leftovers, but with Lebanese sweet treats that is rarely an issue.

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M

Malaysia

Three main groups of people live in the Southeast Asian country of Malaysia—Malay, Chinese, and Indian—on two landmasses separated by the South China Sea. The ancestors of many Chinese people migrated to the area as laborers during the colonial period, primarily to work in tin mines and rubber plantations; many others arrived in the early to mid-20th century. Many ancestors of the Indian people immigrated during the British colonization of Malaya (1786–1824), although Indians have been present in the region since at least the 11th century.

Islam is the official state religion, espoused by 60 percent of the population. By law, any native who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, and adheres to Malay customs, is considered ethnic Malay, with the Malay group making up half of the population. According to the Malay Constitution, citizens who convert out of Islam are no longer Malay.

Religion has a major effect on citizenship and on the sweet treat selections of Malaysians. One of two major worldwide Islamic celebrations, *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival, and known in Malaysia as *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, “celebration day”—ends the month of Ramadan fasting. Sweets are especially important in the observance of the month-long fasting of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims following *sunnah*—the way of life prescribed and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad—break their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan fasting each day of the month with an evening meal called *Iftar*. And as elsewhere in the Muslim world, sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals and *Eid* celebrations. Malaysian children love the sticky, thick, sweet toffee-like confection of Malay origin known as *dodol*, which they receive as *Eid* festival treats. *Dodol* is an ancient candy made with rice flour, coconut milk (*santan*, the liquid pressed from coconut meat), *jaggery* or palm sugar, and pandan leaves, and is available in many flavors, with nuts and dried fruits added in commercial varieties. Malaysian Muslims, as most Muslims, break their daily Ramadan fast with fresh or dried dates, in commemoration of the Prophet’s own breaking of the fast. From Islam’s earliest days, dates, honey, and sweets in general, took on religious, medicinal, and culinary importance in the Muslim world. The holy *Qur’an* promises dates as one of the blessings in paradise. For this world, the Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur’an* and honey. One of his favorite sweet treats was honey and dates. Popular

traditional Malaysian *Iftar* sweets include a colorful steamed multilayered cake made with sago flour or rice flour, called *kuih lapis*, meaning “layer steam cake,” with *kuih* or *kueh* or *kue* referring to bite-sized snacks very popular in Malaysia.

Kuih bahulu, another basic traditional sweet Malaysian *kuih*, is an eggy, small sponge cake baked in special molds of different shapes, similar to a French *madeleine*, with crispy edges and soft insides. Another treat, *kuih ambon*, is a soft and chewy honeycombed small cake made with rice flour, tapioca flour, eggs, sugar, coconut water (the liquid inside of a young coconut), coconut milk, with nutty-flavored aromatic pandan (screwpine) leaves steeped in the coconut milk to enhance the flavor. The various popular *kuih* snacks and desserts come in dozens of varieties and are favorite gifts and special ceremonial sweets. Sometimes *kuih* with the same name taste quite different in the 13 regional Malaysian states. A favorite throughout the states is *kueh koci*, a very sweet shredded coconut treat traditionally made with palm sugar (*gula melaka*) from the southern Malay Peninsula. Many cakes are based on coconut and pandan, one of the most popular being the light, fluffy Malay pandanus coconut cake served with palm sugar syrup, notable for its green color which it gets naturally from the chlorophyll in the pandan leaf juice (although bakers sometimes enhance the color with food coloring).

Sticky rice, known locally as *pulut*, mixed with coconut milk, also provides the base for a number of sweet treats. *Pulut inti*, steamed sticky rice made with coconut milk, topped with a sweet coconut *inti* (“filling”) and wrapped in banana leaves, is a favorite, as is *serimuka*, a two-layered bicolored dessert with a whitish sticky rice bottom and a green custard top layer made with nutty-flavored aromatic pandan juice. The basic popular light, fluffy, usually green pandan cake is of Malay origins.

Malay apam balik (“turnover peanut pancake”; *Chin Loong Pau* in Chinese), a famous snack food for any time of the day, is a thin and crispy or thick and soft



Popular traditional Malaysian sweets include the colorful *kuih lapis* (“layer steam cake”), a bite-sized multilayered cake made with sago flour or rice flour. (Akumatia/Dreamstime.com)

sweet peanut pancake. The thicker version, known in one dialect as a slow “take-a-long-time-to-cook cake,” is sprinkled with sugar and peanuts while it is cooking, quickly folded over when done, and then sliced into smaller sections. The smaller, thinner version of *apam balik* is simply sprinkled with sugar and a crushed peanut topping. The Malay version of *apam balik*, a favorite street food, often includes creamed corn between the folded layers.

The quarter of the population who are Chinese are mostly Buddhists, but the Chinese group also includes a number of individuals espousing Confucianism, Taoism, and other traditional Chinese religions and philosophies. In the federal capital city of Kuala Lumpur—a city of 1.5 million people—and in the city of Ipoh—the capital of the state of Perak in the northwest—Chinese are in the majority. Malay Chinese food was derived primarily from mainland southern Chinese cuisine and was adapted to local environments and tastes.

Chinese Malaysians celebrate their fall harvest “Lantern Festival” (not to be confused with the lantern festival of the Chinese mainland) with “mooncakes,” in honor of the autumn moon. The festival is held during a full moon, on the 15th day of the eighth month of the Chinese calendar. In some parts of Asia, the festival is actually known as “The Mooncake Festival” and has been celebrated for almost 700 years. Mooncakes are usually about three or four inches round and an inch-and-a-half to two inches thick, although they can be of any size, and are embossed or otherwise decorated with Chinese symbols. The round mooncakes represent not only the shape of the moon but also the unity and harmony of the Chinese family. While mooncakes traditionally had a dense filling made from lotus seed paste, and later red bean paste, with a creamy bright-orange salted duck’s egg yolk baked in the center to symbolize the full moon, some sweet versions of the crunchy pastry treat now contain chocolate and cinnamon filling, and date, nut, fruit, or mixed fillings, with or without the duck’s egg yolk. The salty yolk center is said to be an acquired taste.

Another acquired taste—and smell—is durian, contained as a mashed paste, with pandan leaves, in the center of some modern mooncakes. A durian is a large oval fruit widely known for its odor. Durian is an acquired taste, but not one easily acquired in the United States as they are often banned on public transportation and from many American and international airports because of their awful smell. They reportedly taste good. Alfred Russel Wallace, the famous 19th-century British naturalist and confirmed durian eater, in his book *Malay Archipelago* (1869), described its flesh as “a rich butter-like custard highly flavoured with almonds . . . perfect as it is” (Davidson 2006). Wallace picked the durian and the orange as the “king and queen of fruits.” According to Indian legends, oranges are also native to Malaysia. The Malaysian name given to the tart, spiny, yellow-green fruit soursop imported from Middle America is “durian Belanda,” Dutch durian. Wallace was not alone in his love for durians; Malaysian legends suggest that the fruit is devoured

by their version of Bigfoot, *Orang Mawas*, which is said to inhabit the jungles of southern Malaysia. Like Wallace and, reportedly, the *Orang Mawas*, many Malaysians love durians—in their mooncakes, as sweet preserves and roasted seeds, and in many other treats.

Malaysian Chinese celebrate the Mooncake Festival with family, giving gifts of mooncakes to senior relatives, and presenting mooncakes and other seasonal offerings to the deities on family altars with family rituals. In Malaysia, Chinese light brightly colored paper lanterns of all shapes and sizes, which they display in street parades and on high points outside homes and shops. Much lore, dancing, feasting, and moon gazing quite naturally accompanies the Mooncake-Lantern Festival. In Malaysia, mooncakes tend to be simple and traditional, as are the baked goods common at most of their Chinese celebrations. Most people, nevertheless, now prefer to purchase their mooncakes rather than make them at home.

Malaysian Chinese also enjoy traditional *youtiao*, known locally as *you char kuay*—a long deep-fried golden brown lightly salted twisted-dough cruller. The sweet versions of Malay *you char kuay* come with various fillings. The plain version is often a favorite for breakfast, eaten like a donut, with *kaya*, a rich sweet coconut egg jam made with duck or chicken eggs, pandan-flavored coconut milk, and sugar. *Kaya* “toast,” known as *roti bakar*—with the egg jam spread on toasted or even fresh bread or cream crackers—is a popular snack, as well as a traditional breakfast treat served with one of their renowned sweetened local teas, or with the popular *kopi-O*, a strong sweet local Malaysian-style hot black coffee (*kopi*) made with coffee beans roasted with butter and sugar. Another favorite is *min jiang kueh* (“chinese peanut pancake”) a crispy version of an Asian treat (similar to *apam balik* and Chinese *chin loong pau*) made with shreds of coconut, peanuts, and cream corn, and also enjoyed as a snack or for breakfast. Local Chinese, in addition, enjoy *tong sui* (“sugar water”), a warm Chinese soup or watery custard—basically a sweet drink—available in a variety of flavors.

Malaysian Hindu Tamils, whose ancestors came from southern India, celebrate their full-moon fall festival of *Karthikai Deepam*—a version of the Festival of Lights—on the day when the moon is in conjunction with other stars of ritual importance. South Indian Tamils have celebrated this most important ancient festival for over 2,000 years. Traditional sweets naturally appear, such as *verkadalai urundai*—a peanut and jaggery version of *laddu*, a ball-shaped chickpea or wheat or semolina-like flour, and sugar treat common at both religious and secular festivals.

For Malaysian Muslims, *laddu* is also a traditional *Eid* dessert and a treat sold year-round in open-air roadside *mamak* (“maternal uncle”) stalls operated by Indian Muslim Malaysians. The *mamak* stalls have been compared to greasy spoons of America, serving Muslim *halal* comfort foods 24 hours a day to people of all cultures and from all walks of life. The number-one favorite of *mamak* customers is said to be *roti tisu*, bread glazed with sugary syrup, often enjoyed with *kaya*.

Godhumai or *unni* or *nei appam* (a cupcake-sized jaggery-sweetened dessert made from rice flour and shredded fresh coconut), and *putu piring* (a small steamed rice flour cake formed around a filling of coconut and *gur* or *jaggery*, flavored with pandan) are other *mamak* sweet treat favorites. The *mamak* stalls also serve a traditional Tamil sweet known as *vellai appam*, a lacy light pancake made with a coconut milk and rice batter that is leavened with *kallu*—the fermenting sap of palm trees. Many kinds of sweets known as *payasam* are also sold, a most important traditional creamy and rich sweet Indian pudding made of rice, sugar, and milk, and often flavored with cardamom.

A popular *mamak* sweet shaved ice drink, *cendol*, is made from coconut milk, palm sugar, and short green worm-like jellies made from sticky rice flour and green coloring and flavoring from pandan leaves, a drink-pudding usually served along with red kidney beans, and, occasionally, corn—both natives of central Mexico.

For centuries, Malaysia has been a meeting point of international foods. At one point in time, the port of Malacca on the west peninsular coast was the most strategically important port in the international East-West spice trade. International ingredients and people make for international sweet treats, especially in multiethnic Malaysia. In Malaysia, the Hindus do not eat beef, the Muslims do not eat pork, but everyone eats and enjoys Malaysian multicultural sweet treats—except, perhaps, for those made from the native durian.

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Malta

From time immemorial, a tiny archipelago off the toe of the “boot” of Italy, about 60 miles south of Sicily in the Mediterranean, has been a very special and sacred place. Early Neolithic remains thought to be the world’s oldest surviving free-standing monuments attest to the islands’ importance in sacred prehistoric ritual ceremonies. In historic times, Malta is known best as the home of the famous Knights Hospitaller of Saint John, who ruled Malta from 1530 to 1798. Malta has a long intertwined history with the Knights and with the Catholic Church in general.

Today, constitutionally, Roman Catholicism is the official state religion, nominally including 98 percent of the population.

Sacred rites and religion have always been important in this tiny island group, and food, including sweet treats, has been a vital part of the islands' spiritual life since its early days. The spiritual world defines its sweet treats calendar. The distinguished food writer Elizabeth Luard, in *Sacred Food: Cooking for Spiritual Nourishment*, reflects on the first communion sweet treat traditions in contemporary Maltese society:

The splendor and extravagance with which a child's first communion is celebrated reflects the prosperity and generosity of the family. . . . [F]or children who have just received first communion, all manner of sweet things load the table: candied peel; little christening cookies swirled with pink and white icing; pastries stuffed with chopped spiced dates (*mquaret*); hollow pastry horns stuffed with a fresh ricotta and beaten with chopped candied oranges; and toasted hazelnuts. In a good year, when the family feels prosperous, beautifully-decorated candies—realistically painted marzipan fruit, brightly colored ice cream bombes sprinkled with colored sugar—are ordered from the confectioner rather than being made at home. (Luard 2001)

For the whole ritual year, “all manner of sweet things” continue to “load the table,” with religion exerting its influence on Maltese sweet treats year-round. The choice of Maltese treats depends on the occasion. Christmas features chestnut pie (*torta tal-qastan*), cake with figs and hot chestnut purée (*imbuljuta*), and a treat traditionally eaten after Midnight Mass, *qagħaq tal-ghasel*—a honeyless sweet light pastry “honey ring” filled with a thick treacle (*ghasel iswed*) mixture that includes flour, semolina, egg yolks, butter, cinnamon, cloves, anise seeds, citrus zest, chocolate powder, and sometimes sugar. While the *qagħaq tal-ghasel* is a honeyless “honey ring”—for reasons people only speculate about—honey is important and has been commonly used in Maltese sweets since Roman times. The Romans even called the archipelago *Melita* (from the Latin *mel*, “honey”), the name used in the Bible when describing St. Paul the Apostle being shipwrecked on Malta about AD 60. A German traveler and writer in 1624 called Malta's honey “superior to all other honey in the world” (Davidson 2006). Maltese honeys include wild thistle, clover, wild thyme, orange blossom, and sometimes even carob.

Carob appears also in Lenten candy, along with honey, except on Ash Wednesday and certain other special Lenten days. *Karamelli tal-harrub* (“caramel carob sweets”) are caramelized carob syrup hard-toffee treats traditionally sold on streets during Lent and on Good Friday. Honey fritters (*sfineg tal-ghasel*) and Lenten almond cakes (*kwarezimal*—from *quadragesima*, the 40 days of Lent) also are prepared during Lent but contain no butter or other fats, or eggs, following older



Maltese traditionally enjoy *qagħaq tal-ghasel* after Midnight Mass on Christmas Day, a sweet semolina “honey ring” filled with a thick treacle mixture. (Viktorfischer/Dreamstime .com)

traditional Catholic Lenten fasting canon law. Ushered in on Shrove Tuesday with a special sweet sticky dessert prepared expressly for Carnival—pine nut gâteau (*prinjolata*)—Lent comes to an end with the celebrated and ritually important honey-coated Maltese version of hot cross buns (*ħbejiet bis-salib*), which by tradition are made on Good Friday, and the customary colorfully and skillfully frosted *figolli* (“figures”/“shapes”), almond-flavored cookies specially baked during Holy Week for the children to eat on Easter morning. Most often baked in animal shapes and shapes of things in nature—although they can represent almost anything—*figolli* are cherished childhood treats, appearing most often with a chocolate egg in the middle. It is said that Malta was next to Spain in adopting chocolate in the 16th century.

A festival of the patron saint of a village is celebrated with hard and soft nougat made with sesame seed, almond-hazelnut-date-filled, orange-and-lemon-zested, diamond-shaped pastry bars (*imqaret*) and with Victorian jam tarts with breadcrumbs. Each village has its own patron saint(s), and few things characterize Maltese culture better than the village feast and its festival sweet treats. St. Joseph’s Day is a public holiday throughout Malta (*Sfineg ta San Guzepp*), generally celebrated on March 19, with sweetened deep-fried choux pastry balls, filled with ricotta. At every festival and festivity one finds Maltese nougat (*qubbajt*), a traditional soft

caramel confection of almonds cooked in a heavy syrup until the mixture thickens sufficiently to harden, and, quite often, *ħelwa tal-tork* (Turk's sweet), a tahini (sesame paste) and almond sweet imported during the days of Arab rule, the Maltese version of *halva*.

St. Martin of Tours day (November 11) is another special day for the children, featuring a cake made with different nuts (*kejk tal San Martin*); a big cotton bag (*borza*) filled with a variety of nuts, figs, and other fruits; some sweets; and a small sweet “St. Martin’s Bread” (*ħob a ta’ San Martin*) for the children. All Saints’ Day, November 1, is likewise special. Maltese take flowers to the graves of dead relatives on the day, and they eat special almond paste-filled sweet treats known as “dead man’s bones” (*ghadam tal-mejten*), small sweets similar to the Easter *figolla*, but made in the shape of bones.

Hardly have the “bones of the dead” settled in one’s stomach, when the annual religious cycle begins again, as it has since the days of the early saints. In honor of the saints, the Maltese have faithfully maintained their sweet treat traditions. There are more than 80 saints’ days recognized in Malta. But sweet treats are not limited to the liturgical calendar. Doris Fenech, born and raised in Mellieħa on the Island of Malta, points out that they bake many other exquisite pastry sweets (*ħelu Malti*) all the year-round, including date diamonds (*imqaret*), sesame rings (*qagħaq tal-gunglien*), figures of eight (*otto tal-gunglien*), anise biscuits (*kristine*), bread pudding (*puđina tal-hobz*), and “sweet rings . . . English rings” (*gagħaq ħelwien—qagħaq ta’ l-Ingliži*), as the street sweet vendors use to call them loudly out.

The English have been an important influence in Malta over the centuries and especially in recent times. Malta gained its independence from Britain in 1964, and in 2004, it became the smallest of the European Union member countries. Both Maltese and English are official languages. Today, Malta is a popular holiday destination, and tourism is its main source of income. Many tourists are British, and they notoriously like their teatime and teatime treats. Thus, one also finds in Malta the full range of sweet treats typical of what would be seen at a proper English tea.

From the dawn of time to afternoon teatime, the tiny archipelago of Malta has year-after-year sweet treated the gods, saints, knights, and weary travelers alike, all the while successfully combining their traditions with foreign customs. Today in Malta, the next sweet treat is never more than a Saint’s day away.

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Mexico

Hernán Cortés met Mochtezuma II on November 8, 1519, in Tenochtitlán—now Mexico City—and from that day on Mexico and its sweet treats became a major part of the great “Columbian Exchange,” and sweet treats around the world changed forever. Cortés and the Spanish received *xocolātl* (cacao/chocolate), vanilla, sweet maguey honey, *chicle* (chewing gum), avocados, sweet *chilis*, and a number of novel tree fruits. Mochtezuma II and his Aztec people received sugarcane and a multitude of Spanish and European treats, new key ingredients for their sweets—milk, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, and carrots—and fruit trees now common throughout North America—apples, apricots, oranges and lemons—and bananas, watermelon, and cantaloupe. They also received the European honeybee, stingers and all, which were new to them as their native bees were “stingless.” And to top things off they received almonds and eventually their sweet treat marzipan, a gift originally from the Middle East via the Muslims in southern Spain.

Chocolate, named from the ancient Mixe-Zoquean word *kakawa*—*cacahuatl* (“bitter drink”) in the Aztec Nahuatl language—remains to this day as one of the great sweet treat legacies of the ancient Mexico. Chocolate was an important part of Mesoamerican life from the days of Middle America’s earliest civilizations, as both a beverage and as a cultural focus in religious and civil ceremonies, besides becoming a major economic commodity and functioning as currency. Normally drunk as a liquid, often flavored with honey, herbs, flowers, and even chilies, chocolate was initially frothed by pouring it from container to container, an essential part of its ancient Mexican preparation; later, it was frothed with a special kitchen tool called a *chicoli* or *molinollo*, still in use in Mexico today, where frothing continues to be an important part of chocolate drinking rituals.

Cacao beans are, literally, “the food of the gods”—*Theobroma*. They come from the tropical plant *Theobroma cacao*, so named by the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linné in 1753. The cacao plant is generally thought to have been first domesticated

Aztec Chocolate as Money

To the Aztecs and other pre-Columbian Mexican peoples, chocolate was money, it was wealth, and it brought both prestige and health. Throughout ancient Mesoamerica, people used cacao beans as currency. Cacao-bean money became valued to the point where individuals began to produce “counterfeit” cacao currency. Cacao-bean money was convenient in the highly regulated native markets, the *tianguis*, as it could be exchanged for almost anything. In the 16th century, one could buy, for example, a rabbit in the *tianguis* for eight cacao beans, and a slave for about 100 cacao beans. In 1545, 100 cacao beans would buy “one good turkey hen,” while its egg cost three beans. A newly picked avocado was also worth three cacao beans, but a ripe one was worth only one bean. Cacao beans functioned as currency through virtually all of the Colonial period, probably much in the same way they were used before the arrival of the conquistadors in 1519. Like modern-day currencies, cacao beans fluctuated in value and exchange rates, varying in worth with place of origin and quality of the beans. Remnants of cacao-bean currency reportedly still exist today. Manuel Aguilar-Moreno notes, for example, that there is an image of Christ known popularly as the Christ of Cacao in the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary of Mexico City, the largest cathedral in the Americas, in the Chapel of Saint Joseph where people bring offerings of cacao beans, which can still be seen at the base of the image. In the traditional Aztec markets, more expensive items were exchanged with gold dust, a feature that mainly caught the Spaniards’ eyes as, at first, they almost universally did not care much for chocolate.

Coe, Sophie D., and Michael D. Coe. *The True History of Chocolate*. 3rd ed. London: Thames & Hudson, 2013, 99–101; 176–77.

in the northwest Amazon region of Brazil about 2000 BC. Six- to twelve-inch cacao seeds or “pods” grow on the trunks of a type of evergreen tree, in humid tropical climates having regular rainfall and good soil. The pods provide two to five dozen seeds (“beans”) each, which are harvested, fermented, and ground to make chocolate. The cacao bean yields chocolate liquor (pure chocolate in its liquid form), which is made up of chocolate solids (the low-fat part of chocolate), and cocoa butter (the vegetable fat used in modern-day white and milk chocolate products).

No one knows for sure when cacao—chocolate—first reached Spain; the first documentary evidence suggests 1544; Christopher Columbus had encountered it earlier on his fourth voyage in 1502. The first official shipment of cacao arrived in Spain in 1585. Chocolate is naturally bitter, primarily due to the alkaloid theobromine, a chemical similar to caffeine in both its composition and its effects. The Spanish and other Europeans for that reason at first did not think much of chocolate.

Girolamo Benzoni of Milan, Italy, for example, said of chocolate drink, in 1575, “It seemed more a drink for pigs, than a drink for humanity” (Coe and Coe 2013). But all of that changed with the advent of sugar—cheap sugar. In spite of its slow start, chocolate hot drinks became popular upper-class beverages in Spain and other parts of Europe during the first half of the 17th century, with the addition of milk and sugar, two products unknown to the Ancient Mesoamericans. Most sources credit Spanish nuns living in Oaxaca, Mexico, with first adding sugar to the ground cocoa bean sometime between 1522 and the early 1530s. However, as Porterfield and Keoke (2003) point out, Maya and Aztec peoples sweetened their chocolate drinks with honey for hundreds of years before Europeans knew that chocolate existed.

Before the arrival of sugar, the ancient Mesoamericans used two kinds of honey, as their descendants still do today. They used honey from “stingless” aboriginal honeybees and they used “agave nectar” from the maguey or “century plant” (not a member of the cacti or aloe families as is commonly thought). Agave nectar is mainly produced from blue agave—the same succulent used in the production of “tequila” known from the southern Mexican highlands of the state of Jalisco. Agave honey, which has become increasingly popular in the United States as a sweetener, is 1.4 to 1.6 times as sweet as sugar, and is slightly over half to almost 100 percent fructose.

Honey was traditionally important in all cultures in ancient Mexico, but it was especially prominent among the Maya. The bee god, *Ah Mucen Kab*, is featured prominently in their iconography. The importance of honey in ancient Middle America can be seen in the early Spanish attempts to stop its production as a competitor to their newly introduced sugarcane. Fortunately for modern-day Mexicans, the conquistadors were not able to stop honey production, and today, as in aboriginal times, the modern-day states of Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo—which make up the northern part of the Yucatán Peninsula—continue to be the main producers of honey in Mexico.

Mexican sweet treats not surprisingly feature chocolate, *melapona* honey or agave honey, vanilla, sugar, and sometimes cinnamon. Cinnamon, “true cinnamon” (*Cinnamomum verum*), a native plant of Sri Lanka, was brought to Mexico as part of the great Colombian Exchange. Chocolate, sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon have ever since been used together as ingredients of sweet treats, much to the delight of sweet treat lovers everywhere.

In the state of Oaxaca, one can actually have the “drink of the gods,” a special cold version of a chocolate-maize drink called *tejate* (not to be confused with *Tecate*, the beer, known to some North Americans as a sort of drink of the gods), which is still popular among the local Mixtec and Zapotec peoples. *Tejate* is a pre-Colombian drink made from toasted maize flour, fermented cacao beans, *flor de cacao* flowers, *mamey sapote* pits, and sugar syrup. *Flor de cacao*, also sometimes known as *madre cacao* (“cacao mother” but not botanically related to *cacao*), is

an exotic, aromatic evergreen plant, which grows wild in Oaxaca. The Aztecs traditionally used *flor de cacao*'s highly pungent flowers, known to them as *cacaoxochitl* ("flower of cacao"), to flavor their chocolate drinks. The name *tejate* probably comes from the Nahuatl *texatl* ("flowery water"). *Mamay sapote* is a brown rough-textured sweet fruit about the size of a coconut that looks a little like a mango and whose delicate soft creamy pinkish flesh is said to feel and taste something like pumpkin pie. Mexicans now most often use *mamay sapote* for flavoring milkshakes, smoothies, ice cream, and fruit bars.

Mexicans, as everyone else in the world, still enjoy the sweetness of ripened fruits, alone or with sugar or honey. And in Mexico's tropical regions, there are plenty of fruits. For example, there are dozens of fruits that North Americans would generally consider "bananas." One sweet treat that Mexicans enjoy throughout the country is fried bananas (*plátanos fritos*), which are soft bananas fried with cinnamon and light (*blanco*) or dark (*oscuro*) Mexican brown sugar called *piloncillo* (a rock-hard cone-shaped sugar much like the sugar of the 16th century that needs chopping or crushing to use).

In the central highland area, one of the special sweet fruits are *tunas*. *Tunas* are small ovoid "cactus fruits," the almost-too-sweet watermelononly tasting fruits of the *Opuntia* cacti, "prickly pears" to North Americans. *Tunas* can be eaten raw, or can be used to make jams and jellies, or a drink reminiscent of lemonade. If you pick the red ripe *tunas* yourself, *be careful of the tiny spines*. The natives, of course, know the problem and remove the spines carefully. If you purchase *tunas* in a Mexican market today, good vendors will de-spine them for you. The flat hand-sized usually green pads of the nopal cactus plant itself—"leaves" to northern North Americans and *nōpalli* to the natives—are also eaten, usually in the spring. *Nopales* were an important part of ancient pre-Columbian diets, sometimes as a last-resort "survival food." The sweet *tunas* cactus fruits, by contrast, are a much-desired treat whenever they are in season.

If eating sweet cactus is not appealing to you, try some *huitlacoche*—corn smut—"an exquisite delicacy both nutty and earthy with a hint of fruity sweetness" (Mendoza 2010). *Huitlacoche* has been eaten in Mexico ever since their gods made their Mayan ancestors, "the True People," out of maize dough. If you are not in the mood for either prickly pear cactus fruit or corn smut, try chewing on a raw piece of sugarcane that you can find in most markets. Everyone likes sweet sugarcane.

And everyone likes *flan*. Few sweet treats capture the essence and flavor of Mexico better than *flan*, a national favorite sweetened egg custard baked with (or topped with) caramelized sugar. Its basic ingredients are simple: sugar, vanilla, eggs, milk or cream, and maybe a little "real" cinnamon or fruit-based flavoring. *Flan* is not indigenous to Mexico, as are sweet treat foods like *tunas*, *tejate* and *huitlacoche*, but it is *el más típico dulce delicia Mexicana*—"the most typical Mexican sweet

delight.” Recipes vary, with some versions adding special ingredients like cream cheese for an extra special treat.

Mexico, as all former Spanish colonies, shares a number of sweet treats with their European conquistadors. In Mexico, in addition to *flan*, which is actually of Spanish and French origin, one thus regularly finds a number of Spanish sweet treats—*arroz con leche* (rice pudding), *tres leches*, *buñuelos*, *churros*, *empunadas*, *sopapillas*, *horchata*, and the list goes on to include treats like carrot cake. Carrots have been used in sweet cakes for centuries, especially in times and places where sweeteners like sugar and honey were unavailable or unaffordable. Introduced to Andalusia by the Moors between the eighth and tenth century AD, modern carrots were soon brought to the New World by the conquistadores. (They were likely introduced to Mexico by Don Juan de Oñate y Salazar [1550–1626] husband of the granddaughter of Hernán Cortés and great-granddaughter of Moctezuma Xocoyotzin.) Today carrot cake can be found along with other, more obviously Spanish-influenced sweet treats.

No discussion of Mexican sweet treats would be complete without mentioning the most famous sugar sculptures since the majestic ones of the Italian Renaissance, the colorful Mexican sugar skulls of *Día de los Muertos*—“The Day of the Dead.” The festival of *Día de los Muertos* on the first of November celebrates deceased infants and children. Roman Catholics on the same day celebrate “All Saints’ Day,” and on November 2, Roman Catholics celebrate All Souls’ Day. The Mexican feast *Día de los Muertos* begins on November 1, and *similar* to the Catholic “All Saints’ Day,” it is a time for family and friends to gather and remember deceased family and friends. The origins of *Día de los Muertos* go back hundreds of years, and before that deceased-tribute customs go back to Aztec festivals dedicated to departed ancestors who were watched over by *Mictecacihuatl*, the Aztec goddess of the underworld charged specifically with guarding the bones of the dead. Scholars suggest that feasts for deceased ancestors in Mexico may date back as far as 2,500–3,000 years.

Folks today celebrate with sweet treats. They drink sweet *atole*, a sweet corn-based hot drink, which traces its roots to Aztec times; they eat sweet candied *calabasa* (pumpkin) treats typical of the candied preserves brought to Mexico with the conquistadors from southern Spain; they share sweet *pan de muerto*, a decorated sweet “bread of the dead” soft roll; and they rally around the famed brightly colored sugar skulls and sugar skeletons (*calaveras de azúcar*) characteristic of the festival. The skulls’ motifs, although modern, harken back to and are reminiscent of Aztec times when rulers put thousands of human skulls on display on their famous skull racks called *tzompantli*. Today, the skulls in Mexico are sugar skulls, and as a symbol of the virtual national Mexican *Día de los Muertos* holiday, the sugar skulls not only honor the dead but also seek to convey one’s fondness

to one's object of affection. For the occasion, one can order a sugar skull with their beloved's name colorfully inscribed.

As part of the *Día de los Muertos* celebration people offer food to their deceased relatives and friends (*ofrendas*), including *many* sweet treats, and then they themselves eat sweet *pan de muertos* and other of the relatives' and friends' favorite foods. The festival thus becomes a celebration of sweet treats for both the living and the dead.

What foods do they offer and what do they eat?

The answer is that, like so many things, it depends on the region, the local history, family traditions, and the personal likes and dislikes of both the living and the dead. They will, for sure, be eating all of the aforementioned sweet treats and more. And, for example, over in the little 27-person settlement of La Coyotada, San Juan del Río, Durango, Mexico, where José Doroteo Arango Arám-bula (known to the world as Pancho Villa) was born, some folks may offer Pancho's spirit ice cream sundaes and chocolate-covered ice cream "baseballs." They were his sweet treat favorites. Pancho's devotees will probably have *vanilla*, the flavor favorite of Mexico.



Mexicans celebrate *Día de los Muertos* ("The Day of the Dead") with brightly colored *calaveras de azúcar* ("sugar skulls"), in honor of deceased family members. The skulls' motifs, although modern, date back to and are reminiscent of Aztec times when rulers put thousands of human skulls on display on their famous skull racks called *tzompantli*. Today, the Mexican sugar skulls serve as a symbol of the virtual national Mexican *Día de los Muertos* holiday, and not only honor the dead but also seek to convey one's fondness to one's object of affection. For the occasion, one can order a sugar skull with their beloved's name colorfully inscribed. (Agcuesta/Dreamstime.com)

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Monaco

Monaco is the second smallest independent state in the world, famous as a constitutional monarchy headed by the House of Grimaldi since the 13th century. Tourists from throughout the world gravitate to Monaco year-round, which is popular for its mild climate, splendid scenery, world-famous Monte Carlo casino, Grand Prix excitement, and international cuisine.

Except for fish, the Principality of Monaco imports virtually all its food. It has to, as its total territory is a hilly three-fourths of a square mile sea horse-shaped urban wedge, with almost no natural resources, tucked in between France, Italy, and the deep blue Mediterranean Sea. That means, in effect, that the Monegasques can eat whatever sweet treats they want. And their ability to choose from the imports is aided by officially zero unemployment, the lowest in the world, and the world's lowest poverty rate. Their *per capita* purchasing power is among the highest in the world, and so they enjoy their sweets, quality treats, tending to favor the neighboring French—*crème brûlée* being popular—and Italian, along with just a few local Monegasque specialties.

About half of the population is French, while Monegasques and Italians each make up about 16 percent of the population. French is the official language. About 90 percent of the approximately 30,000 inhabitants are nominally Roman Catholic, the official state religion, making Christmas, Easter, Carnival, Lent, and major saints' days important holidays—all celebrated with sweet treats.

Fresh fruits, fruit tarts, and other fruit-based sweets are always popular, among all social classes. One can have a seasonal fruit, “Local wild strawberries in their natural juice, mascarpone sorbet,” or “Exotic fruit *vacherin*, stewed mangoes, citronella/passion reduction” at the world-renowned Michelin Red Guide three-star-rated restaurant Le Louis XV-Alain Ducasse in the Hôtel de Paris Monte-Carlo for €28 (about \$39), or one can enjoy fine strawberries, oranges, apricots, cherries, table grapes, figs, melons, and local honey purchased from the colorful outdoor stalls of the newly renovated historic market *Marché de La Condamine* on Place d'Armes in the business district.

Venturing into the interior of the *Condamine* market hall, one can pick up delicious pastries at any of the bakers' stalls. French- and Italian-style pastries are common, as those cuisines dominate generally, but one can find local items, such as a special crispy, light-brown Monegasque *fougasse* topped with nuts, especially during Christmastide and other holiday seasons. For the royal wedding of Prince Albert II and Charlene Wittstock in 2011, French pastry boutiques celebrated with special creations of guava and raspberry-anise flavored *macarons* (*macarons* being a French creation, possibly of Italian origin), and mini *éclairs*, decorated with motifs from the Grimaldi coat of arms, in red and white checkers. Other creations include Prince Albert *Millefeuille* Pastry with strawberries and whipped cream. More commonly, as do the visitors pilgrimaging to their tiny niche of the Mediterranean world from countries all around the world, Monegasques especially enjoy boutique ice creams, a treat unrelated except in name to the Australian *Nestlé* Peters company's nostalgic favorite ice cream sandwich known as the “Monaco Bar.”

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Mongolia

In the 13th century, Genghis Khan led the Mongols to the successful acquisition of a large empire in Europe and Asia by managing successful invasions in every direction. As the descendants of Genghis Khan acquired land and power, they feuded over the royal succession and the empire began to weaken, and in the 17th century, the

Mongols retreated to their homeland, which was then under Chinese rule. With Soviet backing, in the early 20th century, Mongolia became independent, and then, in 1924, it allied with the Soviet Union to become a republic. Since that time, Mongolia has had an on-again-off-again struggle for a democratic government between and among political parties. Most recently, in 2012, a coalition of four political parties, unified under the Democratic Party, successfully gained control of the Parliament.

Mongolia sits north of China and south of Russia. The arid south includes the Gobi Desert, and the rugged north is mountainous, but supportive of some cattle grazing activities and limited wheat production. The climate is harsh and unpredictable—it is high, cold, and dry, prone to dust storms and blizzards that are hard on livestock, not because of the vast amounts of snow, but because of the snow and ice on the grazing areas. The population is nearly 95 percent Mongol, and within that, 50 percent are Buddhist Lamaist, with the next largest group of Shamanists and Christians, combined at 6 percent. Forty percent claim to have no religion. Different from religions like Islam and Judaism, cultural food preferences and local availability of ingredients, rather than religious beliefs, affect food choices for Buddhists. Comparatively speaking, Mongolian Buddhists do not often eat sweets and desserts, even though Buddhism allows sweet treats in moderation.

Mongolian cuisine is uncomplicated—access to food is limited. Vegetables and spices are sparse, and, for the most part, native fruits are nonexistent. The Mongolian diets are heavily meat-based—including sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and horses, with their accompanying dairy products. The American-style Mongolian Bar-B-Q is a myth; Mongolians do, however, cook their meat over an open fire in a “firepot,” a utensil the Western world has adopted and marketed. Mongolians usually boil or fry their meat, or they stuff the whole animal with hot rocks for roasting. For treats, the Mongols might enjoy mildly alcoholic, fermented mare’s milk (*airag*), slightly sweet dried cheese (*eezgi*), or sweet-sour dried curds (*aaruu*).

Mongolian Buddhists make *ul boov*, or “shoe sole cake,” for the Buddhist lunar New Year’s festival *Tsagaan Sar*. The cake is shaped like the sole of a shoe, but has designs stamped into it with a wooden block, which produces a bulge around the edge. Each wooden block has a design that is unique to each family, and the block is passed down through the generations. At the New Year meal, odd numbers of sole cakes are stacked on top of each other, into a big tower, which signifies the status of the family. Inside the tower, the family places *aaruu*, most frequently made from the milk of camels, yaks, and cows. Although *aaruu* contains no sweetening agents, it is certainly a “treat.” *Boortsog*, a type of fried-dough cookie, are another of the rare sweet treats, and considering that most of the diet is milk- and meat-based, it is not surprising that after the wheat (flour), sugar, and butter mixture is made into cookies, the morsels are fried in mutton fat.

Recently, Mongolians have had much more access to imported foods, especially fruits like bananas, plums, and oranges, and vegetables other than root crops. In

most of the larger cities (of which there are nine, ranging in population from about 27,000 to 1,100,000), there are now fresh food markets and Western style supermarkets. Urban Mongolians might enjoy more choices, but many Mongolians remain true to their nomadic past. Many still herd their sheep, goats, camels, and horses and still subsist on the meat and milk of those animals, and many still migrate seasonally. Animal fat is the sweetener, the treat, the bestower of energy. Genuine Mongolian cuisine is loyal to the ancient traditions and cooking methods, but as more and more Mongolians come to live in urban areas, there are transitions from meat, fat and milk based diets to foods containing more sugars, and more prepackaged processed foods as they adapt to the new, free market economy. Only time will tell how the changes will affect their health and their lives.

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N

Nepal

Nepal, the crown jewel of the Himalayan mountain range, which enjoys two of the three highest mountains in the world, is a small landlocked country bordering India and Tibet. Nepal is slightly larger than Greece, with many geographical and cultural regions. Its subtropical summers and mild winters in the south allow for the production of persimmons, tangerines, apples, kiwis, mangoes, and nuts—all are important sweet treat ingredients. Local fruit production, however, does not meet the needs of the population, so today Nepali people import fruits and nuts from India, China, and Thailand. Nepal's various methods of food preparation, seasonings, and tastes are a result of many ethnicities living in the beautiful country over a very long period of time.

One group, the Gurung, of Nepal's beautiful northwestern Himalayan foothills, known as "The Honey Hunters of Nepal," are renowned for risking their lives twice a year by scaling hundreds of feet down dangerous sheer rock faces to collect honey from the massive nests of the world's largest honeybee, the giant black Himalayan honeybee. Special skills and special rituals have been passed down from father to son through generations, although as in Mongolia, the cliff-scaling honey hunters may be disappearing, even though this dangerous mission brings food and much-needed cash to their villages, as the honey is sold for up to five times the price of honeys in other parts of Asia.

Although Nepal is a very poor country, it is rich in its hospitality. In Nepal, food is always a topic of conversation, usually around the table at mealtimes in homes, as eating out is not common. Older women in extended families pass down culinary traditions and recipes to the younger women who value these oral traditions, while at the same time modifying and adapting the recipes to fit the preferences of the younger generations.

Nepali sweets are available throughout the day—from breakfast to after the evening meal; the concept of "dessert" is not part of the culinary tradition. Nepali people enjoy their sweets made from milk and milk products (yoghurt, ghee, and cheese), grains, fruits, nuts, and seeds, and flavored with wonderful aromatic spices, including green cardamom, and saffron. Although nearly all cooking and baking are done at home, special occasions such as weddings, religious holidays, and family events are cause for an elaborate array of sweets, and a local professional might be hired to create those special confections. At important religious

festivals, friends and relatives exchange elaborate sweets they consider blessed and sacred.

Nepali people of the Katmandu Valley, the Newar, celebrate the end of the rice harvest at their popular four-day festival of *Yomari Purnima*, starting on the full-moon day of December. The Newar women use rice flour, made from the rice of the new harvest, to make shell-shaped dumplings, which they fill with brown cane sugar or molasses and sesame seeds, and then steam. The festival is a happy time, during which celebrants thank the goddess of the grains, Annapurna, with offerings of freshly made sweet *yomari* (“tasty bread”). In the evening, children go singing to neighboring houses, requesting the *yomari* dumplings for their festival sweet treats.

Nepali sweets often have religious significance as offerings to the gods. Nepal is predominantly a Hindu society (81 percent). *Peda*, for example, is a famous, small, usually flat, round patty prepared from thickened milk (*khuwaa*), a Nepali sweet commonly offered to Hindu gods in the acts of ritual *puja*—bowing, chanting, and making offerings. Nepali people consider *halwa* a very pure food, and they offer it to the gods during religious festivals and other celebratory events. *Halwa* are thick puddings made of sugar and ghee, with a base of flour, semolina, or shredded carrots, and flavored or garnished with green cardamom, raisins, cashews, and dried coconut chips. Most Nepali puddings use the same basic ingredients of flour, ghee, and sugar, and for variety, they are seasoned with various spices and nuts, such as saffron and almonds. And, for even more variety, Nepalese women often use semolina, corn, rice, puffed lotus seeds, or coarsely grated carrots instead of flour. These sweetened puddings, as with other Nepali sweets, are served for breakfast, during the day, or after an evening meal.

Barfi is a common fudge-like sweet traditionally made from whatever is on hand—flours, lentils, fruits, nuts, and thickened milk, although nowadays it is often “store-bought,” and is eaten as candy or enjoyed as a snack. There are many varieties of *barfi*—depending on the ingredients. Another very popular delicacy that Nepali women serve on special occasions are sweet, spongy, fried dumplings. They soak the fried *lal mohan* in cardamom/saffron-flavored syrup and serve them warm or at room temperature.

For centuries, Nepal was a country with very little contact with the outside world. This isolation resulted in the development and continuity of ancient traditions, in the lives and in the diets of the Nepali people. When Nepal opened its borders in the 1950s, exposure to Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan cuisines began to influence the cuisine of Nepal.

Today, Nepali people enjoy their sweets from morning until evening, and in rituals. It is important to appreciate the context in which Nepalese savor their sweets, as many have cultural and religious significance. Some of the desserts are common throughout the country, while others are unique to small ethnic groups. While some

desserts are Nepalese in origin, others are “borrowed” from India or Tibet and are modified to fit Nepalese preferences. They are healthy and mildly spiced, and are symbolic of the hospitality and kindness of the Nepali people.

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Netherlands

Cookie is a Dutch treat that children the world over love, and a Dutch word and sweet treat that we *all* know is *koekje*. Every year on the evening of December 5, Dutch children traditionally put clean shoes out in front of their fireplaces, with carrots or hay in them as a treat for Amerigo, the white horse of *Sinterklaas*—Sint Nicolaas of Myra, the patron saint of Amsterdam—with hopes that *Sinterklaas* brings them their much-loved cookies, candies, fruits, and small presents. Both the feast and the saint are known as *Sinterklaas*, the *feast* being celebrated in Holland since the 12th century. The *person Sinterklaas*—known to the rest of the world as Santa Claus—rewards good children with special cookies, candies, sweet pastries, and small presents. Other children are dealt with by his mischievous helper *Zwarte Piet* (Black Peter), getting not-so-sweet treats like a birch switch or a lump of coal. And for “naughty” children (which, of course, there almost never are), there is, in addition, at least the *threat* that they may be taken back to Spain in *Zwarte Piet*’s emptied jute sack that he uses to carry sweets, treats, and especially the cookie-like *pepernoten* confections.

The Dutch are famous for their cookies, and for the December *Sinterklaas* holiday good children are always rewarded with special thin, crunchy, fragrant, spiced buttery cookies known as *speculaas*, shaped like windmills, plants, animals, angels, festal little people, and even the Good Saint himself. The Dutch have a long

The World's Longest Sweet

A strawberry fizzy belt 1.25 miles in length (6,597 ft. 9.07 in.) holds the world's record for the longest sweet. It was created by Look-O-Look International, in 's-Heerenberg, the Netherlands, on April 13, 2011.

Guinness World Records. Accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>.

unique tradition of baking—one that is recognized throughout Europe—and their *Sinterklaas* treats have changed little over the centuries. For hundreds of years *speculaas* have been prepared using special handmade wooden molds, although today, more often than not, *speculaas* are made commercially. Historical records describe a *Sinterklaas* celebration for children as early as 1360. It is quite likely that *speculaas* were the first cookie introduced to the Americas by Dutch settlers who arrived in New Amsterdam, now New York. These thin and very crispy ginger-colored spice cookies, known in the United States as “windmill cookies,” traditionally contain nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, cardamom, and pepper, and, of course, brown sugar, butter, eggs, vanilla, salt, and flour. Today, there are about four dozen different kinds of gingerbread-like treats in the Netherlands. The precise spice mixtures are something akin to a state secret, but the basic combination of spices, and especially the cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and pepper found in many traditional Dutch desserts, dates back to at least the 16th century, the “Dutch Golden Age,” when they controlled the lucrative spice trade with the cinnamon-, nutmeg-, clove-, and pepper-rich Indonesian Spice Islands. The United Dutch East Indies Company became the first multinational company in the world, enjoyed its own golden age in the 17th century, and focused its spice trade largely on pepper.

Pepernoten, “pepper nuts,” are always part of *Sinterklaas* and have been used since medieval times. *Pepernoten* are small, dark, round-and-slightly-domed cookie-like treats—although sometimes they are irregularly shaped—usually made from flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and anise, with the precise ingredients varying by region. Pepper is common in Dutch cooking, even in cookies, as pepper was over the centuries both their most commonly traded and economically important spice, although nowadays commercial *pepernoten* are unlikely to contain much, if any, pepper. *Sinterklaas* markets selling and trading *pepernoten* were especially popular in Holland from the 16th to the mid-19th centuries. “In medieval Amsterdam, the city’s central Dam Square was taken over each year by a *Sinterklaas* market, where the booths overflowed with sweets like cinnamon bark, honey tarts, and *pepernoten*, all distinctly flavored with the sugar and spices imported from [Sint Nicolaas’] home in the mythical East” (Kronl 2007). Nowadays, the



The Dutch are famous for their cookies, especially their thin, crunchy, fragrant, spiced buttery molded cookies known as *speculaas*. (Richard Lammerts/Dreamstime.com)

softer *pepernoten*, the “pepper nuts,” are often confused with *kruidnoten*, the “spice nuts.” *Kruidnoten* are harder and smaller cookies made from essentially the same ingredients as the spiced hard *speculaas*. The rascal *Zwarte Piet* freely throws out sweet candies and *kruidnoten* or *pepernoten* throughout *Sinterklaas* celebrations, in a mixture called *strooigoed* (literally, “uncountable”), much to the delight of the children who scuttle about fetching the treats.

Not at all confused with the *kruidnoten* are many soft-texture varieties of holiday treats, like the sweet yet spicy Dutch Christmas *speculaasstaaf*, a Dutch pastry “log” filled with almond paste, by far the most popular filling (*gevulde*) for Dutch pastry, or the Dutch spiced cookies filled with almond paste (*gevulde speculaas*). Very popular crisp and buttery puff pastry rolls called *banketletters*—the “banquet letters” or “letter cakes”—also made with a filling of sweet almond paste, appear in the shapes of an *S* or *M*, or the initials of the peoples’ names attending a party, or in the shape of the curved bishop’s crozier carried by Sint Nicolaas (*banketstaff*). Seventeenth-century still lifes suggest that the letters were formerly made with “tough” *taai-taai*-like aged dough, first pressed into molds, and then baked. *Taai-taai*, a very chewy ancestor of *speculaas*, is one of the oldest kinds of spice cake. Then, as now, Dutch bakers made *banketletters* and *banketstaaf* with equal quantities of almonds and sugar, blended into a paste with eggs, butter, sour cream, flour, and lemon zest. Eating letters was thought to confer knowledge; the phrase “eating your letters” in the Netherlands signifies one’s acquiring knowledge. Increasingly, the Dutch now acquire their knowledge by eating chocolate letters.

After the early December *Sinterklaas* festival, Dutch bakers create Christmas wreaths using the same ingredients. Bakers in northern Holland take pride in their sweet *duivekater*, a Christmastime treat most often made in the shape of a shinbone—hence its common name “shinbone bread.” In the southeast, bakers’ rich, fruity versions also appear in the same shinbone shape, thought to be a vestige of earlier midwinter pagan festivals. And while these almond-paste delicacies and gingerbread-type sweet treats are traditionally eaten as specialty treats at *Sinterklaas* and the Christmas season, all except the chewy *taai-taai* are now also enjoyed throughout the year. Try some today. They are as classic Dutch as windmills and wooden shoes.

When gingerbread is made into loaves rather than cookies, it is called *zoete koek*—“sweet cake”—and is traditionally eaten year-round. And, year-round, the Dutch love their spice cake:

The Dutch fondness for spice cakes—or *peperkoek*, as these sweets are generically known (whether they contain pepper or not)—is well documented as far back as the Middle Ages. . . . [A] 1417 council decree from the eastern Dutch city of Deventer . . . prescribes just what could go into their compact honey and spice loaf. Anyone who made a *Deventer koek* that didn’t conform was faced with an astronomical fine of 666 guilders. . . . [T]he fine burghers of Deventer knew they had a good thing going, for by the end of the sixteen hundreds the city was exporting 715,000 cakes a year (and this from a city of a mere seven thousand souls!). (Kronld 2007)

Dutch consume over 60 million pounds of spice cake per year. That is a lot of spice cake for 16.7 million people.

When they are not eating cake or *speculaas*, the Dutch are eating other spicy sweet treats. The Dutch never gave up their love of spices the way other Europeans did at the end of the Renaissance. “This is most obvious,” Kronld suggests, “in the traditional sweets that accompany holidays, in treats like *Amsterdamse korstjes*, spice crusts from Amsterdam; in *Oudewijven*, a tangy, light-colored loaf flavored with aniseed; in the now rare *Kruukplaetje*, old-fashioned spiced griddle biscuits made in South Holland” (Kronld 2007). Amsterdam crusts—small, oblong, very-dark-colored, anise-flavored spice cakes with deliciously chewy crusts—are kind of a doubled-over gingerbread made with rye flour and honey. In the olden days of Amsterdam orphanages, it was traditional for every orphaned child to get an “Amsterdam crust” with a bow on his or her birthday. Nowadays, birthdays are celebrated with a host of cakes and cookies, as well as sweets like *appeltaart* (apple pie), *chocoladebollen* (“chocolate balls”), and *poffertjes*, little puffed, yeasted pancakes made with buckwheat flour, traditionally served warm with melted butter and powdered sugar on top.

On New Year's Eve, powdered sugar, with ground cinnamon, tops *oliebollen* ("oil balls"). On the last day of the year, it is the national custom for the Dutch to eat "oil balls"—traditional deep-fried yeasted "donut balls"—to ring in the New Year. It is often suggested that *oliebollen* are the precursors of the American donuts, brought over by the early Dutch settlers to New Amsterdam along with the *speculaas*. Modern-day *oliebollen* can be plain, but more often they include raisins, currants, or finely diced apples. On New Year's Eve, one always finds *oliebollen* with a powdered sugar dusting along with other favorites, like *appelflappen* (apple turnovers) and *appelbeignets* (battered apple fritters).

One secret to baking in the Netherlands is good butter, and they produce and use a lot of it. The Dutch are known worldwide for their dairy products, being the second biggest farm produce exporter in the world, second only to the United States. They are also famous for chocolate. At *Sinterklaas* and other holidays and festive occasions, Dutch traditionally drink hot chocolate milk with their cookies, cakes, and "oil balls." Anytime of the day—year-round—they enjoy hot chocolate, coffee, or tea, with artisanal Dutch bread or twice-baked bread, "Dutch crispbakes" (*beschuit*), spread with sweet chocolate paste, chocolate flakes (*chocoladevlokken*), or chocolate sprinkles (*chocoladehagel*) affixed with salted butter, honey, jam, sweet caramel topping, or a typically *Limburgse* sweet sticky fruit spread (*stroop*) made from reduced apple or pear juice.

The Dutch are famous for their chocolate, as well as for their pioneering chocolate processing inventions, which led to the modern era of chocolate sweet treats. Early in the 19th century Coenraad J. Van Houten, a Dutch chocolatier, invented a process now called "dutching," which treats chocolate with alkalizing salts to remove the bitter taste and darken its color. His father Casparus, in 1828, patented another process that pressed the cocoa butter (the fat) from the cacao nibs (the hulled and roasted beans), making possible a cocoa powder that could be more easily mixed with sugar, milk, and other liquids or ingredients. The Van Houtens, father and son, are largely responsible for the eventual industrialization of chocolate and the mass production and consumption of chocolate sweet treats enjoyed today the world over.

Messy chocolate favorites enjoyed year-round in Holland are *Bossche bollen*, sweet treats originally from the southern city of 's-Hertogenbosch, a municipality known more commonly as Den Bosch. "Den Bosch balls" have been known throughout the Netherlands since the 1920s, called by some simply as *chocoladebollen* ("chocolate balls"). These large Den Bosch balls are heavier pastry spheres loaded with whipped cream and customarily totally coated with premium dark chocolate. They are enjoyed with coffee but are also eaten as dessert and are loved by children at birthday parties. Although infamously messy, they are customarily eaten with fingers only, no doubt a feature adding to their birthday-favorite status.

Giant versions of *Bossche bollen*, about the size of a softball, are called simply *reuzenbollen* (“giant balls”). A similar, but smaller treat, is the well-known Dutch *moorkop* (“Moor’s head”), a cream puff-like confection made with a light airy choux pastry filled with vanilla-sugared whipped cream, with the outside only partially covered with a cocoa glaze and topped with a small dollop of whipped cream.

About the time Casparus van Houten was selling chocolates and experimenting with his cocoa press in Amsterdam, bakers in Gouda, the city famous since the 12th century for marketing its namesake cheese, were perfecting their well-known diamond-patterned *stroopwafels* (“syrup waffles”) which were handmade in Gouda for more than three centuries, lore says, as a way to make use of sugar refinery by-products. *Stroopwafels*, in spite of their name, are not waffles as North Americans know them. *Goudse stroopwafels* are another form of cookie, a buttery yeasted iron-baked cookie-dough wafer sliced in half and filled with a unique warm toffee-like mixture of molasses or treacle, sugar, butter, vanilla, and cinnamon, then joined together again. While similar wafers were split and eaten with butter in the Middle Ages, the *Goudse stroopwafels* with their distinctive “syrup” have been a special City of Gouda tradition since the late 18th century, although as with other Dutch baked sweet treats, each baker has his own specially guarded secret combination of ingredients passed down along family lines from generation to generation, and with *stroopwafels* they also have their own special baking irons. As a result, *stroopwafels* have varying tastes. In the late 19th century, bakers in other localities began copying the Gouda treat as they became popular in open-air markets, and early in the 20th century *stroopwafels* were taken up by dozens of commercial bakeries. Today, freshly made *stroopwafels* are available at local markets and festivals throughout the country. The modern industry-produced *stroopwafels*, now found throughout the Netherlands, bear the generic name but not the taste or still-goey rich sugar-sweet character of the originals. The original *Goudse stroopwafels* remain one of the true sweet treat specialties of the Netherlands, with the Dutch eating on average about 20 a year, usually steamed atop a cup of hot coffee or tea. It is a quintessential Dutch traditional year-round sweet treat everybody loves.

Not everybody loves the “salty liquorice” for which the Dutch are equally famous, *zoute drop*, which is also readily available throughout the Netherlands. But the Dutch love it, leading the world in the per-capita consumption of licorice. It is an “acquired taste” Americans most often find difficult to acquire. The Dutch Drop was originally (and still) thought to have medicinal value as an expectorant and stomach soother, most likely having originated as a pharmaceutical compound, and, at least to Americans, retaining its medicinal taste. It looks like American licorice, but tastes mildly spicy and acidic as it is made with acidic ammonium chloride,

which in turn is formed from the reaction of hydrochloric acid and ammonia. Dutch licorice comes in several formulations and in more than a dozen geometric, coin, and animal shapes and sizes, including diamond-shaped and a round *Dubbel Zout* (“double salt”) variety embossed with a prominent “DZ.” The *Dubbel Zout* is offered for sale online by the Dutch sweets company Kraepelien & Holm, which has been manufacturing Dutch licorice since 1876, with the advice, “This is not a licorice for the weak. Expect a very strong flavor. Yet, our Double Salt licorice has a very strong following.” *Dubbel Zout* has a following in all likelihood mostly Dutch. It is said that *zoute* drops were used in World War II to test for foreign spies: If you are given one and you liked it, you were Dutch, and if not, you were most likely a foreigner.

Foreigner or not, almost everyone loves Dutch pastries. The southernmost provinces of Brabant and Limburg are legendary for pastries. While the province of Brabant is known for its chocolate *Bossche bollen* and *moorkop*, Limburgers take great pride in their *Limburgse vlaai*, a large 10–12 inch yeast dough latticed-top fruit-filled tart typical of the region. “Dutch apple pie” in the Netherlands (*vlaai* or *appeltaart* or *appelgebak*) looks like an American apple pie—or rather the American lattice-top apple pie looks like a typical *Limburgse vlaai* or *appeltaart*. Recipes for the Dutch apple pie date back to the 16th century. Made with sugared crisp-and-tart-apple filling, cinnamon and touch of lemon juice, and sometimes raisins, with a classic diamond-shaped latticed light dough top, it is different from the streusel-topped version known in the United States as “Dutch apple pie.” “Real” Dutch apple pies are lighter, also flatter and thinner, giving an extra crunch to the sweet treat. Apples in the Netherlands are plentiful and are a favorite for the filling, but one also finds cherry, apricot, and plum versions. Dutch eat *vlaai* plain or with whipped cream or the iconic Dutch *chocoladevlokken* (chocolate flakes) or *chocoladehagelslag* (chocolate “hail”) sprinkles.

Dutch love sprinkles, *hagelslag*, loading them up on bread, usually buttered bread, to produce a sweet snack much like “fairy bread” in Australia and New Zealand, although eaten quite commonly rather than as a festive children’s party treat. *Muisjes* (“little mice”), colored aniseed sprinkles, are also customarily often enjoyed on open-faced sandwiches, solidly anchored with salted butter. Traditionally, “nativity mice” are eaten on a twice-baked hard biscuit (*beschuit met muisjes*) at the birth of a baby—in modern times, pink mice (*roze muisjes*) at the birth of a baby girl and blue and white mice (*blauwe muisjes*) at the birth of a baby boy. Dutch celebrate the birth of a royal prince or princess nationally with orange “mice” (*Oranje muisjes*), orange being the color of the House of Orange-Nassau of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

Dutch treats, royal and common, are famous the world over. Everyone loves them, or at least their cookies, chocolate, apple pie, gingerbread treats, and for those who know about them, even their “oil balls” and “mice.”

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New Zealand

The Australasian country of New Zealand is made up of two main islands, the North Island and the South Island, located southeast of Australia in the Southern Pacific Ocean. The islands are home to about 4.5 million people; over half are of European descent, and less than 20 percent are Asian, Maori, and Pacific Islanders. There are many more sheep than people—31 million sheep! New Zealanders, or “Kiwis,” justifiably boast of the unbounded natural beauty of their mountains, pastures, lakes, rivers, beaches, and areas with active volcanoes. Because of its stunning natural beauty, cinema producers choose New Zealand to film movies like *Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, *The Adventures of Tintin*, *The Piano*, *Whale Rider*, and *Avatar*.

New Zealanders value their lush land, and the fruits and vegetables it produces. These lush landscapes also provide natural pastures and grazing areas that result in world-class dairy and sheep industries. Most of New Zealand’s sweet treats are made from locally produced fruits and dairy products.

One iconic dessert utilizing these wholesome fruit and dairy products, along with free-range eggs, is pavlova. A New Zealander made the first pavlova in 1929, claims New Zealand’s culinary anthropologist Helen Leach in her book, *The Pavlova Story*. Seventy years later, “the pavlova wars” between Australia and New Zealand broke out. Both countries claim to have given birth to the now-famous meringue, whipped cream, and fruit dessert named after the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova, who toured and performed in New Zealand and Australia in the 1920s. The good-natured controversy continues even today, demonstrating the complementary yet sometimes contested relationship between the countries, especially when it comes to food.

As with most time-honored desserts, pavlova continues to evolve, producing regional variations dependent on the fruits of the season and the tastes of the creators. For example, the malleability of the pavlova recipes results in pavlova with pineapple and nuts, or coffee liqueur, or, more recently, even microwavable pavlova.

Besides pavlova, appreciation and love of Anzac biscuits is another example of the shared food culture of New Zealand and Australia, one also symbolic of how the

two countries stood together to honor the Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC) during World War I. Both countries celebrate Anzac Day on April 25, the day that commemorates the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915. Wives, mothers, sisters, and girlfriends did not put eggs (which could hasten spoilage) in their Anzac biscuits sent in their versions of CARE packages. Without eggs, the butter, oatmeal, coconut, and golden syrup cookies would thus stay fresher on long overseas shipments to the soldiers.

Surprisingly, rich buttery cookies known as “Afghan biscuits” are quintessentially New Zealand; how they got the name remains a mystery. Afghan biscuits are a mixture of cocoa powder, lots of butter, flour, and, very importantly, crispy cornflakes, and, after baking, they are topped with a dollop of rich chocolate, and “garnished” with a single New Zealand walnut. Afghan biscuits are Kiwi favorites that have a “not-so-Kiwi” name. They get high marks for their ease of preparation and great taste. Not surprisingly, variations of Afghan biscuits have developed over time: Some include dates or dark chocolate instead of cocoa powder, some bakers substitute other crunchy cereals for the cornflakes, and still others garnish the top with a macadamia nut instead of a walnut.

In New Zealand, hokey pokey is not only a dance but also a crisp, spongy-like or honeycomb toffee typically made with brown sugar, corn syrup (or treacle), and baking soda. Hokey pokey is also the name of New Zealand’s very popular flavor of ice cream. Imagine a delicious vanilla ice cream with tiny chunks of crunchy hokey pokey toffee, similar to American butter brickle ice cream. The name “hokey pokey” most likely dates back to as early as the 1880s in England where Italian ice cream street vendors were “hokey pokey” men. As the English emigrated to New Zealand, they brought the nostalgic term of endearment with them, and now, hokey pokey ice cream is loved by Kiwi adults and children alike.

New Zealand ice cream is famously rich and creamy because of the country’s plentiful and extraordinary dairy production. Its ice cream is so good, in fact, that New Zealand has the title of leading ice-cream consuming nation. There is a brand of ice cream called Rush Munro’s, considered by many ice cream aficionados to be one of the finest ice creams ever made; it is used in many of the top-end restaurants and has been hand churned since 1926, according to Day’s Bay resident and gallery owner Claire Schmidt (Schmidt, personal communication, 2012).

In the late 1800s a German explorer, Friedrich Sellow, took some fruits called feijoas from Brazil to Europe. By the 1920s, the Europeans had in turn introduced the sweet and tangy feijoas to New Zealand, and it has remained an iconic New Zealand fruit ever since. Feijoas grow abundantly during the pleasantly warm and sunny New Zealand summers which follow their cool winters. When the feijoas ripen, they soften to a jelly-like texture. To eat them fresh, the Kiwis cut them in half and scoop the flesh with a spoon, rather like they eat kiwifruits. There are myriad recipes using feijoas—from crumbles and muffins to jams and cakes—in old

and current cookbooks, and in nationally and locally published cookbooks. Claire Schmidt, besides having a fondness for Rush Munro’s ice cream, recommends making the ever-popular apple and feijoa cake, a classic creation of many New Zealanders (Schmidt, personal communication, 2012).

Obviously, New Zealand is rich in the production of fruits, including kiwifruits (kiwis, for short, but not to be confused with the kiwi bird, nor Kiwis, the nickname for New Zealanders). The Chinese brought the fruit to New Zealand in 1906 (two years after it arrived in the United States), where New Zealanders recognized the potential of this delicious fruit, and began cultivating and marketing it, and, in the mid-1960s, they successfully changed the name from Chinese gooseberries to kiwifruits. Some speculate that they named kiwifruits after their national symbol, the kiwi, as the bird and the fruit share a similar brown and furry appearance. Kiwifruits, are not only good and tasty on their own, halved, and eaten with a spoon, but they are also prized ingredients in numerous recipes, ranging from toppings for pavlova to smoothies, jams, jellies, and sweet quick breads.

Seasons, microenvironmental variations in climate, and a diverse population drive tastes in New Zealand. New Zealanders pride themselves in the production of organic, fresh, and local foods. New Zealanders have an appreciation for purity in their sweet treats, whether produced at home or commercially. Perhaps this enduring love of naturally produced goods is a gift of the Maori, who were in New Zealand long before any Westerners, and whose exemplary love and stewardship of the land is an enduring gift to all.

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North Africa—The Maghreb Region

(Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia)

Famous throughout history, the Maghreb—the Mediterranean region of North Africa, west of Egypt—literally means, in the Arabic language, “where the sun sets.” Traditionally, the Maghreb includes the modern-day countries of Morocco,

Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, with Mauritania and the disputed territory of Western Sahara being included more recently. Some limit the term Maghreb to the three modern-day countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. In ancient times, all the lands west of Egypt, the current-day Maghreb, were known as Libya, and in ancient Greece, the original Berbers were known as Libyans. However defined, the Maghreb encompasses tropical and fertile coastal regions of the Mediterranean, snow-capped mountains, vast plains, and, mostly, the northernmost edge of the searingly hot Sahara Desert. Most nondesert areas of the Maghreb are also hot and dry, with cool to chilly nights.

Over the millennia, parts of the region have been controlled by more than a dozen different peoples: Berbers, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Germanic Vandals, Byzantines, various Caliphates and dynasties, the Turkish Ottomans, and, in more modern times, the Spanish, French, and Italians.

Inland from the Mediterranean live the independent Berber peoples, speaking their own language, who in early historic times aggressively dominated much of the region, controlling important desert camel-caravan trading routes and mountain areas. Phoenicians arrived in the land “where the sun sets” in the ninth century BC, and early on introduced pomegranates, olives, grapes, and figs—ingredients that have persisted in sweet treats to present day. Muslim Arab invasions in the Maghreb began in the middle of the seventh century AD, and proceeded in several waves through the 14th century. They brought to the area the Islam faith, the Arabic language, a cultural focus on honey-based sweet treats, and the important sweet-treat spices of sugar (considered then a spice and a medicine), cinnamon, cassia, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cloves, pepper (an early sweet-treats spice), sesame seeds, and saffron.

The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur'an*, the sacred book of Islam, and honey; hence, honey attained religious and medicinal as well as culinary importance in the Arab Maghreb. Arabs of the Islamic Golden Age of the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad (AD 750–1258) were renowned for their sweets, and especially for their pastries, including cinnamon-sugar pastries based on Persian cuisine. The Ottoman Turks (1299–1683) later built on and expanded Abbasid predilection for sweets. The Arabs and Turks brought with them the Persian-inspired method of filling thin sheets of dough to make sweet pastries like *baklava*. They introduced both the technique for making thin pastry and honey-soaked pastries like *kadayif*—a semi-soft special-occasion cheese pastry made from long thin string-like threads, soaked in sweet syrup—as well as the use of dried fruits and nuts as sweetmeats. Today, almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts are common in sweet treats throughout the Maghreb. The Turks also introduced treats like *halvas*, made from ground nuts with butter and sugar, and the use of flower essences, principally rose water and orange blossom water. *Halva*, named from the Arabic word for “sweet” (*ḥelw*), refers to a number

of traditional dense sweet confections originally of Turkish origin generally made from honey and ground sesame seeds, and often rose water, saffron, dried fruits, or nuts, found widely in the Maghreb, the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and much of Asia. *Halva* often appears at banquets and on ceremonial occasions. There are many versions of the confection, and many versions and spellings of the confection's name, as is true of virtually all sweet treats of the Maghreb. *Ka'ak*, *kaak*, *kahqa*, or *kaâk* are all renderings of the Arabic word for “cake,” for example, and can refer to several different types of baked goods produced throughout the Maghreb, and the Arab world in general.

Muslims from North Africa known as Moors invaded southern Spain in AD 711, with an army said to be largely made up of Berbers of the Maghreb, creating what became known as Islamic Al-Andalus (Andalusia), in Spain, Portugal, and France.

People of mixed Muslim cultures of the Maghreb, and some Sicilians as well, were collectively known as Moors. Until the final expulsion of the Moors from Spain in 1492, there were regular cultural exchanges between Al-Andalus and Morocco. Berbers became the ruling dynasties of Al-Andalus from the 11th to the 13th centuries. And when the Moors and Jews were driven out of European countries in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, many returned to the Maghreb, bringing with them Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian sweet treat influences—Spanish and Portuguese to Morocco (mostly in Tangier, Tetouan, and Fez) and Algeria, and Italian to Algeria and Tunisia. The great Ottoman Empire controlled Algeria and Tunisia from the 16th to the 19th centuries, also dominating much of the Mediterranean Sea. European colonialists, especially French and Spanish, arrived in the Maghreb in the 1800s, with Spain controlling the coastal area of Morocco, and France colonizing much of Algeria and Tunisia, and inland Morocco. Spanish and French influences in the world of sweet treats are still evident. The British left their influence primarily in the custom of taking tea, introduced in the 19th century. Ultra-sweet mint tea has since become a major feature of life throughout the Maghreb, and a symbol of hospitality, with rituals of its own.

Although the Ottoman Turks never conquered Morocco—a country actually known as *Al-Maghrib*—it retains a strong Turkish influence. The Ottomans built on and expanded the sweets predilections of the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad. Marcus Samuelsson, the Ethiopian-born celebrity chef, found Morocco to be one of two countries in Africa with a strong dessert tradition (the other being South Africa). He was fascinated by “the distinctive desserts of Morocco that have a purely Arabic sensibility, with pastries doused in honey, or sprinkled with orange water, not dusted with powdered sugar or drizzled with sauce. . . . In some cases, ‘dessert’ in Morocco was a part of the main course, as in the Moroccan *b'steeya*, a traditional pie made of layers of stewed pigeon and sweetened almonds wrapped in a thin pastry called *warqa* and flavored with cinnamon and sugar”

(Samuelsson 2006). Cinnamon-sugar was a hallmark combination of food preparations of the Ottoman era.

Outsiders are often surprised at the way Moroccans mix savory with sweet, along with aromatics, and how sugar or honey can be part of savory dishes as well as classical sweet treats. Even preserved lemon peel is an aromatic. Orange blossom water (made from the blossoms of bitter oranges) and rose water, used individually or together, regularly lend a delicate perfume to syrups, pastries, and puddings. Saffron, ginger, cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, and mace all join the flavor medley. And Maghrebi use many sweet syrups: primarily honey syrup and sugar syrup, but also *pekmez* (a thick molasses-like fruit must syrup usually made of grapes), date syrup, and pomegranate molasses.

Egyptian-born award-winning food writer and cultural anthropologist Claudia Roden picks *tmar bi loz* (dates stuffed with almond or pistachio paste) as the most popular sweetmeat in Morocco, a treat made with moist dates, rose water or orange blossom water, and ground almonds or pistachios. Roden points to *slada bil bortokal* (orange salad) as the most common Moroccan dessert, one commonly served after a rich meal, made with orange blossom water, confectioners' sugar, and ground cinnamon. The most famous of Moroccan pastries, *cornes de gazelle* (*kaab gzahl*; gazelle's horns), are crescent-shaped pastries with ground almond and sugar filling, ones usually served to guests in Moroccan homes, with sweet mint tea, and at weddings. Roden's historical pick, *brivat bi loz* (almond pastries in honey syrup), a fried pastry called "the bride's fingers," sprinkled with syrup and chopped pistachios, is a sweet treat featured in medieval manuscripts found in Baghdad.

Other popular common sweet treats in Morocco include *roz bil halib*, a creamy short-grain rice pudding with rose water or orange blossom water, raisins, sugar, honey, vanilla, and chopped toasted almonds or pistachios, served in a communal dish with dabs of butter. Also popular are *seffa*, a sweet version of the ever-present couscous pasta, made with sugar, cinnamon, honey, and almonds, and occasionally also with pistachios and pine nuts and apricots and raisins; and *sfenj*, a Moroccan fried dough, traditionally soaked in honey, usually purchased from street vendors and served at breakfast or snack time with mint tea. In Tunisia, the well-known street-vendor yeasted dough fritters are known as *yo-yos*, made with orange juice, orange blossom water, and coconut, dipped in a warm honey syrup, and available in many varieties. In Tunisia, they often serve *yo-yos* to children for breakfast. Also popular are *kaak d'Essaouira*, crunchy, wreath-shaped Moroccan cookies with anise, sesame, and orange blossom water—a treat named after the western Atlantic coastal city of Essaouira. Snakes (*m'hanncha*) are popular in Morocco; actually snake cakes that are *warqa* pastries baked with a ground almond paste and rose water or orange blossom water and citrus zest flavorings, and topped with pistachios, almonds, or other nuts that are formed into a coil to resemble a serpent. The snake cakes are served during celebrations; guests enjoy the pastry by breaking off pieces of the sweetly coiled serpent.



Seffa, a sweet version of the ever-present North African couscous, is made with sugar, cinnamon, honey, dried fruits, and nuts. (Eva Gründemann/Dreamstime.com)

Throughout the Maghreb as in other parts of Africa, and especially in rural areas, fruit remains the primary sweet treat. There are many fruits to choose from: dates, figs, pomegranates, oranges, lemons, limes, grapes/raisins, plums/prunes, apricots, peaches, wild crabapples, quinces, cherries, strawberries, bananas, melons, coconuts, mangoes, grapefruit, and olives. “Morocco is a fruit lovers’ paradise,” notes Roden:

In *riads*, traditional Arab houses with interior gardens, there are always fruit trees, and their scents permeate the air. It is from the Persians and their notion that paradise was an orchard that the Arabs adopted and passed on their love of fruit. Bowls of dried fruit and nuts are ready in every home to greet visitors—sometimes the hostess will fill a date or a fig with an almond or a walnut and hand it to you. And the usual way to end a meal is with fruit. For guests, it is served either simply cut up on a plate or as a fruit salad. . . . Pastries are for special occasions or for visitors when they drop in. They are filled with almonds, pistachios, or walnuts, and with dates, and are usually soaked in sugar or honey syrup. (Roden 2004)

And that holds true for the other major countries of the Maghreb. Unlike many regions of Africa, the majority of the people of the Maghreb live in cities. City

dwellers who can afford it have more sweet treat options than those in rural areas, as do urban dwellers worldwide. City dwellers more often have the money for and more access to commercially prepared sweet treats and the more exotic desserts available in restaurants. North Africans like their commercial nougat, which typically in North Africa contains more fruits than nuts. As city dwellers, they are more directly affected by the historical influences of past events, other than religion.

Almost all people of the Maghreb are Muslim, city folk and rural alike—more than 97 percent in every Maghreb country—and hence share a religious tradition emphasizing sweets, especially for Ramadan and *Eid* celebrations and observances. While honey consumption, for example, is generally high year-round in Maghrebi, Eastern Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern countries, it rises during religious festival times, following the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. The Arabic name for bees lends its name to a *sura* (a chapter) of the *Qur'an*, An-Nahl—“The Honey Bees”—which also means “gift.” Their gift of honey is a principal part of religious and secular sweet treat traditions throughout the Arab world.

While sharing traditions of sweet treats Maghrebi countries have their separate versions and individual preferences. Algerians are the second greatest per capita consumers of honey in the world, for example. Algeria is known for its *makroudh*, a deep-fried heavy and sweet honey-covered cinnamon-flavored semolina-based pastry, generally filled with dates or almonds and sesame, now eaten throughout most of the Maghreb, and famed in Kairouan, Tunisia. *Makroudh* look like diamond-shaped American fig newtons. Libyans especially like their classic *gharaiba bil laoz* (crescent cookies made with flour, sugar, ground almonds, and butter). In Libya, gruel-like *asida* is also among the most popular sweets, usually prepared for special occasions like *Mawlid* and *Eid*, or ceremonies like the ones surrounding the birth of child. *Asida*, made of a lump of semolina dough, is eaten with honey and butter, usually by hand, without the use of utensils. *Asida* is a famous sweet from medieval Muslim Andalusia, which spread throughout the Maghreb, a treat referred to in 10th-century texts, with recipes dating back to the 13th century.

Wherever one turns in modern-day Maghrebi cities, one can encounter honey-sweet pastries, many of which have histories going back almost to Neolithic times. In recent times, people in most urban centers have access to internationally inspired and commercially produced sweet treats, except, until recently, in Libya. Libya gained its independence from Italy in 1947, but in 1969 Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi began a nearly 42-year reign during which its citizens had little access to commercial sweets that were enjoyed by most of the rest of the Maghrebi citizens. That changed in 2011 with al-Gaddafi's overthrow and death.

To what sweet treat did post-Gaddafi Libyans turn?

The answer is *gelato*, a most welcome sweet treat in a country that is 92 percent Sahara Desert. Since the overthrow of Gaddafi, *gelaterias* (shops selling ice-cream-like Italian *gelato*) have been opening up on almost every busy street of Tripoli, the capital city, and on these busy streets, one often hears the popular cheery broadcasted jingles of ice cream vans. Since the summer of 2012, *gelato* has become very popular, even though expensive, as under the rule of Gaddafi, ices were “luxury” items. Everyone loves ice cream, except, perhaps, for the Italians, who instead love their beloved *gelato*. Influenced by their colonial past, as have been the peoples of the Maghreb since the days of the Phoenicians, the Libyans turn toward their former colonial rulers, the world’s greatest lovers of *gelato*, for their new sweet treats. But in true Maghrebi tradition, they adapt. The new Libyan *gelato* flavor is *baklava* with notes of honey and crumbled pastry. With Libyan sweet treats the lesson we learn is that it is often difficult to escape our ancestral sweet treat tastes.

Other Maghrebi peoples were, meanwhile, enjoying more traditional Arabic ice cream, *bouzat haleeb*, a light gummy iced floral-tasting confection that stretches when eaten because of the addition of *mistika* (gum Arabic) and *salep* (a starch extract from the tubers of orchid-like plants). *Bouzat haleeb* is generally made from almonds, verjuice (an acidic juice made by pressing unripe grapes), rose water, orange blossom water, and sugar. *Bouzat haleeb* is especially popular during Ramadan *Iftar*.

Popular year-round treats include ice creams, *gelatos*, *sherbets*, and custards. Couscous, tiny pasta pellets of durum wheat typical of the Maghreb, is a ubiquitous staple found throughout the region. Couscous is to the Maghreb what rice is to Asia. Most often a *de rigueur* foundation of savory dishes, even couscous finds its way into popular sweets, sometimes being the sweet itself. Plain and simple, like the people themselves, down-to-earth sweet couscous is a typical Maghrebi treat, made with dates and/or figs and other dried fruit(s), butter, sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg.

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Northern Ireland

Traditional food lives on in Northern Ireland, one of four countries of the United Kingdom (along with Scotland, Wales, and England). Residents in Northern Ireland are generally loyal to either Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland, which results in the continuation of both British and Irish food and cultural traditions. Many of the current traditional recipes date back to the 18th century, when all of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. In 1921, the six counties that make up Northern Ireland remained loyal to and stayed allied with Britain, and the 26 counties that left the United Kingdom eventually became the Republic of Ireland. Thus, sweets and desserts enjoyed by the residents of Northern Ireland tended to have a British or Irish flavor and history—but the times are changing. Northern Ireland’s tastes and cuisines have fuzzy boundaries, albeit their identities quite often still remain separate.

A popular sweet in Northern Ireland, associated with the Lammis Fair in Ballycastle, County Antrim, is a type of toffee known as “Yellowman.” Yellowman is made of butter, brown sugar, vinegar, golden syrup, and an addition of baking soda at exactly 545°F. The precise addition of baking soda causes the hot mixture to quickly foam and gives the Yellowman sweet a brittle, honeycombed, texture (Davidson 2006). (Golden syrup is a staple item in nearly every pantry that has been under the British crown. It, like treacle, is a sticky by-product of sugar refining. It is indeed golden and is used as a sweetener in or a syrup on biscuits, cakes, pancakes, porridge, sponge puddings, and other desserts.)

One would not think the subject of “moss” would be in a discussion of sweet treats, but the Irish have always been practical and used what ingredients they had available in creating their cuisine. Carrageen is an edible seaweed that grows on rocks around the coast of Ireland; in Northern Ireland, it is a vegetarian gelling agent, and “firms up” many desserts, including a dessert known as carrageen pudding or carrageen moss *blancmange*. The Northern Irish have many variations of this wonderful pudding; some include whiskey and fruits, others use citrus zest, and yet others include essences such as vanilla or almond. Typically, these puddings are light, are made in a mold, and have a very subtle taste of the sea, a sentimental taste to the locals, and difficult to identify for others.

Northern Ireland prides itself in the production of fruits, and some of its areas, including County Armagh, grow prize-winning Bramley apples (U.K./Ireland Travel 2012). Typical recipes include apple pie, apple pan dowdy, and apple crumble with custard sauce. As with many of the traditional recipes, what is in season and available at a reasonable cost shapes the choice of dessert, and always, it is unpretentious, practical, and delicious.

Although the Northern Irish diet has changed with the times, their love of potatoes has not. Nearly every grocery or convenience store sells bags of potatoes, and

nearly every kitchen stocks a big bag. From time to time, there are leftover potatoes, and they are easily “converted” into Irish potato scones. Although not sweet by themselves, when they are served hot off the griddle, and dripped with maple syrup, golden syrup, treacle, or honey, they become a satisfying sweet treat that will suppress an appetite for hours.

No conversation about sweet treats in Northern Ireland would be complete without mentioning the rich and unique tradition of neighborhood bakeries. While many family-owned, local businesses have disappeared in other parts of the world, Northern Ireland’s market towns and villages still take pride in their family-owned bakeries. These bakeries are often in their second or third generation of family ownership and have long established traditions of baking excellence, offering items such as cakes, crème cakes, fruit loaves, and biscuits (cookies).

Belfast is the largest city in Northern Ireland. This capital city is exciting, alive, diverse, and beautiful. Talented chefs, confectioners, chocolate artisans, and bakers display a love of life, ritual, and fine dining; Belfast is a destination city. The urban environment, healthy choices, and great atmosphere mirror the food, culture, and palates found throughout the countryside and in the villages of Northern Ireland.

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Norway

Norway survived two centuries of Viking raids, a 14th-century political union with Denmark, a 19th-century resistance to unite with Sweden, and a 20th-century successful effort to gain independence. Norway, indeed, is proud to be a country and culture independent from others.

Norway sits in northern Europe, west of Sweden, bordering the North Sea and the North Atlantic Coast. Less than 3 percent of its land is arable; the rugged

mountains, breathtaking fjords, the cold arctic tundra in the north, and the moderate coastal weather, with ample precipitation, provide enough variation in the climate and the terrain to supply plentiful local sources of food—game, fish, berries, cherries, and apples.

Bountiful berries and apples, along with a productive dairy industry, created an evolution of desserts. The beauty of the Norwegian desserts lies in their elegant simplicity. Because fruits grown in Norway take longer to mature, they are carefully plucked when the magic moment of ripeness happens. Each year the discovery of the first, fresh, wild, springtime cloudberry, for example, is a cause for a seasonal celebration. Although berries are plentiful, Norwegians appreciate them as delicious delicacies, and they often serve and savor them with fresh plain or whipped cream. Norwegians celebrate with food—the beginning of seasons, the end of seasons, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and, of course, civil and religious holidays.

Norway has an exhaustive array of Christmas holiday sweet treats. *Julekaka* is the traditional sweet Norwegian Christmas bread. Holiday bakers make this sweet bread with candied fruits and nuts in cardamom-flavored yeast dough. They sometimes top *julekaka* with a sweet, white icing and serve it warm, just out of the oven, or other times they toast and serve it with butter and coffee, which suggest time to relax with family, friends, and neighbors.

Norwegian custom dictates that seven traditional kinds of Christmas cookies are presented at the table to family and guests (exactly which seven appears to be open to discussion). In times past, the cookies were all proudly homemade, but today, some may be purchased readymade. The *pepperkake* (gingerbread man cookie) is undeniably a very popular Christmas cookie. *Pepperkaker* are rolled, thin, gingerbread cookies that are cut with a cookie cutter or a knife. They can be in the shape of a gingerbread man, or they can be of other shapes. The dough can also be cut, baked, and used to make Christmas tree decorations or gingerbread houses. Holiday bakers might decorate the cookies, tree decorations, or houses with icing, and enjoy them as a sweet treat or simply as visual delights—or both!

Sandkaker (sand cakes, which resemble little sand castles made on the beach) are another common Christmas cookie. *Sandkaker* are almond-flavored butter cookies pressed into fancy little tart-like molds that locals enjoy plain, or filled with fruit or cream pudding. Some believe that the charm of *sandkaker* lies in the little tin molds in which they are baked. Folklore tells us that traditional Norwegian bakers do not wash the molds between uses, so there is no need to grease them before using. Because the molds are accordingly well seasoned, for skillful bakers the delicate *sandkaker* fall easily from the molds.

Skilled bakers make *krumkaker*, delicate, crisp, cone-shaped cookies made from eggs, flour, sugar, butter, and cardamom, with a very special iron, designed only for making *krumkaker*. These irons have very fine, intricate engravings, not readily

visible until the cooked, thin, crêpe-like cookie is wrapped around a wooden cone to “crisp-up.” When the cookies are crisp, they are dusted with powdered sugar or filled with sweetened whipped cream.

The intricate engravings and scrollwork on the *krumkake* iron are sometimes considered an example of Norwegian folk art. The style is similar to other Norwegian styles of art, including chip carving (a form of decorative woodcarving) and *rosemåling* (a unique method of painting on wood). *Krumkake* iron engravings have maintained their original character with stylized leaves, flowers, and scrolls, all clearly defined on a properly made *krumkake* and always identified as Norwegian.

A *krumkake* is not only decorative in the intricate scroll designs, but its beauty lies in its very light, delicate crispness and its cone shape. The aesthetics of the visual and tactile details are also significant in other Norwegian sweets, including the thin, fluted shapes of *sandkaker*, the weightless, flowerlike forms of *rosettes* (delicate cookies made from a thin batter and fried on flower or star-shaped irons), and the crimped edges of *fattigmans*, or “poor man’s cookies,” which are carefully shaped into a knot before they are fried. Since Norwegian bakers make most of these cookies from the same staple ingredients of flour, sugar, eggs, and butter, the attention to the diversity of intricate visual detail is very important, as this detail is what distinguishes and defines each morsel of goodness.

Cardamom has graced many of the sweets and breads in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries for centuries. How did the aromatic spice get to these very northern countries from places like Sri Lanka and Southern India? One theory is that late in the eighth century, the Vikings enjoyed cardamom in Turkey (in what was then Constantinople) and returned to Norway with the newly found spice. Another theory is that the Crusaders brought it back with them in the 14th century. Either way, cardamom has been a staple, signature ingredient in Norwegian cuisine since those times, and it remains popular today.

Cinnamon is the spice of choice for the popular and traditional *eplekake* or apple cake. Norwegians enjoy using their freshly grown and end-of-season fruits in their cooking and baking. *Eplekake* is a wonderful example of a moist and fruity dessert cake that Norwegians serve warm or cold. Artfully arranged apples around the tops of the cakes demonstrate the appreciation for both attractive visual appeal and delectable taste.

Kaker

The word *kaker* in Norway is not only used for cakes such as *eplekaker*, but it also describes more cookie-like sweets such as *krumkaker*, *sandkaker*, *pepperkaker*, and *kransekaker*.

Kransekake, the Norwegian ring cake, is another traditional sweet, which is more common at weddings, birthdays, and other household celebrations. Similar to the Danish *kransekage*, it is an almond/egg-white-based dough formed into concentric circles, baked, and stacked into a large cone shape with the smallest ring at the top. It is held together with white icing and is often decorated with trinkets such as bonbons, little flags, or sparklers. On many celebration tables in Norway, one might also find *bløtkake* (“softcake”), a lovely layer cake made with vanilla sponge with berries and cream sandwiched between layers. The practical-minded Norwegians make this cake with whatever they have—canned apricots or fresh or frozen berries—or fruit jam. They use cream or custard or both. It does not seem to matter—the result is beautiful and delicious! Also beautiful and delicious are sweets that came with Norwegian immigrants to the United States, lovely light, delicate desserts such as *snø* pudding and lemon soufflé, treats that remain popular among today’s descendants of Norwegian immigrants.

Defining Norwegian cuisine is challenging. It began with peasant cooking—wholesome, local, fresh, preserved, dried, or frozen, but always appealing in taste and presentation—and remains so today. It is a palate where what the peasants ate has become what all Norwegians eat. Delicious, pure, practical, and wholesome, the traditional sweet treats of Norway reflect the values of the Norwegian people and the people themselves. As the demographics of Norway grow and change, and as young chefs introduce other international cuisines, so to, will traditional Norwegian sweet treats be preserved, on one hand, and, on the other hand, they will be modified in innovative, creative, and visionary pleasant-to-look-at ways, as they have been for centuries.

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P

Pacific Islands

(Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tahiti)

The images of women in grass skirts, rhythmically swaying to beating drums are, for the most part, gone—except perhaps for tourist events. The cultures of the Pacific Islands, in general, and of Papua New Guinea, Tahiti, and Samoa, in particular, remained true to the cuisine and culture of the original immigrants for thousands of years, until Ferdinand Magellan arrived in the 16th century. Until then, the Island people lived in isolation on the mostly tropical islands embraced by mountains, coastal lowlands, rolling foothills, seasonal monsoons and areas of geological interest—including active volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunami.

Besides seafood, the islanders enjoyed breadfruits, sweet potatoes, coconuts, and bananas, as well as many other tropical fruits, eaten fresh or cooked in earth ovens or prepared using other methods that have evolved over centuries. The islanders had a tradition of celebrating life's events with elaborate feasts of local foods. Today, the bad news is that the Westernization of island diets has changed the way many islanders eat; many of the imported foods are processed and refined. The good news is that tourists are interested in traditional food, food production, food preparation, feasts, and rituals, and their interest has cultivated a sense of pride in and enhanced identity with traditional ways and a renaissance in the cultures, customs, and cuisines of the islanders.

Tahiti, Samoa, and Papua New Guinea are diverse and complex, being composed as they are of a combination of indigenous Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian traditions, showing signs of European and Asian influence. Papua New Guinea has one of the most diverse populations on earth, with a population of around 5 million people, for example, speaking over 700 different languages in a small country about the size of Sweden. Papua New Guinea is the eastern half of a large island neatly split by the 141st meridian east; the western half of the island of New Guinea is part of Indonesia. Papua New Guinea, like Samoa and Tahiti, has been affected by colonialism, world wars, politics, and the sweet potato.

No one knows for sure how the sweet potato (*kaukau*) got to Papua New Guinea. Some food historians believe that the Spaniards brought it in the 16th century. Others believe that there is evidence on Polynesian Islands of a well-developed sweet potato cultivation system well before the 16th century. Sweet potatoes supply over

90 percent of the total food intake of the Papua New Guineans, providing a daily, nutritional sweet treat and staple food for the residents. In some areas, the yam is abundant, but yams are not intended for food; those that grow to great lengths are rather carved with ritualistic patterns to serve as symbols of fertility and ancestral power at rituals and feasts. The Europeans brought pigs to the islands, and now pork is the meat of choice, but locals rarely eat meat, except at holiday festivals such as weddings, funerals, Christmas, Easter, and community celebrations, which are occasions that generally call for big-pig-roasting-in-earth-ovens feasts typical of the South Pacific region. Pacific islanders claim a variety of Christian faiths and thus feasting and fasting follow Christian liturgical calendars.

Desserts in Papua New Guinea are generally made from the local fruits, as in many other parts of the world. An abundance of *sago*, coconuts, bananas, papayas, passion fruit, and *pitpit*, a close relative of sugarcane, provides sweet treats year-round, and each fruit, if not eaten fresh, has variations in its preparations.

Sago, for example, although not exactly a fruit, is an important starchy substance obtained from the *sago* tree. Women strip the bark, soak it in water, pound it to remove the bitterness, and flour-like material emerges. Locals mix it with boiling water, stir it until it becomes thick and sticky, scoop it from the pot with a stick, and enjoy the sweet treat. Often, *sago* is formed into griddle cakes cooked over an open fire, or the flour might be placed in bamboo shoots for roasting in an earthen oven. *Sago* flour is frequently mixed with other flavors, including lotus seeds, for a sweeter effect. Papua New Guineans eat their *sago* hotcakes with butter, sugar, and grated coconut. *Sago* pudding, by itself, is rather plain, but when locals embellish it with fruits, it becomes a very sweet treat. Then there are the sweet *sago* dumplings, which involve mixing mashed bananas with *sago*, wrapping the mixture in leaves, and boiling them.

Coconut and coconut milk are combined with fruits as a normal day's fare. Banana with coconut cream and *talautu* (pineapple in coconut cream) are two popular, traditional desserts. The coconut cream is pressed from the flesh of the coconut after the outer shell is removed. Of course, banana pancakes are a great way to start the day, and a piece of banana cake flavored with exquisite vanilla is the perfect way to end the day.

Vanilla embellishes many Pacific Island sweet treats. The Spanish conquistador, Hernán Cortéz, took vanilla pods from their native Mexico to Spain in the early 16th century, and the Spaniards likely brought the pods to Papua New Guinea shortly thereafter. Vanilla pods, more commonly referred to as vanilla beans, are a product of the only orchid that produces an edible fruit. Because the only bee that can pollinate the orchid is the Mexican *Melipona* bee, which did not traverse the globe with the vanilla pods, local skilled farmers hand pollinate, hand harvest, and then hand cure the Papuan New Guinea and the Tahitian orchids in a process that takes from 13 to 14 weeks.

Noted anthropologist, Margaret Mead, author of the classic *Coming of Age in Samoa*, and executive secretary of the Committee of Food Habits of the National Research Council during World War II, focused on the interconnectedness of all human life and the interdependence of food, ritual, and beliefs. Her work in these areas is best exemplified in the hallmark of Samoan cuisine: community. Extended families congregate for an *umu* feast for holidays or life events, where pork is ritually cooked in the *umu*, the fire pit, perhaps along with seafood and root vegetables. Coconuts are bountiful, and the coconut milk is often used in food preparation. Accompanying the pork and vegetables might be *alaisa fa'apopo* (Samoan-style coconut rice), or *fa'apapa* (baked coconut bread), or one can top baked coconut bread with *fa'ausi* for coconut caramel smothered *fa'apapa*. Of course, one should try *panipopo*—Samoan sweet coconut buns, and for dessert, *pisua*, tapioca in coconut caramel.

Samoans use bananas in multitudes of sweet treats. *Sua'fa'i*, banana soup, is a dessert or breakfast soup, made from boiling very ripe bananas and adding coconut milk, sugar, and tapioca, which locals enjoy hot or cold. Samoans are famous for *poi* (Samoan banana pudding) and *keke fa'i* (banana cake).

The Pacific Islands grow some of the rarest cocoa in the world. In Samoa, the Criollo and Trinitario cocoas are so important that the plants and crops have been protected by law since 1961, with statutes also prohibiting the import of all fresh cocoa products. It should come as no surprise, then, that *koko* Samoa—Samoan cocoa—is the comfort drink of choice for Samoans of every age. The cocoa product itself comes in a hard block, with coarse chunks of cocoa bean still visible. Samoans grate the cocoa, or scrape it off the chunk, add it to boiling water, simmer the drink for about 15 minutes to release the flavors, and finally sweeten it with sugar, and milk, if desired. *Koko* Samoa must be served hot, because as the *koko* cools, little chunks of *koko* fat appear on the surface. The ground *koko* is coarse, and some Samoans strain the beverage through their teeth as they drink, while others enjoy drinking the grounds; mostly everyone checks his or her teeth for *koko* grounds before he or she smiles from the pure pleasure of the beverage.

Tahiti was relatively unknown to most in the late 19th century—except perhaps through Captain Bligh of *Mutiny on the Bounty* fame who arrived in Tahiti in the late 18th century, and the artist Paul Gauguin, who captured the beauty of the Maohi and their country in his primitive style paintings of the late 19th century. Today, French Polynesians honor the heritage and traditions of their Maohi ancestors. Oral history tells of gods and warriors in a dramatic past, where the gods threw javelins for sport, the kings rode the surf, and Aito men showed their muscle power by competing in outrigger canoe races and stone lifting. Nowadays, these events are reenacted for visitors from all over the globe, and, in doing so, the culture and heritage are preserved and passed to the younger generations. Like Samoa and Papua New Guinea, Tahiti is lush with a variety of locally grown produce, most

notably, bananas, coconuts, pineapples, and vanilla. And as in Samoa and Papua New Guinea, tourists and other interested foodies are fascinated by their traditional food, food production, food preparation, feasts, and rituals.

Traditional Tahitian vanilla, for example, is known throughout the Western world as a vanilla of choice. Williams Sonoma retailers sell ground Tahitian vanilla bean, 1.9 ounces for \$11.95—or more than \$100 per pound—and King Arthur’s Flour sells Tahitian Vanilla Extract—4 ounces for \$16.95—close to \$550 per gallon!

Po’e is a popular fruit pudding found at all traditional Tahitian *tamara’a*, barbecue feasts. Traditionally, banana, brown sugar, coconut milk, and vanilla-flavored pudding was wrapped in banana leaves and baked in the fire pit. Tahitians eat *firi firi* for breakfast or as dessert. *Firi firi* are similar to fried, sugar-covered donuts, except they are long rather than round, and are made with coconut milk.

Breadfruit, a popular Tahitian staple, must be cooked before it can be eaten. Fried, roasted, or cooked in an earthen oven with hot stones, the fruit frequently described as the size of a man’s head can be eaten as either savory or sweet. As a sweet pudding, breadfruit is embellished with sugar, milk, and treacle. Breadfruit’s starchy qualities also make it useful as a thickening agent for puddings and porridges, which are often folded in banana leaves and roasted.

Better than images of women in rhythmically swaying grass skirts ever did, sweet treats in the Pacific Islands reflect the islands themselves—lush, fresh, fruit-filled, coconut- and banana-laden delights.

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Pakistan

Pakistani cuisine is Muslim culinary culture, and it bears influences from its Muslim neighbors of Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq, as well as its Hindu neighbor, India. In 1947, the British colonialists divided the Indian subcontinent into largely Muslim Pakistan and primarily Hindu India. Since that time, the fate of Kashmir has been in dispute over which country has legitimate claims to it. Political and religious strife continues within and between the two Asian countries.

Pakistan is home to multiple ethnic groups; among them are mostly Punjabi and Pashtun, with one major language, Punjabi, and numerous minor languages. Pakistan is 96 percent Muslim, and of the Muslims, 85–90 percent are Sunni. Only 3 percent of the population is Hindu or Christian, so the dietary preferences of the Muslim citizens dictate the culinary customs and culture of the country.

Desserts are not standard fare in the Pakistani menu. In most homes, the host will serve fresh fruits such as mangoes, or *kheer* (rice pudding) with fruits, especially if there is a guest at the table. Many of the sweets, treats, and desserts are centered on the Muslim holiday and holy day meals. Ramadan occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the month of fasting, when the faithful take neither food nor water between dawn and dusk. *Suher*, the pre-dawn meal each day during Ramadan, consists of a hot grain cereal, often eaten with dates or bananas, foods that Ramadan participants believe will delay the feeling of hunger longer than other cereals and fruits. Following sunset, the Muslims break fast with the traditional ceremonial *Iftar*—a sip of water, eating of dates, and perhaps another piece of fruit, after which those participating in the fast enjoy a large meaty meal, along with other sweets. The sight of the new moon at the end of the month-long Ramadan fasting period signals the start of *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival. Sweet dishes *kheer*, *sewian*, and *korma* enhance the festivities.

Kheer is a sweet rice pudding relished throughout the Indian subcontinent, and Pakistanis are among the many who enjoy it. Locals make *kheer* in many different ways, with many different delicate flavorings, but the main ingredients are milk, rice, and sugar. *Kheer* is one of the oldest sweets on record; evidence suggests that Indians were enjoying *kheer* more than 2,000 years ago.

Sewian, similar to *kheer*, contains fine pasta, vermicelli, instead of rice. The cook quickly tosses the cooked vermicelli in hot *ghee* or oil, and then simmers it with milk and sugar, and seasons the pudding with rose water or cardamom. (*Ghee* is “clarified butter.” When preparing *ghee*, butter is cooked until the fatty solids can be removed by skimming them off; *ghee* has a lovely, nutty, flavor, and it does not burn at high cooking temperatures. *Ghee* can also be stored easily at room temperature for months.) The cook garnishes the *sewian* with shredded almonds or pistachios. *Korma* is a sweet, cream-based aromatic sauce that ordinarily embellishes meat or vegetables, but on special occasions like *Eid al-Fitr*, *korma* consists of dried fruits and nuts smothered in the rich cream sauce.

Pakistanis regularly enjoy several sweet beverages. They consume tea throughout the day, and prefer it sweetened, boiled with milk, and flavored with cinnamon or cardamom. (It is one of the sweet, aromatic, made-with-milk teas from which American-style chai evolved.) A “sweet *lassi*” is a popular, refreshing, light summer drink—a blend of yoghurt and fruits, very often mango. During the hot, summer months, *nimbu paani* satisfies thirsty Pakistanis. It is a refreshing combination

of lime juice, sugar, salt, soda water, and ice. Energizing sugarcane juice, called *roh*, typically sold by street vendors, carries the label of the Pakistani national drink. It is “made to order” for each customer because the juice oxidizes and turns black very quickly.

The Pakistanis savor sweets; they enjoy their puddings all day long, at holidays, and at all of life’s major events. Most Pakistanis do not eat great amounts of fruits because, in many regions, fruits are expensive. *Halva* is a favorite sweet, most often made from carrots or nuts. (*Halva*, in Pakistan, translates to “sweet.”)

There are myriad variations of *halva* in Pakistan, all sweet and delicious, and gently flavored with saffron, rose water, or cardamom. The Pakistanis make the dense, sweet confection with finely grated carrots, almonds, pistachios, semolina, or cooked *dal* (lentils), all gently sweetened, mixed with *ghee* or milk, usually on a stovetop, then left to cool and solidify. *Halva* is the quintessential Pakistani treat: it is delicate, aromatic, nutritious, ceremonial, and is made with accessible and affordable ingredients. The Pakistanis usually cut *halva* into small, diamond-shaped, elegant pieces.

Jaggery is pure, unrefined sugar, usually in the form of a hard chunk or block that is rich with nutrients, minerals, and vitamins. *Jaggery* is a rough, raw, and delicious alternative to refined sugar. To use it in cooking, it must be soaked, crumbled, grated, or chopped. Many Pakistani recipes use *jaggery* as an ingredient, which imparts not only sweetness and nutrients but also beautiful amber-orange color. *Gur walay chawal* is a lovely-to-look-at, sweet, golden rice dish that could be called “*jaggery* rice.” *Jaggery* burns quickly, so some skill is required in melting the *jaggery* (if that is the chosen method of incorporating it into the recipe), cooking the rice, blending the ingredients together, and adding garnishes of fruits and nuts.

Most Pakistani weddings are four-day Muslim ceremonies that unite the families of the bride and groom. They are ceremonies laden with ritual and celebratory foods. Some say that the success of a Pakistani wedding depends on the quality of the food; it is culturally important to present an impressive buffet for the guests. *Gajar halva* (carrot *halva*) is a traditional wedding sweet, as is *rosmalai*, which are sweet creamy soft cheese dumplings in an aromatic cream sauce, *kheer*, and *zarda*, a sweet rice dish with raisins, nuts, and aromatic flavors, including cardamom and orange zest. Of course, all these sweets have family, ethnic, and regional variations.

Rich in flavor and vibrant in color, Pakistani cuisine is fresh, made with local ingredients and nearly all Pakistanis eat their meals with time-honored Muslim traditions of abstinence from pork and alcohol, and following *halal* guidelines. The Pakistani table welcomes guests with light, delicate, flavorful, and delicious sweets. They are memorable treats that bring centuries of history and culture to the table.

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Peru

Both the ancient Incas and modern-day Peruvians are well known for their potato dishes as southern Peru is the original home of the potato, now sprouting in over 4,000 types. One staple potato-like tuber still grown high in the Andes, primarily for home consumption by Quechua and Aymara descendants of the Inca, is sweet *oca*, a prized tuber that gets its name from the Quecha language. Traditional Andean preparation methods expose *oca* to the sunlight in a manner that reduces the acid content of these tubers to the point where they are served as a sweet. “Like many other Peruvian roots they come in two classes: the sweet, which may be eaten raw, cooked, or sun-dried and made into *causi*, which is described as tasting like dried figs and was used as a sweetener before cane sugar was available; and the bitter, which is freeze-dried and made into a storable product called *ckaya*” (Coe 1994). In the Quechua language, the *oca* are still known as *wayk’u* (boiling) and *miki’i* (sweet/delicious), and they differ genetically as well as linguistically. “Sweet *oca*” is a use-category, and constitutes the most-favored type, but the two kinds of *oca* do also form distinct genetic clusters. *Oca* was so important that Inca law regulated its planting, storage, distribution, and “how they should be treated” (Coe 1994). Whether the devoted caretaking was in part related to the fact that Inca considered *oca* an aphrodisiac is unknown. While sweet *oca* is primarily grown today for family use, restaurants now feature sweet *oca* mash as part of *cocina novoandina*, the nouveau Andean cuisine. *Oca* is being touted today as a symbolically important part of *cocina novoandina*, which also makes use of Amazonian fruits and other traditional sweet roots.

The Inca traditionally also ate the sweet roots of *achira*, another staple crop, especially at a winter solstice festival honoring the sun god held in their capital of Cuzco. The Festival of the Sun, *Inti Raymi*, is today the second largest festival in South America, and at the great new year festival Peruvians still share and eat the sweet *achira*.

Ancient Inca and modern-day Peruvians, of course, also used honey and ripe fruits *as* and *in* sweet treats. Today, for example, the sweet native fruit *lucuma* is one of the most popular ice-cream flavors. Inca mainly used *lucuma*, papaya, plums, cucumbers, avocados, and *caimitos*, the “star apple.” In addition, they

had a local sweet tasting fruit, *pacay* (*guamas*), a large bean-pod like fruit now known also as “ice-cream bean” due to its refreshing sweet flavor and sugar-rich smooth-textured pulp. *Pacay* and *lucuma* were so important to the ancient Peruvians that they depicted them in their ceramics. So valued were the *pacay* that the Inca emperor sent a basketful of *pacay* along with gold and silver to Francisco Pizarro as a gift. Today, the Peruvians continue their love of the traditional fruits—especially *cherimoya*, *lucuma*, and *maracuyá* (passion fruit)—and in addition, principally enjoy grapes, oranges, bananas, lemons, limes, pineapple, cherries, and raisins.

The first cane sugar was grown in the 1570s, but early on Peruvian mills were not particularly productive and that set the stage for the development of post-contact Peruvian sweet treats along a different path than those of its South and Middle American neighbors, a path more influenced by European and African sweet treats:

It is certain that little sugar was grown in Peru and that it was imported from Mexico, though this situation would change later. This gave rise to the tradition of making sweet puddings in Lima, centered on the many convents that had been built in the capital. They were responsible for the delicious sugared almonds and hazelnuts, marzipan, sweet cakes, *sango*, *cicadas*, *ranfañote*, *mazamorra* and *alfajores*. The *alfajor* [*sic.*] is worth a special mention as an Arab-influenced Spanish tradition that has survived to the present day. (*Perú mucho gusto* 2009)

Today, as in colonial times, sisters in convents continue to prepare many deserts and sweet treats, such as the now-classic *suspiro de Limeña* (“sigh of a Lima woman”)—a rich, sweet, creamy, cinnamon-flavored Peruvian caramel meringue parfait-like dessert, made with an egg-yolk enriched caramel sauce called *manjar blanco* (*dulce de leche* in other parts of South America), topped with a light but stiff sweet meringue made with port wine.

In spite of the slow start with sugar production, colonialists eventually brought in African slaves to work on their coastal plantations. The Africans brought to the world of Peruvian sweet treats *humita*—fresh corn wrapped in husks with lard, sugar, cinnamon, and raisins, and boiled, steamed, or baked in *pachamancas* “earthen pot” hot-stone ovens. The famous *turrón de Doña Pepa*—a treat in part defining Lima’s identity, also said to be of Afro-Peruvian origin—is a sweet, sticky, layered anise-flavored delight soaked in brown sugar syrup, topped with honey, and decorated with multicolor candies. It is traditionally made with *chancaca*, a high-molasses-content raw cane sugar and honey syrup, but one can substitute brown sugar and molasses. In 19th century, this now-famous treat was known simply as “honey nougat” or “nougat of the Lord of Miracles,” the patron saint of the city of Lima.

Chapanas—a dessert made with sweet manioc (cassava) flour, molasses, and anise—and *picarones*—a distinctive donut-like deep-fried squash and sweet potato pastry covered with syrup of *chancaca*—also reflect Afro-Peruvian colonial traditions. *Picarones* initially were an inexpensive alternative to *buñuelos*. Another popular traditional Afro-Peruvian dessert from colonial times, *frejol colado*, Peruvian sweet beans, is a pudding-like combination of sweet Peruvian (*Peruano*) beans, milk, sugar, cloves, anise, and toasted sesame seeds.

From times long before the Spanish arrived and even before the Inca, people of the land of modern-day Peru drank *chica morada*, a sweet beverage usually made by boiling purple maize with pineapple and sugar, often with cinnamon and cloves. Today in the Andes, especially on market and festival days, vendors sell a shaved-ice treat called *shikashika*—named by the Quechua after the sound of a *raspador* shaving glacier ice in the high Andes. Brought down afoot with mules in large (ca. 90 pound) blocks, *shikashika* vendors here as in neighboring Bolivia shave the ice and sell it topped with colorful sweet syrups.

Why go through the bother?

“Ice from the mountain tastes sweeter,” proclaims the award-winning 2009 documentary *Shikashika* (2012). This sought-after sweeter-tasting special mountain water comes from the very same mountain where the son of the sun god, Manco Cápac, chose to build his city.

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The Philippines

Philippine food may not be the most famous food in the world, but with its cultural history, demographic diversity, and abundance of tropical fruits, the islands have developed a cuisine that extends far beyond eating fish and duck embryos. Philippine cuisine was initially rooted in Malayo-Polynesian and Chinese traditions, and

then beginning in the 16th century, over 300 years of Spanish rule brought a magnificent cultural influence to the traditional Philippine palate. Later, in 1898, after the Spanish-American War, the islands were ceded to the United States, and on July 4, 1946, the United States granted the Philippines independence. American and other Asian cuisines made their imprints on Philippine tastes, and today the Philippine Islands claim ownership of a multinational, international cuisine.

Through decades-long internal political and ethnic tensions, and recent political strains with China, the archipelago of over 7,000 islands in Southeastern Asia survives, and its citizens are proud of their cultural heritage. The Philippine Islands are mostly mountainous with coastal lowlands, subject to northeast and southwest monsoons. Slightly over one-fourth of the population is Tagalog, about one-fourth do not identify with any ethnicity, and the remaining residents are Cebuano, Ilocano, Bisaya/Binisaya, Hiligaynon Ilonggo, Bikol, and Waray. Over 80 percent of the population is Catholic, evidence of the Spanish missionary zeal, making Christmas, Easter, and saints' days widely celebrated public holidays.

Philippine cuisine is a combination of sweet, sour, and salty flavors. When dining with family and friends, Philippine people set the table with all the courses—from the “appetizers” to the “desserts”—and serving all menu items simultaneously allows for casual anticipatory visual, gastronomical, and aromatic pleasure of the meal. Counterpoint is embedded in the culinary culture—the Filipinos are masters at pairing seemingly contradictory flavors; they combine them in ways different from the American palate. They embellish chocolate-flavored “glutinous” (sticky rice, but not high in gluten) rice porridge with *tuyo* (dried, smoked fish), for example, in a dish called *chamorado*; and they dip slightly sour unripe fruits in salt. Typically, a Filipino might enjoy three meals and two snacks a day. Dinner is usually light, but still is the main meal. Breakfast or lunch is the larger meal, and the snacks are often rice cakes or fruits.

Rice centers Philippine cuisine. For sweets, the rice of choice is *malagkit*, the rice described as sticky or glutinous rice. Filipinos also pound immature rice into a powder to make *pinipig*, rice flour they use in baking, or for sprinkling on hot chocolate or other drinks for added refreshment. As for mature rice, they soak it for several hours, then grind it into “wet” flour, *galapong*, and use it for making rice cakes.

Glutinous Rice

There is no gluten in rice. To describe rice as “glutinous” is misleading. “Sticky” is probably a better way to describe the rice that has different proportions of starch compared to other long-grained rice. “Sticky” rice is more frequently used in puddings and desserts.

Coconut is fundamental to Filipino cooking, baking, and sweet treats. Filipino cooks use every bit of the coconut: they cook the pith and blossoms as vegetables. They collect sap from the trees and make it into vinegar or distill it into *lambanog*, an alcoholic, coconut brandy. They add the flesh of the tender coconut to water for a flavorful drink, and when the coconut is a bit more mature, they use the flesh in making sweets or pies. They also grate and squeeze mature flesh to release coconut milk to use in cooking. The leaves of the coconut tree often wrap rice cakes. Throughout the islands Filipinos often consume coconut water from the inside of immature coconuts—not to be confused with the mildly sweet coconut milk or cream pressed from the grated meat of the coconut—as a refreshing thirst quencher known as *buko* juice. And then there is coconut jam, or “coco jam,” a delicious confection made from simmering coconut milk and brown sugar until appropriately thick; when spread on toast with a runny egg, it becomes the ultimate sweet comfort food.

The Filipinos’ fondness for sweet treats is evident in their love of rice cakes. *Kakanin* is a generic term for the popular rice cakes, served in a variety of ways, but are usually made with coconut milk. Traditionally, Filipinos enjoy the rice cakes as a fourth or fifth meal of the day, or as mid-morning or mid-afternoon snacks. These snack times are called *merienda*; the *merienda* treats for both children and adults are traditionally presented on a tea trolley.

Puto is the term that describes all rice cakes made from *galapong*, the ground, wet, rice flour; and all varieties of *puto* are steamed. Each village, town, bakeshop, and family has a favorite *puto*. In the town of Valenzuela, for example, on the November 12, Feast Day of San Diego Alcala, locals celebrate the famous *putong* Polo, which was originally created in the *barangay* (*barrio*) of Polo in Valenzuela. *Putong* Polo is smaller than most *puto*, and on the feast day, a thousand pieces are brought to the nearly 380-year-old Church of San Diego Alcala for a blessing, after which the delicacies are distributed to the participants of the early morning church service. Other variations of *puto* appear in Manapla, famous for its anise-flavored *puto*, where Malolos proudly steam their *puto* in banana leaves.

Puto bumbong is a traditional Christmas treat—steamed sticky rice (*puto*) cooked in bamboo (*bumbong*). After *simbang gabi*, the Christmas Eve Mass, the prayerful participants queue up at their favorite stalls outside the church just to have a taste of this purple-colored delicacy. The distinctive purple rice called *pirurutong* is prepared by mixing sticky rice and black/purple rice grains, which are soaked, pounded, and ground into *galapong* and then steamed in bamboo shoots, removed, and topped with butter, sugar, and coconut.

A popular afternoon snack is *puto maya*, a rice cake named after the native *maya* bird. *Puto maya* is not officially a *puto*, since it is not made with *galapong*; *puto maya* is a *suman*. And the rice “cake” is not a cake in the American definition, as it has no leavening agent. *Suman* is a pudding that solidifies as it cools, and is

served on a plate or in a bowl, or the mixture is put in a mold or rolled in a banana leaf. There are many variations of *suman*, but basic ingredients include sweet rice, coconut milk or cream, desiccated coconut, and sugar. The rice grains cook in the milk until done, and then they are sprinkled with the coconut and sugar, or other favorite garnishes. Filipinos literally use rice in *puto* and *suman* in dozens of ways.

Other popular rice-based sweet treats include *biko*, a sweet sticky rice dish, and *cuchinta*, a sticky dessert made with rice flour, brown sugar, and lye water, and often served with coconut. *Bibingka* is a coconut rice flour dessert baked in banana leaves, and sometimes topped with *pinipig* or salted duck eggs, also popular in the stalls outside the church after Christmas Eve Mass. *Sapin-sapin* is a red-, white-, and purple-layered sticky rice and coconut dessert made with sticky rice flour. Purple yams and annatto water (red coloring made from crushing annatto seeds) color two of the three *sapin* (layers). Obviously, rice or rice flour is the signature ingredient in each of these delicious sweet treats.

Filipinos universally enjoy their popular *halo-halo* sweet. The colorful fruit concoction, typically served in a tall clear glass dish, is a mixture of nearly every Philippine sweet you can imagine: canned or cooked kidney or garbanzo beans (the only “not sweet” ingredient), coconut flesh, jackfruit, *pinipig*, sweet yam, *flan*, banana, crushed ice, coconut milk or evaporated milk, and all topped with ice cream! Of course, there are many variations of the ingredients, but overall, *halo-halo* is an unusual combination of ingredients, resulting in an unusually spectacular treat.



Filipinos universally enjoy their popular *halo-halo*, a colorful mixture of varied fruits and boiled sweet beans, typically served in a tall clear glass with shaved ice and coconut milk or evaporated milk. (Seanjeeves/Dreamstime.com)

Mangoes and lychees are popular fruits in the Philippines, as are durians (the offensive smelling fruit with the delicious taste), pineapples, and citrus fruits. The most popular and the most used Philippine fruit is the banana. The Philippines are the fifth largest banana producers in the world. The luxury banana, rare in the United States, but abundant in the Philippines, is the Lacatan banana, known for its chubby, stubby appearance, and extraordinary

creamy yellow color, luscious taste, and intense flavor. Many consider the Lacatan bananas the best in the world, and some say, once you have tasted one, you will never again enjoy a Cavendish, the bananas exported from the Philippines to the United States, the “commercial banana” most of the world eats. Perhaps that is why the Filipinos keep the Lacatan bananas for themselves.

With over 7,000 islands, over 170 living languages, and probably more influenced by the West than other Asian cuisines, the Philippine Islands can rightfully boast about their culinary history and cuisine. Fresh, local, and distinctive foods, drinks, and counterpoints harmonize with culinary influences from China, Spain, Mexico, the United States, and, nowadays, from all over the world. The sweet treats and other foods in the Philippines today reflect the history and cultures of the indigenous people as well as those who came to the islands from abroad, and stayed. Perhaps the multiple colors, textures, and flavors of *halo-halo* are a metaphor for the multiple cultures and tastes that identify the diverse, modern, Philippine cuisine.

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Poland

Polish food is considered comfort food. The cuisine is an amalgamation of cooking traditions from its history and from its neighbors. Polish food has earned its reputation for being delicious, satisfying, creative, and interesting. It is neither bland nor highly spiced; menu items are prepared with fastidious, practiced, detail, or are casually combined into a one-dish meal, honoring one rule: the ingredients must be flavorful, fresh, and wholesome.

Early Polish food was simple and straightforward, and producing local, fresh ingredients depended primarily on the fertile soil and the favorable climate. Later, trade routes, invasions, boundary changes, wars, and religion brought more variety to food choices and tastes. In the 14th century, large number of Jews immigrated to Poland, and the richness of Jewish cooking blended with Polish cuisine. Poland rests between Western Europe and Russia, so it is not surprising that the general culinary tastes also reflect the love of pork, sausages, sauerkraut, and sour cream. Poles enjoy sweets that reflect Austrian and Czech influence—strudels, sweet

breads, and *serniks* (cheesecakes). Regional homogeneity in cooking is evident in the similarity of old Polish “cookery” books. The first known printed Polish Cookbook was the 1682 *Compendium Ferculorum albo zebranie potraw* (*Compendium Ferculorum, or a Collection of Dishes and Recipes*) by Stanislaw Czerniecki. A century later, Wojciech Wieladko published *Kucharz Doskonaly* (*Excellent Cook*). It was, and continues to be, a book so popular that it has been reprinted, probably not for use, but for nostalgia. Such cookbooks give evidence that centuries ago, Poles recognized the importance of recording cooking ingredients and processes.

In addition to the regional and Jewish contributions to Polish cuisine, the Italians left their imprint. When Italian royal Bona Sforza married Sigismund I of Poland in 1518, she, like the Italian noblewoman Catherine de’ Medici in France, brought her Italian cooks and gardeners to her Polish residence. The primary legacy of her Italian chefs and gardeners was, unbelievably, salad greens and vegetables not commonly grown in Poland. The foreign chefs also imported eastern and southern European fruits, citrus fruits, pomegranates, figs, raisins, and almonds, cane sugar, and, of course, olive oil, not to mention assorted herbs and spices.

Across Poland a way of eating exists that has vanished in much of the supermarket-cluttered West, but one which is being reborn in areas where people care about how their food is produced and what is in it. Skills such as making *potica*, stringing mushrooms for drying, making sauerkraut, pickles, and jellies and jams from fresh fruits were passed down from generation to generation in Poland and now live in modern kitchens—practices born out of economic hardship, but sustained because of appreciation for quality local produce and important history. Polish cuisine has a history of change and adaptation. From the chefs imported by its queens to fuzzy culinary borders with its neighboring countries to a history of geographical, migratory, and political changes, it is no surprise that today Polish cuisine embraces the best of the past and the opportunities of the present. Poles continue to use honey, raisins, and poppy seeds liberally. They also season with cloves, nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, saffron, and caraway.

More recently, the Slow Food movement has revitalized the production of traditional food, from cheeses to several varieties of honey. Honey has a centuries-old reputation in Poland. As far back as AD 900, a Polish prince maintained his own apiary. From the honey, he made mead. Beekeepers, at that time, were common in all social classes in Poland, and the ruling classes assessed taxes of honey and beeswax on the beekeepers. Historical records suggest that by the end of the first millennium, beekeeping was a thriving industry in Poland. Bees were sacred and were considered good luck; they were talismans, and symbols of love, virginity, and other virtues. There is an old legend about a vacancy for a Polish crown prince (apparently, the lines of inheritance for heirs were empty), and someone named Michael Wiscionsky was the chosen candidate to fill the vacancy. Why? Because a swarm of bees settled on him during the selection process (history

also suggests he was not an outstanding leader nor was he remembered for much of anything but the bee story). The bees have such significance in Poland that a bee made of diamonds remains in the crown of the kings, its presence officially extolling the virtues of the bees.

Many Poles traditionally kept their own hives—for honey, for beeswax, for medicinal use, for pollination of their fruits, and for honey cakes. Honey cakes were one of Poland's first, and most loved, sweet treats, and remain so today. Originally, in ancient Greece and Rome, honey cakes contained honey and wheat, which were set aside for weeks to ferment and rise. Today, there are many variations of Polish honey cake. Polish bakers make the cakes with different flavored honeys, and sometimes they add breadcrumbs or whole eggs to the mixture, while at other times they beat the egg whites and fold them into the mixture separately. Originally, buckwheat, cultivated in Eastern Europe since the Middle Ages, was the main ingredient. While variations in size and shape are many, honey cake has endured the ages. Poles enjoy the traditional round honey cake cut in wedges and served plain, with coffee, or dusted with powdered sugar or served with whipped cream for dessert.

Gingerbread is a spiced variation of the honey cake, known as *piernik*. The ancient Slavs (the first Poles) made the first local honey cakes. With access to leavening agents, the “hard” honey cakes evolved into “softer” cakes. Then easier access by the elite to spices such as cinnamon, ginger, cloves, cardamom, and nutmeg produced gingerbread, a symbol of prosperity and high social class, due to the high cost of spices. So, while the poor people ate honey cake, the privileged class enjoyed the gingerbread. Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), for example, was especially partial to the famed gingerbread (*piernik Toruński*) of the northern city of Toruń, a traditional legendary gingerbread that has been produced in that city since the Middle Ages, thanks in part to its well-known beekeeping traditions. Now, both honey cake and gingerbread are popular holiday treats, and *piernik Toruński* remains an icon of Poland's national cuisine, and praised in literature, poetry, and other fine arts. Toruń, also home of Nicolaus Copernicus, hosts a popular Gingerbread Festival (*Święto Piernika*) each year in June.

As Poland is 90 percent Roman Catholic, Christmas and Easter are special times when sweet treats are embedded into holiday rituals. One of many Christmas traditions is that on Christmas Day the house must be clean—very important, since a folkloric belief foretells that if the house is dirty at Christmas, it will be dirty the entire year. Today, families decorate their Christmas trees with many sweets, including apples, oranges, candies, and small chocolates wrapped in colorful paper, besides other ornaments. Traditionally, the decorative fruits during winter were dried fruits.

Makowiec is sweet yeast bread that embellishes Christmas celebrations in Poland. It is similar to German *stollen* and comparable sweet yeast breads, but the



The gingerbread of the northern city of Toruń (*piernik Toruński*) remains a popular holiday treat and an icon of Poland's national cuisine. (Mariusz Jurgielewicz/Dreamstime.com)

poppy seed filling imparts an entirely different flavor. Polish cuisine uses poppy seeds generously—they are used in sweet yeast *kolaczki* (similar to the Czech *koláče*), sprinkled on cookies and breads, or used in *kluski z makiem* (egg noodles tossed with sweetened, ground poppy seeds) for *Wigilia*, the traditional Christmas Eve meal.

Before *Wigilia*, no one eats a morsel of food before the breaking of the *oplatek*—unleavened unconsecrated wafers much like hosts used in the Catholic Mass. It is an old tradition that dates back to a time when persons gathered around the Christmas Eve fire and shared *podplomyk*, unleavened flat bread. It is symbolic of “breaking bread together,” or Holy Communion, to wish each other long, good, healthy lives, and a prosperous new year. Participation in breaking *oplatek* formally begins the Christmas Eve meal, the most important meal of the year, served on a white tablecloth lightly scattered with straw (reminiscent of the stable where Jesus was born), with an extra place setting (for those who were not able to share the dinner), but not until the first star appears in the nighttime sky.

The meatless meal includes *kutia Wigilijna*, a sweet wheat pudding that traditionally was typical in eastern Poland, but now is a signature first course of the Christmas Eve meal throughout the country. Similar to oatmeal, but taking much longer to cook, the wheat pudding contains poppy seeds, honey, sugar, dried fruits, and nuts.

After a few more vegetarian courses, the guests enjoy *kompot*, compote made from local fruits, dried for winter use. Ideally the compote contained 12 different dried fruits, each representing one of the Twelve Apostles. The *kompot* introduces other desserts, which include *makowiec*, a poppy seed roll; *babka rumowa*, a dense, buttery, rum-soaked cake, often baked in a mold; and *sernik*, a rich, Polish cheesecake made with local farmer's soft (ricotta-like) cheese and occasionally embellished with fresh fruits or whipped cream. After the meal, the participants sing Christmas carols and enjoy each others' company until it is time for Midnight Mass. Christmas Day includes a dinner, often a ham dinner, with all the accoutrements, including more traditional desserts and sweets: more poppy seed rolls, honey cakes, gingerbread cakes, and cookies.

The Lenten fast in anticipation of Easter begins on Ash Wednesday. The *piece de resistance* of indulgence for "Fat Tuesday," the last day before Lent, is *paczki*, which means "puffy." The fried hole-less donuts are similar to American-style bismarcks—fried confections with jelly or sweet cheese in the center. After indulging in *paczki*, most Polish Catholics take their 40-day Lenten fast very seriously, so it is no surprise that they hold nothing back for the Lent-ending Easter celebration that begins with Easter Morning Mass and breakfast, and usually continues through Easter Monday. The Easter lamb cake, representing the Lamb of God, is the centerpiece of the dinner. There is a smaller, companion cake to the lamb cake, which the churchgoers take to Holy Saturday evening services for the Easter blessing. *Babka*, made from a sweet yeast eggy dough, similar to Austrian *Kugelhopf* or the Balkan *cozonac*, is baked in a mold and then dusted with confectioners' sugar and is an Easter fixture. *Babka* is a term of endearment for "old woman," or "grandmother," with the cake named because of its resemblance to the full skirt or hair bun of an older woman.

Authors have written multitudes of books about Polish cuisine and traditions. People the world over enjoy the history, the comfort, and the pleasure of Polish sweet treats. When you sit down at a Polish meal, you will be welcomed, nourished physically and spiritually, and you will experience depths of hospitality that will never leave your memory.

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Portugal

Portuguese is a sweet language. To Miguel de Cervantes of *Don Quixote* fame Portuguese was “the sweet language.” When it comes to sweets in particular, *everyone* speaks Portuguese. From the Portuguese, through one route or another, we get words like *sugar*, *molasses*, *marmalade*, *caramel*; and sweet ingredients and toppings, like *cashew* and *coconut*; and sweet fruits like *banana*, *carambola* (“star fruit”), *guarana*, *mandarin*, *mango*, and *tapioca*. It was largely the Portuguese and Spanish who brought modern-day sweet treats to the known Western world of the 15th century, to the unknown peoples of the newly discovered pre-Columbian New World, and to us today.

At one time, the land on the Iberian Peninsula now known as Portugal was thought to be the end of the world, tucked between Spain to the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Infante Dom Henrique, known in recent centuries to English-speaking people as “Prince Henry the Navigator,” grew up at this edge of the world. Dom Henrique himself was an important early investor in Portuguese sugar plantations and helped spread the plantation system of cane sugar production to the nearby Atlantic islands, thereby greatly influencing the spread of the plantation system of sugar production to the New World, a system profoundly affecting both the historic development of the New World and the sweet treats we eat today. In 1425, he planted sugarcane on the island of Madeira, introducing it from Sicily, where it was known as early as the 10th century. Dom Henrique was a partner in the building of the first recorded sugar mill in Madeira in 1452, expanding it in 1455, resulting in sugar becoming the main export of Madeira, and Madeira becoming the leading supplier of sugar to Europe after about 1450 (Mintz 1986).

The Genoa-born sugar merchant Christopher Columbus brought sugar to the New World, from the Canary Islands, on his second voyage in 1493. Patterning their production methods after sugar production in the eastern Mediterranean islands, it was the Portuguese, more than anyone else, who dominated early 16th-century New World sugar production. By the end of the 16th century, the capital city of Lisbon, Portugal—formerly thought to be at the very end of the world—had become the

very center of the spice/sugar trade, eclipsing Venice as the most important spice/sugar trading city in Europe.

Today, Portuguese enjoy a number of commonly eaten sweet treats, and notable among them are favorites that date to earlier times. These include *churros* (fried pastry fritters), *pão-de-ló* (sponge cake), and honey-based sweets. The first printed cookbook in Portugal was Domingos Rodrigues's *Arte de Cozhina* (*Kitchen Arts*), published in 1680, and reprinted in later editions from 1758 to 2010, including a popular and influential 1763 Spanish edition, *Arte de Cocina*. *Arte de Cozhina* contains a recipe for *fruta de siringalcinga* ("syringed fritters"), now known throughout the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking worlds basically as the popular *churros*, which are extruded and usually star-shaped sweet fried pastry fritters. Some say the Portuguese brought the *churros* to much of Europe following their travels to China and the Far East, while others suggest that Spanish shepherds are responsible for the invention with the name taken from the shape of the horns of their Churro breed of sheep. Either way, eaten plain, sprinkled or dusted with sugar, or eaten with chocolate, *churros* are a popular breakfast, dessert, and snack treat throughout the Iberian Peninsula, and increasingly throughout the world. In some countries, like Portuguese-colonized Brazil, they are filled with chocolate, sweet fruit, or *dulce de leche*. Wherever eaten, they are best when eaten hot.

Arte de Cozhina also contains a recipe for *paõ de ló amendoas*—modern-day *pão-de-ló*, Portuguese sponge cake popular throughout Portugal, especially in the Algarve region where it reflects the historic Arab influence—being served with almonds and marzipan. Southern Portuguese, by virtue of the local climate and topography, cook with ingredients more akin to the Mediterranean proper. Southern Portugal is also an area more directly and strongly influenced by the long Moorish rule in the Al-Andalusia (Andalusia) region of which it was a part. Here, for example, one finds the famous Portuguese Moorish-introduced sweet treats with dates, almonds, figs, and honey (Mac Veigh 2009). The sponge cake featured in *Arte de Cozhina* is thought to have been brought to Portugal in 1662 by Lady Ann Fanshawe, known for her important collection of recipes from England's Stuart period. This later became best known to the world as Victoria sponge.

And, of course, from ancient times, honey-based sweet treats have been a Portuguese favorite, in Andalusia and elsewhere, for example, the sugar-rich Islands of Madeira and Porto Santo, home of Christopher Columbus and his wife Filipa Moniz Perestrelo, and home of Portugal's sugar industry. Popular in Madeira, and considered to be its oldest dessert, *bolo de mel*, Madeira honey cake, is enjoyed especially during the Christmas holidays. Not surprisingly, the cake was traditionally made with molasses, a by-product of cane sugar production, but in a reversal of worldwide trends, it is, surprisingly, now made with honey. When made with molasses, the cake has a very dark, almost black, appearance, with the spongy but

sticky texture of a soft cookie. And in true Arab style, the cake also often contains almonds. No doubt little Diego Columbus enjoyed *bolo de mel* with Grandpa Perestrelo, and his mom and dad, Christopher Columbus and Filipa Moniz Perestrelo, especially since in Madeira it is traditional not to cut the cake but to tear off bits with one's fingers.

Vasco da Gama, about 10 years older than Diego Columbus, also likely enjoyed honey cake. The tomb of Vasco da Gama lies in the *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos* in the Lisbon parish of Belém, adjoining a Portuguese national place of pilgrimage—the pastry shop *Antiga Confeitaria de Belém*, established in 1837, “home to what is arguably the Holy Grail of Portuguese sweets: *pastéis de Belém*, the recipe for which has been a secret for centuries” (Leite 2004). “Until the 19th century, monasteries were Portugal's . . . confectionary epicenters,” explains the award-winning food writer David Leite (2004). Only three people in the world know the recipe for the famous centuries-old *pastéis de Belém* sweet treats, a puff pastry containing “a luscious, warm custard” made under tight security. “Generic, and often anemic, imitations can be had elsewhere under the name *pastéis de nata*, custard pastries,” affirms Leite. And that they can! The Portuguese in fact consider the *pastéis de nata*, “the little puff pastry tarts filled with an egg-yolk-rich custard,” their national sweet treat (Kronrdl 2011). *Pastéis de nata* are the “archetypal Portuguese pastry.” While only three persons in the world know the famed secret and closely guarded *pastéis de Belém* recipe, versions of the *pastéis de nata* recipe appear as early as 1680 in the cookbook *Arte de Cozinha* mentioned earlier. Michael Kronrdl, the award-winning author of *Sweet Invention* and *Taste of Conquest* hastens to add “which probably means they were around much earlier. They seemed to have been a popular export too, finding their way to Macau, Goa, Angola and Brazil and other spots where the Portuguese raised their flag. From Macau the little tarts were adopted by Cantonese bakers under the name *dan tat*” (Kronrdl 2011). *Dan tat*—egg tart—has circled and conquered the sweet treats world, ending up No. 16 on CNN's “World's 50 Most Delicious Foods” list.

The Moors introduced these egg-based sweets to Portugal, establishing modern-day taste preferences for rich, sweet, eggy desserts. Portuguese sweet treats are renowned for their use of egg yolks, butter, cinnamon, chocolate, dried figs, quince, almonds, and of course, honey and sugar. *Ovos moles* (“soft eggs”), for example—a local delicacy from Aveiro on the coast—is made of *only* egg yolks and sugar. Some cakes are made with almonds, eggs, and little or *no* flour. *Porto pudim flan* contains only heavy cream, milk, egg yolks, sugar—but they also add a little Madeira fortified port wine from the Madeira Islands for flavor.

Nuns, in the 17th- and 18th-century “confectionary epicenters,” originally made many of Portugal's typical pastries in convents and monasteries. In medieval times, the religious orders produced eggs to clarify wines, such as the *Porto* they put in the *Porto pudim flan*, and they used the leftover egg yolks in their sweet treat recipes.

Many believe the original now iconic “Holy Grail of Portuguese sweets,” *pastéis de Belém*, for example, were first baked 200 years ago by nuns at the *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos*, where Vasco da Gama awaits the Second Coming (Martinez-Carter 2012).

With the monastery and convent sweet treats came the curious sweet treat names for which the Portuguese have also become famous:

angel’s double-chin	(<i>papo de anjo</i>)
nuns’ tummies	(<i>barrigas de freiras</i>)
nuns’ kisses	(<i>beijos de freiras</i>)
nun’s sighs	(<i>suspiros de monja</i>)
abbot’s ears	(<i>orelhas de abade</i>)
seraphim cream	(<i>creme de seraphim</i>)
bacon from heaven	(<i>toucinho do céu</i>)
cheese from heaven	(<i>quejinhos do céu</i>).
mother-in-law’s eyes	(<i>olhos de sogra</i>)

(Barnette 2005; Krondl 2012; Portuguese cuisine 2012)

These sweet treats are Portuguese counterparts to “angel cake,” “angel food cake,” “devil’s food cake,” and the like. Whatever they are called, in whatever language, Portuguese sweet treats remain as popular today as they were when folks were enjoying them at the very edge of the known world.

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R

Romania

Tourists traveling to Romania usually do not go for the cuisine, but when they leave, their travel memories most often highlight the delicious, beautiful, and fragrant Romanian foods. Romanians love to roast, cook, and bake. The holiday feasts, the life rituals, or simply having company all are important occasions to celebrate with food and friends.

Traditionally, Romanian meals were substantial—with meat and vegetables, and plenty of fat to sustain long hours of physical labor. The beef, pork, or chicken meals began in the backyards where the animals were raised. Nowadays, fewer people regularly eat large amounts of meat, but traditional meals are still copiously prepared and carefully served, with as many courses as practical.

The evolution of Romanian cuisine dates back to the second century, when the predecessors of the Romanians, the Dacians, inhabited the region. Their diet was simple—they ate meat, including fowl; enjoyed honey as a sweetener; drank wine; and enjoyed grapes, apples, and pears for lighter fare. Although the Dacians raised sheep and cows, their dairy intake was mostly limited to raw milk, which meant that there were few cheeses, yoghurts, or butters to enjoy alone or with their other simple foods.

When the Romans occupied what is now Romania (hence, the name and Romance language), the cuisine expanded to include soups (broths), breads, and olive oil. Living under the threat of invasions, the Romanians often ate what could be quickly prepared and could be eaten on the move—vegetables, whatever fruits were available in season, and dried meats. As the centuries moved on, the soups were improved by adding meat, vegetables, and herbs to the broth, and the two-pronged fork made its way from Venice to the homes of Romanian diplomats. Not much changed until the 13th century, when the Mongols invaded the region. The Mongols killed tens of thousands of Romanians, burned villages, pillaged crops, and destroyed records. This period, indeed, was dark, but the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia eventually emerged as strong territories. The 14th century brought the Ottomans, with their legendary repertoire of sweet treats along with their political rule. From the 16th to the early 19th century, Slav, Greek, Armenian, Hungarian, and Arab influences expanded the range of Romanian cuisine. In 1856, the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, for centuries under the control of the Ottoman Turks, secured their independence, and, in 1918, Transylvania

became part of Romania. The road to independence continued to have challenges; the Russian Communist takeover and decades of the Nicolae Ceausescu rule left many Romanians in extreme poverty. Romania joined the European Union in 2007. Today, the culinary influences of its neighbors, conquerors, and invaders amalgamate into contemporary Romanian cuisine—a cuisine which, born from the need to be practical, affordable, and adaptable, has earned a reputation for being colorful, flavorful, and delicious.

Life continues to be difficult for many Romanians, but they are able to produce most of their food locally and make sweet treats from simple ingredients—usually eggs, milk, butter, and sugar. They also produce some delicious soft cheeses from cow or ewe’s milk, such as their traditional fresh white *urdă*, a cheese of ancient Romanian shepherd origin.

About the middle of the 19th century, children of rank and royalty went to Paris for education and training in “proper” behavior; when they returned to Romania, there was additional French inspiration on the Romanian cuisine. Bucharest became known as “Little Paris,” with the influx of French chefs, coffeehouses, and pastries. The “coffee culture” continued to develop and called for more sweets.

The Romanian sweets are, without question, sweet, and if they are not, the toppings and garnishes are sweet—the perfect complements to strong coffee. The versatile, thin, *clătite* (crêpes), for example—similar to other central European pancakes—are made from milk, eggs, a bit of sugar, and a touch of butter. *Clătite* are not excessively sweet (and may also be used with savory fillings), but with toppings of chocolate, jam, fresh fruits, dustings of sugar, and nowadays, a garnish of whipped cream on special occasions, they become a very sweet, tasty confection.

Pănași (donuts) are made from dough of soft cheese (*urdă*, or ricotta or cottage), flour, sugar, vanilla sugar, semolina, and perhaps the zest of a lemon. The donuts and donut-hole balls are usually fried, and sometimes are boiled in water, but the fun is in the finishing. A simple way to create what Americans call a “bismarck” is to place a donut on a plate, fill the donut hole with a spoonful of sour cream with a generous dollop of fresh berry jam, and top off the creation with the donut ball or “hat.” Deep-fried donut-like stuffed pastry without the holes are known as *gogoși*, one of the most famous Romanian traditional pastries, dating back to the days when the region was part of the Roman Empire.

For the most part, Romania is an Orthodox Christian country. Christian holidays center on church services and food. *Baklava*, a traditional Easter sweet, is the jewel in the crown of desserts in Romania, as it is in other countries of the region. It is generally accepted by food historians that *baklava* was first documented as early as the eighth century BC in ancient Syria, and that the *baklava* recognized today spread far and wide with the Ottoman Empire. Romanian *baklava* traditionally had 20 layers of light, delicate, buttery *phyllo* pastry with 20 layers of chopped nuts (walnuts, pistachios, almonds, or any combination), basted with a sugar, honey,

lemon, and sometimes rose water-flavored syrup, signifying the 40 days of Lent. Today, most Romanians have six layers each of *phyllo* and filling in the *baklava* that graces every Easter table; it is cut into triangles or diamond shapes, and served with Turkish coffee.

Pască is another traditional Romanian Easter confection. It is a beautiful round pastry made with *cozonac*, versatile sweet yeast dough. The baker rolls out half the dough to line the bottom of a round pan, braids the remaining dough, and places it around the edges of the pan. In the “nest” at the center rests a sweet, soft, creamy cheese filling. After 40 days of Lenten abstinence from meat and meat by-products, *pască* is not only a visual delight but also a much-anticipated and nostalgic culinary pleasure.

Cozonac, the dough of *pască*, is referred to as Romanian *panettone* (*panettone* is an Italian light, yeast, sweet dough, usually mixed with raisins and made into breads, and invites subtle flavors, including lemon and vanilla). *Cozonac* is an adaptable dough, baked alone or with garnishes (as the cheese filling in *pască*); it can be rolled out, spread with locally grown and ground poppy seeds or fruits, rolled up and baked into a strudel-like bread. *Cozonac* is also Christmas holiday bread, served with other cakes and holiday cookies. One such cookie is *salam de biscuiti*, or salami cookies—so named because they look like salami and not because they taste like salami. Biscuit salami cookies became a holiday tradition during the Communist years, when stores had few goods for shoppers to choose from, but they also sold cheap, bland, tasteless biscuits and Turkish delight candy—the inexpensive main ingredients for this unbaked cookie, which is rolled into a “log” that resembles salami. The dough is a mixture of cocoa powder, butter, essence of rum or vanilla extract, crumbled biscuits, and any other ingredients that might enhance the flavors, from coconut or lemon zest to chopped Turkish delight. Enjoy this “sweet salami” with your Christmas cup of Turkish coffee!

Romanians enjoy Turkish delight, a candy believed to have originated in Istanbul in the 18th century. It is a chewy confection made with a cornstarch base, scented with rose water, and rolled in confectioners’ sugar. It is made with patience as it must sit overnight. Turkish delight has a multitude of flavors, including date, coconut, fruit, and nut. Westerners frequently find it difficult to acquire a taste for those flavors, and are often not fond of its soft, sticky gel-like texture. Nevertheless, Turkish delight is thoroughly enjoyed by the Romanians as a readily available commercial sweet treat of choice.

Fruits are plentiful, and apples, cherries, quinces, and grapes grow abundantly in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Plums grow throughout the country, including Transylvania, where the cuisine is quite different from the rest of the country. Transylvania is the largest province in Romania, best known for Bram Stoker’s fictional landscape and story of Count Dracula. Three national cuisines converge

in Transylvania—Hungarian, Romanian, and German. Because Transylvania once belonged to Hungary, many there take pride in their Hungarian heritage.

One of the Transylvanian specialties is “chimney cakes,” or *kürt skalács*. *Kürt skalács* are hollow, cylindrical pastries made from sweet yeast dough that are wrapped around a thick wooden dowel, sprinkled with sugar, and cooked over a wood or coal flame on a rotisserie. After the cake is carefully removed from the wooden cylinder, soft, sweet, baked dough surrounds an open center, and a caramelized crunchy sugar crust coats the pastry. Nowadays, most *kürt skalács* are produced commercially, but during special events and holidays, they are handmade by local expert bakers.

Nestled among magnificent castles and medieval cities, ski resorts and hiking trails, Romanians find abundant fruits, good creamy cheeses, and good sweet yeast dough, from which they make multitudes of desserts and sweet treats. Born out of practicality, Romanian cuisine uses available ingredients to create sweet treats for everyday pleasures and for traditional ceremonial and holiday fare. Their festive desserts and treats bring unforgettable joy and sweetness to the busy everyday lives of Romania’s citizens, as they have for centuries.

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Russia

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been an enormous resurgence of curiosity about Russia. From the 13th-century invasion of the Mongols to the mid-16th-century rule of Ivan the Terrible to the 17th to early 20th century of the Romanovs (during which time Russia became a European power), Russian cuisine was evolving. It was during the Romanov period that Peter the Great’s affection for the culinary tastes of Western Europe translated to European-style chefs, meals, sweets, and desserts in the houses of Russian nobility. Those preferences endured through Napoleon’s unsuccessful 1812 attempt to take control of Russia,

the unrest that led to the Bolshevik Revolution, and to the rise and then fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. From the beginning of the Romanovs, Russian cuisine was divided according to social class, as the nobility introduced foreign dining practices, food, culinary techniques, and exotic fruits such as raisins, dried apricots, figs, melons, watermelons, and lemons. Roast meats and soups became common fare for the upper classes. At the same time, the peasants were deprived of access to these foods, and as they produced all of their own food their fare was basic and unpretentious, with local berries and honey serving as their primary valued sweetening agents and embellishments.

Russia is the largest country in the world, but within that great area, the soil and climate are not generally conducive to robust agricultural practices. Only about 7 percent of its land is arable. Since the environment is often either too cold or too dry for food production, many of the meats, fruits, and nuts are imported.

In this vast area, nearly 80 percent of the population see themselves as Russian, but only about 20 percent identify with the Orthodox religion, with about 15 percent identifying as Muslim. After 70 years of Soviet rule, it is not surprising that so few people publicly identify with organized religion, dating from an all-too-recent time when believers of all persuasions went “underground” for their own safety and security.

From the food of the peasants and the European-style adaptations for the nobility grew a rich, colorful, and diverse cuisine. It is time to shed the stereotypes of borscht, boiled cabbage, plain bread, and bland desserts and open our minds to a new cuisine that blends traditional peasant foods with European influences, resulting in an unforgettable menu of desserts and sweets.

Imagine a sweet so significant in history that it has a museum dedicated exclusively to its history, technology, traditions, and variations. One such sweet is Tula gingerbread, first mentioned in 1685, showcased in the Tula Gingerbread Museum, in the town of Tula, about 115 miles south of Moscow—a treat identified by journalist Viktor Kuzmin as the number-one Russian sweet. The museum displays hand-carved gingerbread molds (many of which belonged to famous confectioners), household gingerbread weights and measures, and notable gingerbread packaging. And, of course, it features what are said to be both the world’s smallest (about one-third of an ounce) and largest (94.8 pounds) gingerbreads. The museum also educates guests about the ancient methods used to make the national delicacy, and then offers modern gingerbread treats. There are also replicas of stamped cakes made in commemoration of historical events, victories in battles, coronations, important people, and portrayals of traditions and ceremonies that developed around Tula gingerbread. One of Russia’s original sweets, “honey bread” came to Russia from Egypt in the ninth century. The early honey bread had just three ingredients: rye flour, honey, and juice from berries. Later, in the 12th and 13th centuries, spices from India and the Middle East embellished the basic recipe of Tula gingerbread.

The unique appearances of Tula gingerbread come from carefully prepared *speculaas*, “gingerbread boards.” The planks on which the mirror-image mold designs are carved come exclusively from locally grown birch or pear trees and are taken only from the section of the tree that is between the roots and the bottom of the trunk. The planks dry for 15–20 years in naturally ventilated barns, after which time skilled artisans carve the images. The artisans season the gingerbread boards by boiling them in vegetable oil until saturated, thus preserving them for decades, if not centuries. Gingerbread, sometimes valued as much for its appearance as its taste, is served on virtually all occasions, including wakes, and is often presented as gifts. Tula gingerbread was historically considered an expensive gift.

The long-time secret Tula gingerbread recipe handed down, usually from father to son, is now said to be popularly known, but at one time privileged bakers portioned the honey and flour with stones rather than weights, so rivals could not steal the recipe. Try some Tula gingerbread, from a recipe which, at least one legend says, Stepan Sevastyanov, as a 13-year-old Grechikhin confectionary apprentice, uncovered and revealed after one Sunday pretending to be ill when everyone had gone to church, and measuring the stone “weights.”

Blini, also called “Russian pancakes,” evolved from the ancient, common, fried flat bread. Russian *blini* are closer to a French crêpe than an American pancake, but they are unique because the batter contains yeast and buckwheat flour. Although *blini* can be a savory course, on the sweeter side they are often stuffed and rolled or folded with jams, jellies, soft cheeses, sour cream, or sprinkled with butter and sugar. The ancient pagan event that marked the beginning of spring gave way to *Maslenitsa* after conversion to Christianity—a favorite religious and folk holiday celebrated during the last week before the beginning of Lent, an event parallel to *Carnival* in the Western Christian world. With meat already forbidden during *Maslenitsa*, Russians particularly enjoy *blini* during their “Pancake Week”—the last week during which eggs, milk, cheese, and other dairy products are permitted before Lent. *Blini*—the “quintessential *Maslenitsa* delicacy”—are enjoyed as appetizers and desserts throughout the year, but especially on holidays and holy days, and particularly during *Maslenitsa*. *Blini* accompany Christmas festivities and the rich *kulich* and other sweet yeast breads that grace Easter tables along with the celebrated *paskha* (“Easter”)—a cooked (like an egg custard, with other ingredients folded in) or no-bake white festive molded cheese dessert symbolic of Christ the Paschal Lamb. Easter in Orthodox homes is not complete without *kulich* and *paskha* that has been blessed by the parish priest on Holy and Great Saturday, the day before Easter.

Syrniki are popular, traditional desserts and appropriately translated as “cheese pancakes,” since a Russian word for cheese is *syr*. Like other recipes, there are variations on the embellishments and techniques, but always, the cooks knead sweetened cottage cheese into unleavened dough, and shape and fry the small round flat circles, and then serve them to delighted diners, garnished with sour cream, jam, honey, fruit purée, or syrup.



Kulich, a sweet rich yeast bread blessed by the parish priest, traditionally graces Easter tables in Orthodox homes throughout Russia. (Fieryphoenix/Dreamstime.com)

Tea in Russia is sweet. It is a fine art to make and serve tea from a traditional samovar, a large often urn-shaped spigotted metal container which is a “gift” that dates to the 13th-century Mongol invasion, made since 1778 in the gingerbread city of Tula. There is perhaps also a finer art to sweetening tea, which is the customary way to

drink it. Traditionally, peasants drank tea with a cube of sugar placed between their teeth. Russian Jews, during Hanukkah, saturated a cube of sugar with brandy, and placed it in a brandy-filled teaspoon balanced across the teacup, ignited the cube of sugar, and dropped it, flaming, into the tea. Many Russians drink their tea with thick, syrupy jam, usually served on a tiny dish alongside the teacup. Some eat the jam right from the dish, others stir it into the tea, or they sweeten their tea with a slice of apple. Tea with raspberry jam is a remedy for a common cold. In the cold winters, Russians are increasingly once again turning to *sbiten*, a spiced honey-based hot drink with jam, formerly popular from the 12th to the 19th centuries, which is also often served from a samovar.

And so it goes. Russian sweet treats and desserts come in all shapes and sizes, with histories that tell marvelous stories. From the ritual setting of a samovar, with assortments of historic Tula gingerbread and a rich selection of other sweets and desserts they enjoy throughout their lives, Russians beckon friends, family, and guests *prosim k stolu*, meaning “Please, to the table.”

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S

Scotland

Scotland is mighty proud of its cuisine based on local food that grows on its stunning landscapes and coastlines, and in rivers and seas that have witnessed millennia of dramatic history. Scotland is a land, a country, a culture, an identity, and it radiates a pride that has no limits. Part of the United Kingdom, Scotland borders England to the south, with its other borders at waters' edge—the North Sea, The Irish Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. Scotland's nearly 800 islands remain mostly uninhabited. Ten thousand years ago, Scotland's early peoples hunted wild game, fished their pristine streams and coastal waters, and gathered fruits and nuts to sweeten their diets. Imagine, if you can, what the trek was like for the Bronze Age people who migrated to Scotland from the European continent between 2100 and 750 BC, about 3,500 years ago.

These early settlers, like others before them, doubtless ate fish and game, with wild honey, and fresh or dried fruits as sweeteners. Domesticated oats growing in Bronze Age Switzerland eventually made it to Northern Scotland, where they became a long-time staple of the Scottish diet. The early Scots were quite mobile and required food that could travel easily and not spoil quickly. Carrying small pouches of oats, the trekkers, voyageurs, and wanderers made their own oatmeal and oatcakes, two items that remain important in the Scottish diet.

The cuisine of Scotland revolves around the historical and cultural significance of oats, as oats grew and were able to ripen in moist, cooler, climates where wheat and maize could not ripen. Early oatmeal and oatcakes were not sweet—oatmeal was a simple “porridge,” or cereal, and oatcakes were an accompaniment to a meal, similar to a piece of bread. In time, however, and not entirely surprisingly, some preferred to add a sweetener to the porridge, or sometimes spread jam or marmalade on oatcakes at breakfast.

The diet of the Scots appears to have remained about the same for almost 1,800 years, until the end of the 13th century when the dairy industry developed and led to a greater consumption of milk, cheese, cream, and butter. Then, in 1295, an alliance between Scotland and France signed by William the Lion in 1165 (the *Auld Alliance*) brought a French influence to Scotland. Among other things, this alliance granted dual citizenship to citizens of both countries. This alliance, which lasted until 1560, brought about cultural exchanges between Scotland and France, many of which are still evident in Scotland today. One

can see those influences in education, architecture, philosophy, and in the cuisine of Scotland.

The history of Scottish shortbread reflects the French influence. Although shortbread dates back to the 12th century, Mary, Queen of Scots, in the 16th century, receives the credit for making it a popular sweet treat. By this time, butter, one of the ingredients in shortbread, was more widely available in Scotland, along with flour, sugar, and occasionally a flavoring such as caraway seed. The name of a very popular form of shortbread, that demonstrates the French influence, was *petit gâtelles*, which, in Scotland, were “petticoat tails,” because the shortbread, although baked in a circle, looked like petticoats when bakers cut the circle into wedge-shaped pieces. At this time, shortbread was expensive, and the Scots thus enjoyed it only on special occasions such as Christmas, *Hogmanay* (New Year celebration), and weddings. Over the years, more people had access to butter and sugar, and shortbread became a symbol of Scotland. Scottish shortbread continues to be a popular treat for locals and tourists alike. It is now available at grocery stores, sweet shops, gift shops, tourist shops, and even petrol stations. A traditional shortbread recipe is typically very basic, but one can easily embellish it with fruits, flavorings, and nuts.

A Scot from the city of Dundee invented marmalade. In the late 18th century, as one version of the story goes, a gentleman named James Keiller came upon a boatload of oranges for sale very cheaply. He bought them for resale but discovered that they were the very bitter Seville-type oranges and not a popular item. His wife came to the rescue and made them into a nippy “jam.” Mrs. Keiller called the jam “marmalade,” from the Portuguese word *marmelos*, which describes a quince paste-like orange spread. The Keiller Company produced marmalade in the city of Dundee until the 1920s, when Crosse and Blackwell bought the business and continued the marmalade tradition.

Dundee is also where they make the famous Dundee cake. The Keiller marmalade production was immensely successful, and being the resourceful, practical people that they were, the Keillers developed the Dundee cake to use the by-products of its marmalade production. Lighter than a fruitcake, but still made with dried fruits, the golden-colored Dundee cakes feature an attractive arrangement of whole blanched almonds on the top—their signature. To this day people throughout Great Britain enjoy the Keillers’ famous marmalade and Dundee cakes.

Another interesting Dundee cake legend involves Mary, Queen of Scots, and her love of teatime sweets. Mary, apparently, did not like cherries in her fruitcakes and folks speculate that someone made the original Dundee cake for Mary, and, thus, under no circumstances, should it contain cherries. Thus, *genuine* Dundee cake has no cherries. Whether the tale is truth or fiction, genuine Dundee cake is always cherry-less. Mary lived in the mid-16th century and the Keillers developed the Dundee cake in the late 18th century. Perhaps the Keillers took the idea of the

cherry-less fruitcake, made a cake, and certainly made history. Or maybe they just did not have any cherry by-products from production of their other sweet treats.

Scots are famous for using local ingredients in their food preparations, so it should be no surprise that one of the very traditional desserts is *cranachan*. *Cranachan* comes from an earlier time. *Crowdie* is the name for a creamy-fresh Scottish cheese, as well as the name for a mixture of finely ground oatmeal and water that needs stirring, but not cooking, to form a thick consistency. In former times, *crowdie*, the oat mixture, was a breakfast staple, frequently made with buttermilk instead of water and, on special occasions, when sweetened with cream and sugar, it becomes a delicious, “cream *crowdie*.” According to the eminent Scottish food writer Alan Davidson, this enhanced, sweetened, creamed, *crowdie* is still *crowdie*, but for many, it has evolved into the more luxurious dessert known as *cranachan* (Davidson 2006). *Cranachan* is made from a mixture of whipped cream (which might be mixed with *crowdie*, the soft cheese), the local whisky, honey (preferably local heather honey), and local fresh raspberries (or other fruits of the season), with toasted oatmeal soaked overnight in a little whisky. Often the host brings the ingredients to the table separately, and diners create their own *cranachan*.

Any survey of traditional Scottish sweets must include tablet. Tablet is a caramel colored, medium hard, sugary-like sweet, grainier and harder than fudge, but not as hard as hard candy. The origins of tablet are unknown, but traditionally, sugar and light cream or milk, boiled to the softball stage, produce this tasty sweet treat. It requires vigorous stirring until it begins to get grainy or crystalize. By pouring the tablet mixture into pans and allowing it to cool, it hardens enough to cut into small “tablets.” Scots have as many methods and variations for making tablet as there are techniques for mastering the art of candy-making itself. Modern recipes for tablet, such as the one used by Maggi Macleod, a Scottish resident of the Highlands seaside village of Dornoch, use condensed milk in a well-defined ritual, because making tablet, according to Maggi, is an exact science.

Traditional sweet treats in Scotland include Irn-Bru (pronounced Iron-Brew), a soft drink developed and patented in Scotland in the early 20th century. As the temperance movement gained strength, Irn-Bru arrived as a tonic and an herbal drink. Today, a single firm produces Irn-Bru, A. G. Barr. Their product, a nostalgic symbol of Scotland, has become a popular alternative to alcoholic drinks. Irn-Bru contains 0.002 percent iron, as well as caffeine, sugar, and flavorings that give it an orangey-golden color and a sweet-spicy flavor with citrus overtones.

Have you heard of *clootie* dumplings, which is another classic Scottish sweet pudding whose origins go back generations? Some say it is the perfect Burns Night treat for partygoers with a sweet tooth. They say it is the sweet treat equivalent of haggis, the savory pudding traditionally boiled in a sheep stomach. *Clootie* dumpling is a sweet pudding steamed in a *cloot* (cloth). A *clootie* dumpling is a roundish, ball-like shaped pudding, usually weighing between four ounces and two pounds,

steamed or boiled in water. Ingredients always include flour, breadcrumbs, dried fruits, eggs, treacle (a by-product of sugar refining, rather like molasses), spices, sugar, and milk. *Clootie* dumplings traditionally contain “good luck” charms or coins, and to discover a charm or coin in your piece is good luck. Common sense leads the Scots to serve full sweet cream with *clootie* dumplings.

Scottish sweets popularly include “sweeties.” “Sweeties” is the generic name for boiled sweets and toffees. As in other European countries, sweets became increasingly popular in Scotland from the late 16th century onward, as sugar became more available and affordable. Sweeties claim the most creative names: Hawick balls, Soor plums, and Berwick cockles. Toffee varieties include Jeddart snails, Moffat toffee, Glasgow toffee, and Helesurgh toffee. Other kinds of sweeties bear names like curly-doddies (or curly-murlies), curly andra, and black man. Perhaps the most famous sweetie is Edinburgh rock.

Rock is a large and colorful sweet stick of candy. Seaside resorts and other tourist places originally sold rock as holidaymaker treats; it is a hardened, sugary substance made from pulled candy “rope.” Making rock is a highly technical skill; often there are letters “pulled” into the pieces. The history of pulled candy goes back to the Middle Ages, when it was a preferred sweet of the aristocrats and royalty.



Traditional *clootie* dumplings, a roundish sweet pudding steamed in a *cloot* (cloth), here shown on sale at the Glasgow Barras Market, make a perfect Burns Night treat for sweet-toothed partygoers. (Stockcube/Dreamstime.com)

Edinburgh rock remains a local specialty in Edinburgh. It comes in much smaller pieces than commonplace rock. Locals say it has a unique, chalky consistency, and it is quite crumbly. Vanilla, lemon, or mint are the flavors of white Edinburgh rock, while raspberry or rose water flavors produce pink rock, and, of course, orange and ginger produce orange- and ginger-colored rock.

Ever practical, unpretentious, and wonderfully creative—from shortbread to sweeties, from *cranachan* to *clootie* dumplings, from Dundee cakes to Edinburgh rock—sweet treats in Scotland are pure, unsullied bliss. If you can, take your time when enjoying these treats—take tiny bites and savor each delectable morsel. One last sweet treat tasting note is that in Scotland, it is perfectly acceptable to flatter the host and ask for seconds.

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Singapore

Originally founded as a British East India Company trading colony in 1819, Singapore became an independent democratic nation in 1965. Today, the now-cosmopolitan city-state on the tip of the Malay Peninsula is one of the world’s most prosperous countries with one of the world’s busiest international ports. It is a far cry from early spice trading days when the port of Malacca, just up the coast to the

north, was the most strategic port in the international East–West spice trade, and Singapore, just a large fishing village, was “a pirate- and malaria-infested swamp” (Caldicott 2001). Although the small island is just slightly larger in area than the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea, it is truly world class. With almost 5.5 million people, Singapore is world class crowded with people, mostly of Chinese, Malay, and Indian cultures. Mandarin Chinese, Malay, Indian Tamil, and English are all official languages. Hence, as one would expect in a truly globalized port city, Singapore’s sweet treats are international.

No place better illustrates the globalized and intercultural dimensions of sweet treats than the iconic Singapore hawker centers—the Singapore outdoor version of food courts, but with a transnational flare. Government development programs since the 1960s have transformed the traditional less-than-hygienic unlicensed street food vendors’ stalls into “a world-renowned icon that is uniquely Singaporean and celebrates [their] ethnic diversity and foodie culture” (Gannon and Pillai 2013). There are over a hundred government-regulated hawker centers with modern but largely open-air facilities, with about 7,000 stalls preparing and serving relatively inexpensive cooked food. Each center has at least 20 food stalls, many open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Although the hawker centers are informal and casual, the food stalls follow strict government guidelines on food preparation, cleanliness, and polite treatment of customers.

And what sweet treats do these hawker centers offer?

Food stalls offer a large variety of sweets. Literally, all kinds: “Customers can find any cuisine—Chinese, of course, but also Malay, Peranakan [descendants of Chinese 15th- and 16th-century immigrants], Indian (both north and south), and international food (Japanese and Western)—in a typical hawker center” (Gannon and Pillai 2013). The government encourages its citizens to intermingle and understand one another by, for example, organizing an annual food festival celebrating its food diversity and supporting other cultural festivals. Singaporeans enjoy visiting their friends and neighbors from other ethnic communities and celebrating their food and festivals—being mindful, of course, of their particular religious and cultural food preferences. Over 40 percent of the population is Buddhist, 15 percent Muslim, and about 13 percent Taoist and Hindu. Eating and talking about food is a national pastime. All three major ethnic groups and all religious groups celebrate their major festivals, and all are national holidays—festivals like the famed fall harvest Festival of Lanterns—the Full Moon Festival—celebrated, but on separate occasions, by Chinese Buddhists and South Indian Tamil Hindus.

The government allocates hawker stalls according to the percentage of each ethnic group in the population. Thus, each center has 77 percent Chinese, 14 percent Malay, and 8 percent Indian establishments. The hawker centers sell traditional fare from the greater Asian region and Western food. Regionally, the sweets are much like the Malaysian sweets, what one might expect, since Malaysia itself is

about half Malay, a fourth Chinese, and 7 percent Indian. One finds in the Singapore hawker centers Chinese favorites like traditional *youtiao*, a long deep-fried golden-brown lightly salted twisted-dough cruller, and *min jiang kueh* (“Chinese peanut pancake”), a crispy version of an Asian treat (similar to the Malaysian *apam balik* and Chinese *chin loong pau*) made with shreds of coconut and peanuts. One finds *sagu gula melaka*, a sweet pudding made with pearl sago, palm sugar, and pandan leaves soaked in coconut milk. One also finds *klepon*, a traditional Indonesian and Malaysian boiled rice cake stuffed with liquid palm sugar and rolled in grated coconut; Malay *kuih lapis*, a colorful steamed multilayer cake made with sago flour or rice flour, butter, eggs and sugar, and *kuih bahulu*—another traditional Malaysian *kuih*, or bite-sized snack—a basic sweet and eggy small sponge cake, similar to a *madeleine*, with crispy edges and soft insides; and *kuih ambon*, a soft and chewy honeycombed small cake made with rice flour, tapioca flour, eggs, sugar, coconut water (the liquid inside of a young coconut), and coconut milk (the liquid pressed from coconut meat). Hawker center stalls sell Indian treats like *verkadalai urundai*, a ball-shaped chickpea or wheat or semolina-like flour, peanut, and sugar treat. Treats are enjoyed with a local sweet drink such as *cendol ais*, a shaved ice drink made from coconut milk, palm sugar, and green rice-flour jelly “noodles,” or with one of their sweetened local teas, or with the strong sweet local Malaysian-style hot black coffee (*kopi*) made with coffee beans roasted with butter and sugar.

The hawker center foods symbolize a national identity that focuses on cultural unity in diversity. At the hawker centers, one finds East and West foods, and old and new treats both intermingled and blended. Hawker center chefs like to experiment with new culinary treats, as well as serve traditional and international sweet treats. Singapore’s long-standing critical role as a trading center and cultural mediating point between East and West continues, and the hawker centers serve to bring together its multicultural sweet treat treasures. At the hawker centers, one can find any sweet—well, *almost any*, as Singapore law bans the import, sale, and possession of chewing gum.

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Slovakia

In January 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully separated into two countries: Czech Republic and Slovak Republic. Slovakia is a small, landlocked country with the Tatra mountains in the north, the lowland Danubian valley in the southwest, and the tiny but important Tokaj wine region in the southeast. The Slovak Republic sits in central Europe, bordered by the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, and Poland. While Slovak cuisine reflects the foods of the region, it also has its own identity, due, in large part, to the varied geography and the frequency with which certain dishes historically became embedded in the culture.

Most Slovakian meals are “meat and potato” type meals—foods found in rural areas, complemented with fruits of the region: apples, plums, apricots, peaches, plums, cherries, berries, and wine grapes. Traditional meals evolved for holidays, holy days, secular and sacred seasons, and meaningful life events. Hospitality is a core value of Slovaks, and their abundance and enjoyment of sweet treats reflect their love of good food and good company. Slovak sweets and desserts include pies, tortes, cakes, sweet breads, and *palacinky*, crêpes similar to the Hungarian *palacsinta*.

Myriad varieties of *palacinky* serve testimony to the ingenuity of the Slovaks, all made from flour, eggs, milk, and a sweet garnish or filling added. Often rolled, they hold jam, sweet cottage cheese, chocolate, walnuts, or poppy seeds, or they get a dousing of brandy for flambéing, or, when they are layered, they might have sweet fillings of apples, plums, apricots, or the famous sour cherries between each layer. Slovaks recognize virtually unlimited variations of *palacinky*, and enjoy them for breakfast, for dessert, or with coffee.

Slovakian dinners may have a sweet accompaniment to the main course itself, an unusual concept for Westerners. *Dukátové buchtičky*, ducat cakes, named after the gold coin from the Middle Ages, are common little sweet balls about the size of a ducat or a silver dollar. They are soaked in a vanilla cream and are so practical and easily made that they are often served at school lunches. *Slivkové knedle*, plum dumplings with a sprinkle of sugar, poppy seeds, and melted butter, are examples of sweets made with fresh fruits, and they occasionally accompany a main course. Apple bread pudding and egg noodles tossed with butter, sugar, and poppy seeds are sweet dishes that may be part of a meal or maybe a dessert. Less flexible, the poppy seed, walnut, or curd filling of the celebrated half-moon-shaped *Bratislavské rožky* (Bratislava rolls), a traditional delicate sweet yeast dough pastry—according to customary time-honored “rules”—must be half of the whole pastry, and the pastry should have a shiny, glazed, marble-patterned surface. Dating back to 1785, *Bratislavské rožky* in recent years became a protected food

brand of the region recognized as a traditional Slovakian product by the European Union, joining the sweet *Skalický trdelník* from the town of Skalica—the Slovak version of the Hungarian sweet “chimney cakes” known as *kürtőskalács* brought to the Slovak Republic in the 18th century by a Transylvanian cook of retired general Count József Gvadányi.

The Slovak Republic is about 86 percent Catholic, so Christmas and Easter holidays are rich with traditions and sweets. Like some other Eastern European and Baltic Christian countries, Christmas celebrations begin with Advent, the time leading up to Christmas. Slovaks celebrate December 6, the Feast of St. Nicholas. If children have been good, Svätý Mikuláš fills their neatly lined up shoes with presents, sweets, and fruits. If the children have not been good, a wicked little creature puts coal in the shoes!

Beginning with the 12-course meatless meal on Christmas Eve, Slovak traditions are similar to Polish Christmas celebrations. One of the sweet courses is *bobalki*, round balls of dough, first baked, then moistened with boiling water, and finally slathered with poppy seeds and honey. *Bábovka* also appears in the 12-course meal, a light, airy cake, generally prepared for holidays and weddings. Frequently marbled, sometimes plain, sometimes flavored with lemon zest, *bábovka* is usually baked in a bundt-like mold, and accompanies braided sweet yeast bread, *vianočka*, which is a traditional Christmas bread. The evidence is in its name; the Slovak work for Christmas is *Vianoce*.

Paskha, the traditional sweet yeast Easter bread with raisins, is made in a mold or braided. The Greek translation is *pascha*, the word used for describing the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. Each family has its own version of *paskha*; some families make it entirely of white flour and bake it in a mold, others braid it, perhaps adding one strand of dark wheat flour to the braid.

A profound history tells us much about Slovakian cooking, celebrating, and baking; the history and evolution of traditions and recipes fill volumes. The traditional sweet breads, cakes, dumplings, and embellishments of fruits, honey, and poppy seeds have endured for hundreds of years, and, with good fortune, will continue to be Slovakian sweet treats for hundreds more to come.

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Southeast Asia

(Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam)

Smaller countries of Southeast Asia have long played roles disproportionate to their size in regional and world history. Southwest of the Asian giant China, the countries of Myanmar (formerly Burma, until the end of British rule in 1948), Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam surround Thailand in the shape of a wide-open westward-pointed horseshoe. Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia are predominantly Buddhist countries, with Buddhists comprising 96 percent of the population in Cambodia, 89 percent in Myanmar, and 67 percent in Laos—and Buddhism being the official state religion in Cambodia. Only 9 percent of the Vietnamese espouse Buddhism; the majority in Vietnam have no designated religious connections.

Quite unlike the case with major religions like Islam, Judaism, and Catholicism, sweet treat choices for Buddhists are mostly affected by cultural and personal food preferences, and local availability of ingredients, rather than by religious beliefs. Wherever Buddhism goes it tends to acquire the customs of its host country or region. Comparatively speaking, Buddhists do not often eat sweets and desserts, albeit sweet treats in moderation are permitted by their religion. Sweets may, however, be served at and for special occasions. Religious festival occasions correlate with the phases of the moon in their lunar calendar. Buddhist cuisine is basically an East Asian plant-based cuisine influenced to a large extent by India, where Buddhism began in the sixth century BC, and China, where Buddhism is today a main religion. Unlike most major religions, Buddhists do not have specific food prohibitions. Buddhist cuisine does, however, emphasize its general non-violence principle of *ahimsa*, doing no harm, in this case to animal life. Very strict Buddhists thus sometimes eschew not only meat but also dairy products. Yet, they are practical in interpreting best ways to follow their paths to *nirvana*, to the peaceful state of spiritual perfection.

As the eminent food writer and former British ambassador to Laos, Alan Davidson, points out, sweet treats in the Burmese language of Myanmar are known by a word literally meaning “confections-desserts-salivators-tongue titillators” (Davidson 2006). Sticky rice is a Burmese mainstay, both in its general cuisine and in

Nirvana

Nirvana, a term often used with reference to sweet treats and their consumption, actually refers to the peaceful and happy state of spiritual perfection sought by Buddhists. The term, often borrowed to describe favorite desserts of perfection, is also a popular restaurant name with “Nirvana” restaurants appearing in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, the Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, Mexico, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, the West Indies, and India.

sweet treats. A less-firm version of the Indian dessert *halawa* appears as a tongue titillator-salivator—made of sticky rice, butter, coconut milk (liquid pressed from coconut meat), and poppy seeds—as does a simple dessert made of agar jelly, tapioca, sago, and coconut milk. Another simple dessert is a flatbread called *palata* sprinkled with sugar. “Round snack float on the water” balls, *mote lone yay paw*—floating sweet sticky rice-ball dumplings made with *jaggery* (palm sugar) and grated coconut—are traditional Burmese snacks commonly served in celebration of a baby’s first tooth, and at the Thingyan Water Festival to mark the (usually) mid-April lunar New Year, a major Buddhist festival.

In neighboring Buddhist Cambodia, the three-day Water and Moon Festival, *Pithi Bonn Om Touk*, is the biggest festival of the year. Khmer traditionally eat *ak ambok* (“swallow flattened rice”) during the festival, a rice, coconut, and banana dish recalling Buddhist mythology. When family elders ceremonially hand-feed *ak ambok* to younger family members during the festival, they thereby bless the youths’ wishes, helping to make their wishes come true in the coming New Year. Cambodians often make sweet treats in honor of their ancestors and offer them to the monks at their pagodas. For most of the year, Cambodians eat sweets any time of the day. Cambodians favor fresh fruits for dessert, with sweet sticky rice, coconut, bananas, mangoes, durian, other tropical fruits, and home-grown legumes, roots, and vegetables used to create regional special treats and sweet snacks. Their simple delights are generally steamed or boiled, as the Cambodian population is 80 percent rural, and they most often have no ovens for cooking.

Neighboring Buddhist Laos is 55 percent Lao with the remainder consisting of individuals from over 100 ethnic groups, including the Hmong, many of whom are or were primarily hill people. The easy-going Laotian residents of a relatively poor country make excellent use of their beautiful and bountiful local natural resources. Sticky rice, sugarcane, palm sugar, and dozens of fruit varieties feature prominently in their desserts and snacks, which they eat in moderation. Their lunar calendar and natural seasonal cycles regulate their slow-paced life, with their tranquil lives

joyfully interrupted by festivals, including a more subdued version of their annual Songkran Water Festival of the New Year.

Neighboring Vietnam, having been under the domination of the Chinese for a thousand years, reflects Chinese influence, and the influence, in more modern times, of the French. About 86 percent are Kinh people (Viet), and 81 percent in Vietnam report no religious affiliation. Vietnamese is the official language, with English favored as a second language. Favored as sweet treats are the many local fruits—especially bananas, citrus, mangoes, papayas, melons, pineapples, coconuts, and jackfruits. A favorite fruit treat throughout the country is *hoa qua dam*, chunks of fresh tropical fruits in a bowl, glass, or cup, with shaved ice, coconut milk, and condensed milk. Other desserts are influenced by the Chinese *Wu Xing* philosophy, the Five Elements, in seeking to balance a mealtime’s sweet taste elements (associated with earth) with four other classic categories: spicy (metal), sour (wood), bitter (fire), and salty (water). Apart from French-influenced custards and pastries, like the *bánh flan* found throughout the country, desserts in Vietnam tend to be quite different from mainstream American desserts in the United States. One of the most common desserts is the traditional *chè* preparation—thick, sweet drinks and dessert soup-like-puddings, made in dozens of varieties utilizing local fruits and other ingredients to flavor a base made of pulses or tubers and/or sticky rice, and cooked in water, sweetened with sugar, and served hot or cold in bowls or glasses. Other desserts tend to be simpler, and include items like fried bananas and banana fritters (*nome shek Chiene*), fritter-like bird’s nest cake (*bánh tai yến*), sweet flavored yoghurts, fruit smoothies made with condensed milk, and gelatin and custard desserts made with coconut—like the popular pumpkin custard (*sang khja lapov*). Variations within and between the three major regions are common—Hanoi and the Red River delta of the North, Da Nang and the central mountainous region, and Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong River delta region of the South.

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Southern Africa

(Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland)

In the United Nations’ scheme of geographic regions, five countries constitute the region of Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and

Swaziland. Traditional South African fare in fruits—the main South African sweets—include dates, apples, apricots, peaches, tangerines, grapes, raisins, watermelons (originally from Southern Africa), quinces, currants, cherries, raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, citrus (lemons, oranges, and grapefruits), and in some parts, coconuts, mangoes, pineapples, papayas, and the fruit of the marula tree, the latter a native of South Africa, West Africa, and Madagascar that followed Bantu migrations. Fully ripe yellowish juicy aromatic marula fruits have white strong-flavored but pleasant sweet-and-sour tasting flesh, prized in these parts of Africa for thousands of years. Marula was historically important especially in the countries of South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia throughout ancient times. A single marula tree can bear up to 1,100 pounds of fruit per year. Marula fruits are eaten raw or processed into beverages or jellies, and the highly nutritious kernels can be eaten raw or roasted. The nutty-flavored seeds are also popular. The marula, protected in South Africa, belongs to the same family as mangoes and cashews.

In addition to fresh fruits and nuts, sweet treats in urban centers, for those who can afford them, include items from the colonial past, from global cuisines, and products from national and international companies—like packaged cookies, flavored popcorn, and bottled drinks.

South Africa is the largest of the five countries of the South African region. The country of South Africa, with 48.6 million people, about two-thirds of them urban, is the dominant economic superpower of the region. The city of Johannesburg alone has more people than any of the other South African countries, 4.4 million. Swaziland, by contrast, has only 1.4 million people in the entire country and is only 21 percent urban.

The Ethiopian born celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson notes two distinctly different regions of Africa with a strong urban dessert tradition, Morocco and South Africa (Samuelsson 2006). In South Africa, he points out, Dutch culinary influences remain strong, and their cakes and pastries have become part of the national culinary tradition.

In the urban settings, one finds Dutch-sounding sweet treats named in the native Afrikaans language (a derivative of Dutch), such as *vetkoek* ("fat cake"), a popular deep-fried dough ball sold by street vendors and served plain and hot. Well-known treats include the sticky and crisp Afrikaner *koeksisters* twists (from the Dutch word *koekje*, "cookie"), deep-fried *braided* cruller-like pastry (from the Dutch, "to curl") dipped in sugary syrup and rolled in cinnamon sugar. Cape Malay, on the southwestern tip of South Africa, is a community founded largely by immigrants from the former Dutch colony of Indonesia, noted for its special unplaited version known as *koesisters* (spelled without the second *k*). A *koesisters* is more like an American donut hole, a small dark, rounded, yeasted, deep-fried cake spiced with ginger, *naartjie* peel (mandarin orange), cinnamon and aniseed or cardamom, cooked in syrup, and sprinkled with dried coconut. Cape Malay, suggests Samuelsson, is



Magwinya, a popular deep-fried dough ball sold by street vendors of Gauteng Province, served plain and hot, is a regional and sweeter version of South African *vetkoek* (“fat cake”). (Alexander Joe/AFP/Getty Images)

perhaps the most celebrated cuisine in Africa, with its particular blend of African, European, Malaysian, and Indian cooking.

In the urban centers of South Africa, one also finds *soetkoekies*, buttery “sweet cookies” usually spiced with nutmeg and cinnamon and made with sweet wine, and, traditionally, with soft rendered pork or mutton fat. *Soetkoekies* taste much like Dutch *speculaas*, their famous “windmill cookies,” but without the white pepper and cardamom, and with the addition of sweet red wine. The traditional Afrikaans “sweet cookies” are chewy drop cookies rather than crispy ones made in molds.

In the urban areas, one also finds *mosbolletjies*, a sweet feathery *brioche*-like bun traditionally leavened with the fermented must from grapes, and flavored with aniseed, first introduced by the French Huguenots in the 17th-century Dutch Cape Colony. *Mosbolletjies* can be eaten either warm with soft butter or dried in the oven to make *beskuit* (rusks) which are then traditionally dipped in coffee or tea. Commercially, the popular *ouma beskuit* (ouma rusks)—“grandmother’s rusks”—are known in South Africa and throughout much of the world and are available in almost a dozen flavors.

Iconic South African *malvapoeding* (*malva* pudding), an apricot jam-based rich sticky caramel-ly soft and spongy Dutch pudding tradition of the Cape, is a sweet

treat literally loved by all, and best served with vanilla custard, fresh cream, or with vanilla or butterscotch ice cream. It is typically a favorite wintertime comfort food dessert. Considered by some as South Africa's favorite dessert—at least in the urban areas—it was brought to South Africa when the Dutch East India Company established Cape Town in the 1600s.

In urban areas, one finds pastries made with raisins, coconut, sweet potatoes, or custard. *Melktert* (milk tart), for example, is a popular Dutch-inspired sweet creamy pastry-crust tart with cinnamon-flavored egg custard filling.

Other mostly urban treats include *tameletjie*, a sticky toffee-like brown sugar candy also brought to the Cape by the French Huguenots. Formerly sold by street vendors, *tameletjies* are nowadays a sweet treat of special feasts. Fruit preserves and jams, especially gooseberry jam, are favorites. Urbanites and rural folks alike enjoy dried fruits and fruit leathers (called planked fruit) year-round. South African urbanites, of course, as the rural folks, love their fresh fruits, and almost anything made with sugar, brown sugar, sugarcane, or honey.

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Spain

Around 9,000 years ago in what is now known as the "Cave of the Spider" (*Cueva de La Arana*) on the Cazunta River near modern-day Valencia, Spain, someone painted what has become the most famous sweet treat prehistoric image in the world, the "*Man [sic.] of Bicorp*," a prehistoric portrayal of a woman gathering honey as another human and a large animal await. "The painting speaks of man's long fascination with honey. Before our ancestors could write, they recorded this honey hunting event in bold red paint. . . . Numerous tribes and people throughout the world still hunt honey in much the same way, risking their lives for a taste of sweetness" (Traynor 2012). In another Valencian prehistoric rock painting from about the same time, a dozen folks are depicted apparently awaiting the honeycombs of five "opportunistic" honey collectors while large bees buzz around. Prehistoric cave drawings of humans are rare, with the most-frequently depicted subject being large animals of prey. Prehistoric depictions of bees, honey, and honey-gathering are among the relatively few non-prey nonhuman prehistoric art subjects found. Honey in Western European sweet treats only began to yield to sugar as a major

sweetener beginning with the Arab occupation of southern Spain in the later Middle Ages.

Medieval Spain eventually saw the arrival of Moors from North Africa who established a Muslim state in southern Spain and Portugal known in Arabic as Al-Andalus—now “Andalusia.” A famous treaty signed in AD 713 by a Visigoth leader from southeastern Al-Andalus, Theodemir, and Abd al-Aziz, the first governor of Al-Andalus, specified honey as part of the payment of an annual tribute. The decades that followed the Moors’ conquest of the Iberian Peninsula brought in a dominant Arab influence—in culture, food, and drink, but especially in the introduction of sugarcane-based sweet treats—to particularly the south and southeast of the Iberian Peninsula. From AD 929 to AD 1031, the Arabs dominated the region from their Islamic capital of Córdoba and this laid the culinary foundation of modern-day Spain. And there the foundation was laid for sugarcane-based sweet treats of the world as well. And that, in turn, was occasioned through the nearly 800-year occupation of Spain and Portugal by Moorish and Arab peoples. In the history of sweet treats, few “events” had the impact on Western civilizations as did the near-800 year occupation of the Iberian Peninsula by Muslim peoples. Their main sweet treat legacy—sugarcane.

Sugarcane arrived in Spain with irrigation technologies using gravity flow canals and waterwheels, allowing for, in addition to sugarcane, the introduction of new crops such as oranges, lemons, limes, apricots, bananas, and almonds, saffron, cinnamon, and rice—all crops that appear in modern-day sweet treats. During their rule in the Iberian Peninsula, the Muslims not only introduced sugar but also introduced sugar-using recipes and sugar-based cuisines employing egg yolks, cinnamon, sesame seeds, dried figs, rice, almonds, fresh fruits and honey.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus—a native of Genoa who had worked in the Portuguese sugar trade of the Atlantic Madeira, Azores, and Canary Islands, set off on an exploratory expedition in search of a maritime trade route which could circumvent the trade monopoly the Venetians held on the lucrative eastern Mediterranean trade of sugar and spices and other valuable goods.

Columbus’s 1492 voyage is legend.

In 1493, on his second of four voyages, Columbus brought sugarcane from the Canary Islands, off the northwest coast of Africa, to Santo Domingo, Hispaniola (the modern-day Dominican Republic), in the Caribbean, although he let it grow wild (Fernández-Armesto 2002). Next to the actual “discovery” of America itself, probably the most significant deed of Columbus was the introduction of sugar and the sugar-plantation system to the New World. Thus began what Alfred Crosby Jr. termed “The Columbian Exchange” (1972) in which sugar played one of the major roles, transforming the Western world of sweet treats and most other aspects of the New World and Europe.

Onward into the 16th century, sugar was a luxury, and peoples of Western Europe considered it a medicine and a spice. The peoples of Spain—and of Greece, Italy, and North Africa—were familiar with sugarcane as a crop and, to some extent, with sugar itself as a sweetener, but in 1492, in Western Europe, sugar was still a luxury. Demand for sugar had increased gradually from 1474 to 1504, and that both Spain and Portugal experienced a continuing growth in the demand for sugar is suggested also by the household accounts of Queen Isabella I (Mintz 1986). But that slow growth was to change relatively quickly when sugar essentially replaced honey as the Western world's main sweetener in the decades that followed. The demand for sugar as a sweetener grew voraciously in the 16th century, and that growth was due both to the development of the Spanish and Portuguese sugar plantations and to the changing nature of sugar use itself—from a medicine or spice, and sometimes preservative, to a sweetener.

A large part of that change in the use of sugar as a sweetener was tied initially to the introduction of bitter cocoa and subsequently bitter tea and bitter coffee to Europe. Sugar made stimulating but slightly bitter beverages more appealing to Europeans. While no one knows for sure when cacao first reached Spain, the arrival of chocolate-combined-with-sugar in Spain changed the world of sweet treats forever. The first *documentary* evidence for the actual appearance of chocolate in Spain comes from the records of a visit by Dominican friars led by Bartolomé de las Casas who in 1544 took a delegation of Quiché Maya Amerindian nobles from Spanish-ruled Guatemala to visit Prince Philip (who became King Philip II of Spain) (Coe and Coe 2013). Over the next 100 years chocolate, as a sugar-laden hot beverage, became increasingly popular in the Spanish court.

Sugar production using the plantation system with its dependence on slave labor first moved from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Atlantic Islands of the Canaries, Azores, and Maderias, and then to the colonies in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas. Spain pioneered in sugarcane cultivation, sugar production, the use of African slave labor, and the introduction of the plantation system in the Americas, even though it was the Portuguese who dominated early 16th-century New World sugar production (Crosby 1972). Sugarcane and its plantation system of production took quick root in the American colonies, and they quickly became the main supplier of sugar to Europe. In the 16th and 17th centuries, England, the Netherlands, and France joined as sugar-producing colonialists and competitors to Spain and Portugal, and after 1700, with increased production and competition, sugar was transformed from a luxury product into one of everyday use by even the poor (Kiple and Ornelas 2000).

Modern-day Spain emerged through a politically tumultuous 20th century to the country as we find it today. While authors often despair of dividing Spain

into meaningful regional food zones, most authors note that all regions of Spain have their special cuisines, shaped by their local ingredients, geography (especially whether they are coastal or inland), history, and regional customs.

In Valencia, on October 9, people celebrate both the Day of the Community of Valencia (Spain is divided politically into “autonomous communities”) and the feast day of *Sant Dionís* (St. Dionysius), the patron saint of lovers. Men traditionally give their sweethearts special almond-based marzipan sweet treats wrapped in silken scarves, throwbacks to the days of the Arab control of Spain and the adventures of the “Silk Road.” The *mocaorà*, as the custom is called, also commemorates the capture of the city of Valencia from the Moors in 1238 by King James I of Aragon. King James I of Aragon, identified also as “James I the Conqueror,” is known for many things, but in the sweet treats world legend has it that he “baptized” a sweet drink traditionally made of tigernuts (*chufa*, one of the earliest domesticated crops in the world, introduced into Valencia by the Arabs) as *orxata*—“pure gold.” The rest of Spain now shares various versions of *orxata de xufa* (*horchata de chufa*), where it is still made from tigernuts, water, and sugar. Elsewhere in the world, especially in the former Spanish colonial countries, *horchata*, as it is more commonly called, is made with different combinations of ingredients such as sugar and ground almonds, sesame seeds, rice, and barley, and goes by a number of other names.

Fartons are the name of an elongated sugar-glazed spongy sweet confectionary made in modern times by the bakers in Alboraya, Valencia, to dunk in *orxata*. The custom of dunking your *fartón* in *orxata* (*horchata*) has spread from Valencia through Spain and throughout much of the Spanish world. You can dunk your own *fartons* at home; they are simple to make, and while tigernuts may be difficult to obtain locally for your *orxata*, you can substitute rice with vanilla and cinnamon, or follow other regional variations that have sprung up in other Spanish-speaking areas. Or you can dunk your *fartons* in a warm chocolate beverage.

What was Columbus dunking in his *orxata* just before he set off for “India”? It was not a *fartón*, as those are modern, but it could have been an *almendrado*, a cookie still popular throughout Spain. Blanched flaked almonds and sugar with egg whites, sometimes with vanilla seeds and lemon or orange zest, create a Moorish-inspired macaroon-type cookie characteristic of Granada, where the Moors surrendered to Ferdinand II and Isabella I and where Columbus finally obtained funding for his trip to “India.” *Almendrados* and other almond cookies were also popular in Ferdinand II’s Kingdom of Aragón, of which evidence has been found dating from 1491 (Nathan 2007).

Peoples of two areas of Spain enthusiastically preserve their special identities, the Basque Country (*Euskal Herria*), part of which is in present-day France, and Catalonia in the northeast. To linguists and others, the origins of the Basque people and their language are mysteries. Not so mysterious, except for the reasons why

they do it, is the running of the bulls in the town of Pamplona, *Iruña* in the Basque language, as part of Spain's best-known festival, San Fermín. The Navarre area, of which Pamplona is the capital, shows more of French influence, an influence that shows up in its sweet treats. The Basque Country is well-known for its cuisine. Basques are also famous for their *txoko*, exclusively male cooking clubs dating back to their start in 19th-century San Sebastián (Donostia). Basque desserts tend to be simple, and traditionally are made with local fruits, and, of course, milk, eggs, and sugar. The most notable Basque sweet treat, *pastel vasco*, “Basque cake,” reflects the French influence in both its more common name, *gâteau basque*, and in its taste. It is a sweet treat that originated in 17th century not far north of San Sebastián, in the historical Greater Basque Country which includes modern-day France. *Pastel vasco/gâteau basque*, as most traditional sweets, has regional and family variations, although *pastel vasco* has long commonly included preserves made from the “black Basque cherry,” a Basque Country specialty, known in the area since the 12th century, and vanilla custard, which appeared toward the end of the 19th century (*Gâteau Basque* 2008).

Catalans, as with the folks in the Greater Basque Country, also enthusiastically preserve their special identity. And much of their sweet treat identity lies with—what else?—*crema Catalana*, a sweet treat which only non-Catalans compare to *crème brûlée*. *Crema Catalana* is used in stuffed fruits, such as *Peres de Lleida*, pears from Lleida, one of the oldest towns in Catalonia; *Catànies*; Catalan *marcona* sweetened almonds; *Mató de Pedralbes*, a Catalan cream treat from Barcelona; *Manjar blanco*, a Spanish *blancmange* eaten throughout the Spanish-speaking world; and *Xuixos*, a deep-fried custard-filled cylindrical pastry. Traditionally, *crema Catalana* is served on St. Joseph's day, March 19, whereupon it becomes *crema de Sant Josep*. Its ingredients are simple: egg yolks, milk, and sugar, often flavored with lemon or orange zest and cinnamon.

Crema Catalana ice cream is often flavored with *jerez dulce* (sweet sherry) or the famous sweet Spanish Cream Sherry (*Jerez*; *Xeres*), from the town of Jerez de La Frontera in the Andalusia region, a center of viticulture since the days of the Phoenicians and Romans. The terms *Sherry*, *Jerez*, and *Xeres* are themselves derived from the Arabic of the Moorish times in Andalusia. Sherry is one of the sweet treats Christopher Columbus took with him on his voyage.

They still serve *crema Catalana* in Café Iruña in Pamplona, one of Ernest Hemingway's favorite hangouts. Look for it on the menu as *natillas*, a rich sweet cold custard with vanilla and cinnamon.

Throughout the world all food traditions continue their love affair with honey, *miel* in Spanish. A well-known Catalan sweet treat, *miel y mató*, traditionally pairs honey with a goats' milk cheese (*mató*) from the mountain area of Montserrat northwest of Barcelona, a cheese already popular in the Middle Ages when it was scented



Miel y mató, a well-known traditional Catalan sweet treat, pairs honey with goats' milk cheese (*mató*) from the mountain area of Montserrat northwest of Barcelona, a cheese already popular in the Middle Ages when it was scented with orange flowers. (Courtesy of Tamorlan.)

haute cuisine throughout much of the world. Anrià's restaurant, *El Bulli* near the town of Rosas near the city of Barcelona, won the World's Best Restaurant title five times before Anrià closed it in 2011. Cooking with nitrogen oxide canisters and the like, Adrià created *mástic de miel y mastic*, "Mastic of Honey and Mastic"—an "almost bodyless honey-flavored foam." We can only guess what the woman of Bicorp might think of that. "Mastic of Honey and Mastic," unfortunately, is not a sweet treat easily created at home.

On the whole, everything considered, from early prehistoric times right through present times and into the future, with *almendrados* or *crema Catalana*, with *farçons* or foam forms, nothing beats the sweet treat New Worlds discovered in Spain.

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with orange flowers. Today Montserrat in Catalonia and Montroy in Valencia produce much of Spain's honey. And today Spain is the largest honey producer in the European Union. The Valencia Honey Fair is a popular event held in Montroy in November. The Mesolithic woman of Bicorp, the prehistoric one whose image appears on the ancient cave wall 36 miles down the road in Araña, would be proud of her homeland.

Spain looks not only to the past but also to the future, and the sweetness of honey blends in equally well with past, contemporary, and future foods. The leading *avant-garde* chef in the world is generally considered to be Catalan Ferran Adrià, one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people of our times. The trend with which he is identified, *nueva cocina* with its molecular gastronomy, the "new cooking" of Spain, has become the trailblazer of

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The Spanish Caribbean

(Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico)

Spanish Caribbean sweet treats today reflect the fruits and root crop flavors of ancient times and the historical mixture of the peoples and cultures of the region: the aboriginal Amerindian Arawaks and Arawak-speaking Taínos, the conquering and intermarrying Europeans, the West Africans of the sugar plantation slave trade and early gold mining eras, and the later immigrants to the area, especially those from India and China who arrived after various abolishments of slavery in the 19th century.

It was on his second voyage in 1493 that Columbus brought sugarcane to America—thereby changing forever the sweet treats offerings of not only the Caribbean and all of the New World but also of Europe and much of the rest of the world. As sugar became more important to the islands, so did the sugar-making by-products of molasses and rum. And as sugar became more important, honey became a minor ingredient in sweet treats, especially compared with neighboring Mexico and the countries of Central America.

To this day sweet treats in the Spanish Caribbean retain much of their colonial flavor—largely a Spanish-Portuguese flavor blended with those of the indigenous Amerindian peoples whom Columbus met. These peoples spoke Arawak, the name itself though to be derived from the word for a main staple, cassava flour/starch, *aru*. Their main staple crop for well over a thousand years was *yuca* (not to be confused with *yucca*)—a long, thick, tough-skinned root domesticated in the rainforests of Brazil about 2000 BC, but *yuca*, also now known as *manioc*, is now often also considered native to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and most of the West Indies. *Yuca* remains a staple crop of the region, appearing in a large variety of foods and playing a prominent role in modern-day sweet treats. *Yuca* is one of the few original foods to survive early Spanish contact, in both its sweet and bitter varieties. It is generally classified as “sweet” or “bitter,” and great care must be taken to remove the toxins from the latter.

Yuca fritters, *buñuelos de yuca*, are today enjoyed throughout Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. In the Dominican Republic, *yuca* dough made from grated *yuca*, egg yolks, sugar, baking powder, salt, and vegetable oil is rolled into small balls about 1½ inches in diameter, which are cooked in hot oil until they become a crusty-crispy golden brown. Sweet syrup made from coconut milk and the hard, unrefined dark-brown block-sugar generally known as *panela*, and seasoned with cinnamon and cloves, typically tops the warm golden brown fritters. *Buñuelos de yuca* are especially and traditionally enjoyed during the Christmas and Easter holidays.

Cubans often include one or more other vegetables in their *buñuelos*. Typically, they include *malanga*, the Cuban white sweet potato—a root crop also known as *boniato* and *batata*—and traditionally Cubans top their distinctive four-inch figure-eight-shaped *pastry* with *alimbar*, a dark, sweet, thick anise and cinnamon-flavored honey or sugar syrup. Nowadays Cubans add some butter to the mixture, and, quite often, a bit of the sugar by-product, Cuban rum, for which they are famous. Sweet potatoes like the *batata* were first tasted by Europeans in 1492 by members of the Columbus expedition and were brought back to Spain in the same year.

In addition to *buñuelos de yuca*, Dominicans also make a much-loved anise-flavored *yuca* fritter popularly called—and looking a bit like—“little spiders”: *arañitas* (*arepitas de yuca*). Nowadays the Puerto Ricans eat sweet *yuca* fritters (*buñuelos de yuca*) less frequently than folks in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and more often make their fritters with corn, rather than *yuca*, prompting some to suggest that Puerto Rican sweet *yuca* fritters were originally an import from Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

North Americans are most familiar with *yuca* in the form of tapioca, especially “pearl tapioca,” small white-colored balls made from tapioca starch. Tapioca, a staple food throughout the West Indies, is popular in a variety of desserts throughout the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. The popular sweet tapioca

pudding is made from tapioca pearls which have been soaked in water and cooked with milk, sugar, eggs, and vanilla, much like “tapioca pudding” in North America. Tapioca pearls are also used as thickening in a number of other puddings, including the favorites: vanilla, chocolate, banana, and coconut.

Tapioca pearls are commonly used in pudding, but they can also appear in fruit sweetened shaved ice treats and in hot drinks. Shaved ice drinks topped with fruit-flavored syrup, found year-round, are known as *frio-frios* or *guayaos* in the Dominican Republic; the pointy orange, lemon, coconut, strawberry, passion fruit, guava, and tamarind versions in Puerto Rico are known as *piraguas* (sold on the streets by the *piraguero*), and in Cuban the shaved ice treats are known as *granizados*. Vanilla, chocolate, coconut, bananas, and pineapple became an important part of the great “Columbian Exchange” of sweet treat ingredients. Vanilla and chocolate are native to Honduras and Mexico. Hernán Cortés is commonly credited with bringing vanilla from Mexico to Europe in the 1520s, and chocolate is known in Europe from 1544 onward. Columbus discovered the pineapple on his second journey in 1493, and immediately brought it back to Europe where it quickly became an important royal sweet treat celebrity fruit treasured for its tangy sweetness, as a major curiosity for epicureans and horticulturists alike, as valued royal gifts symbolic of royal privilege, as the crowning piece to royal banquets, and, as it remains today, a symbol of hospitality.

The Spanish missionary Father Tomás de Berlanga brought bananas from Gran Canaria of the Canary Islands to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic in 1516, where they were first cultivated and “whence they spread to the other settlements of this Island and to all the islands peopled by Christians. And they have been carried to the mainland, and in every port they flourished” (Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo 1526, quoted in Koeppel 2008). Along with coconuts, they have since been a key ingredient in Caribbean sweet treats.

Coconuts in the New World are an enigma; they may actually have floated over from their native lands in insular Southeast Asia and southern India, although the precise original home is disputed. Some speculate that coconuts—as well as a non-commercial variety of banana—may have been brought over to the Pacific side of the Americas by very early explorers or wanderers from Southeast Asia or Oceania. Not disputed is that coconuts were named by the Portuguese explorers who came upon them earlier in India. In any event, Columbus found coconuts in widespread use in the Spanish Caribbean upon his arrival in 1492. Coconut water and flesh have since become key sweet treat ingredients worldwide, and today are still some of the most widely used sweet treat ingredients in the Spanish Caribbean. Puerto Ricans, for example, are well-known for their favorite, *tembleque de coco*, or simply *tembleque*, a sweet “trembling/wobbly” coconut creamy pudding made with just coconut milk, sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon sticks, salt, and vanilla, topped with ground cinnamon.

Coconuts and pineapples blend with vanilla in many Spanish Caribbean sweet treats and feature prominently especially in Dominican desserts. The Dominican Republic is often identified with two national sweets: *bizcocho criolla* (Dominican creole vanilla cake) and *majarete dominicano* (Dominican cooked corn pudding). *Bizcocho criolla*, the “national cake of the Dominican Republic,” is an airy and moist, light vanilla sponge cake-like dessert with a fresh pineapple jam filling or, occasionally, a coconut cream filling, covered with Dominican meringue frosting (*suspiro*). “Dominican cake is the center of every Dominican celebration. No wedding, baptism or birthday is complete in the Dominican Republic without our delicious traditional cake” (Aunt Clara’s Kitchen 2011). It is complicated to make, and for that reason is not now often homemade in the Dominican Republic. And as is often the case with complicated as well as simple national desserts, recipes are both guarded and varied. *Bizcocho criolla* is about a third fat, enveloped in a large volume of air—the perfect “recipe” for a delectable national airy sweet treat treasure.

Majarete dominicano also “identifies Dominicans,” although Cuba and Puerto Rico and other Latin American countries have “traditional desserts” by the same name. In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, *majarete* is usually eaten as a dessert, although it is also a favorite pudding for breakfast. Puerto Ricans use rice flour, rice or coconut milk, evaporated milk, and sugar, resulting in a *majarete* quite different from the Dominicans, who traditionally use freshly grated corn (or, occasionally, corn meal), coconut milk, milk, sugar, and spices. The Dominican version is closer to that of the silky Cuban cooked corn pudding, which is also made with freshly grated corn and coconut milk, both often being served with cinnamon and vanilla.

The Spanish influence on sweet treats appears universally in the Spanish Caribbean in one version of *flan* custard or another. The custard-type dessert made with eggs, condensed milk, sugar, and vanilla is a favorite dessert throughout Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico and appears in as many flavors as local fruits and special regional products allow: coconut, rum, coconut rum, rum and coconut, banana, pumpkin, breadfruit, milk *flan*, vanilla *flan*, cream cheese and pineapple *flan*, caramel, orange, chocolate, guava, lemony, strawberry, cinnamon, honey-mango, coffee, and so on—the list seems to have no end.

The lingering Spanish influence on Cuban desserts is also seen in their *flan* look-a-like dessert *tocinillo de cielo* (“little bacon from heaven”), a sweet treat of the region since the arrival of Columbus. It is simply made with egg yolks, sugar, citrus, and water—rather than the *flan*’s whole eggs, milk, or cream (but usually both). It is lighter and sweeter than the classic Spanish *flan*. *Tocinillo de cielo* originated in the sherry-producing capital of Jerez de La Fronteta, in the southern Spanish province of Cádiz of the Andalusia region, where vintners used egg whites to clarify their world-famous *Jerez* wine, which is generally known to the world as sherry. The inventive Cádiz natives used the leftover yolks for *tocinillo*

de cielo, thus creating their now well-known dessert. Citrus, itself a characteristic feature prominent in and of the early Andalusia region and brought to the Spanish Caribbean at the end of the near 800-year occupation of the Andalusia region of the Iberian Peninsula by Muslim peoples, punctuates the hallmark sweet. Modern-day *tocinillo de cielo* can be almond-flavored, rather than citrus, another flavor favorite of Muslim Andalusia. No one really knows where or how the name “little bacon from heaven” originated, but the dessert itself dates back at least to 1324 when it was a noted sweet treat created by the nuns of the Convent of the Holy Spirit of Jerez de La Frontera. Columbus set sail from the city of Cádiz on his second and fourth voyages, suggesting a long presence of *tocinillo de cielo* in the Spanish Caribbean. Today, the Jerez de La Frontera region is still famous for the dessert, and its transplanted version in Cuba remains popular, although in recent years Cuban austerity programs have made it a less frequently enjoyed sweet treat than in pre-Revolutionary days.

Cubans today more often enjoy a sweet potato paste quite unlike most North American desserts. It is a very sweet, smooth, custardy cream pudding made from *boniato* (*batata*), the “Cuban white sweet potato.” Less mysteriously named than the “bacon from heaven,” the Cuban treat is simply called *boniatillo*, “white sweet potato paste pudding.” It is made using the delicately flavored *boniato* tubers, which were in Cuba when Columbus arrived, having been domesticated with other potatoes originating in South America some 10,000 years ago. *Boniatillo* is a favorite holiday sweet treat, uniquely Cuban, made with the cream-colored flesh of the Cuban white sweet potatoes, dark sugar, water, heavy cream, cinnamon, citrus, and—in typical 16th-century Andalusian fashion—egg yolks and sherry.

Sweet potatoes are a main ingredient in desserts in the Spanish Caribbean, and for most sweet potato sweets-loving natives, there is simply no substitute for the *boniato*. It remains the favored ingredient for sweet potato pudding, sweet potato rum cake, and other similar desserts. In the Puerto Rican *cocina criolla* cuisine, a favorite version appears as *nisperos de batata*, sweet potato balls with coconut, sugar, cloves, and cinnamon. Cubans make a well-loved sweet potato cake. They likewise make a special typically Cuban sweet treat called *cafiroleta*, a sweet dessert of *boniatillo* covered with *coquimol*, a coconut milk custard sauce. Cubans especially enjoy *coquimol* on their cake. *Coquimol* is a sweet custard-like coconut cream sauce, also typically Cuban, made with coconut milk or coconut cream, sugar, egg yolks, vanilla, a touch of nutmeg, and light rum.

Cubans enjoy rum in things such as banana rum custard tarts, Cuban coconut rum *flan* (*flan de coco y ron*), rum and banana donuts, rum and raisin bread pudding, their version of *tres leche cake*, and, of course, their famous Cuban rum cake. Puerto Ricans, of course, also join in on the sponge rum cake, *bizcocho de ron*, with much of their attention often focused on the type of rum one chooses rather than the cake itself. Rum cakes are popular *throughout* the Caribbean, especially for

the Christmas holidays, although, some suggest, these are a descendent of the English holiday puddings brought to the islands by mid-17th-century English settlers.

With the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Fidel Castro promoted the slogan “everyone eats the same” and, as embargos resulted in de facto compulsory locavorism, the bountiful tropical fruits and sugarcane became a renewed core of sweet treats in Cuba. However, in tropical locations throughout the world fruits fresh and dried have always been a major part of sweet treat traditions. And as many have suggested, sometimes the best sweet treat is a fresh fruit cocktail. Today folks in the Spanish Caribbean continue to enjoy the fruits Columbus came to know for the first time in his early voyages, as well as those he and subsequent explorers brought with them from Europe and neighboring Latin American countries. Today, the Spanish Caribbean fruits and the other sweet treats reflect the history of the islands. Today one readily finds coconut, pineapple, mango, papaya, passion fruit, breadfruit, guava, bananas, plantains, grapefruit, citron, and guanabanas (soursops). And, of course, one finds important ingredients and flavorings like vanilla, sesame seeds, cinnamon, pumpkin sweet potatoes, sugarcane, molasses, rice, and coffee. These fruits and other bounties combine in Spanish Caribbean unique desserts and traditional preserves, jellies, desserts, and cakes. Guava, pineapple, or strawberry jam, for example, often delightfully fills little thumb-print dimples in classical treats like Puerto Rican *mantecaditos*, shortbread sugar cookies popular at Christmas time.

And, of course, nowadays in the tropics of the Spanish Caribbean, these fruits and other signature flavors all sooner or later merge in one way or another in the ever- and universally-popular-anytime ice cream and ice cream treats.

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Sri Lanka

Shrewdly not mentioning that Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, was the source of the finest cinnamon ever known to the world, Marco Polo (1254–1324), the famed merchant adventurer from spice-trading Venice, described his visit to Ceylon and in it called

the teardrop-shaped island off the tip of India “the finest island of its size in all the world”—and, he added, just in the Indian Ocean one had 12,700 to choose from. The finest island in the world also produced the only true cinnamon in the world, *Cinnamomum verum*. While the true source of true cinnamon was kept secret by the Arab spice merchants for centuries, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) became famous for its cinnamon from the 16th century onward.

Sri Lanka, is today, however, best known for its tea—“Ceylon tea”—a legacy of the English who began growing tea experimentally in Sri Lanka in the 1830s, then developing it commercially when Sri Lanka’s main crop, coffee, was decimated with “coffee blight” toward the close of the 1860s. British much earlier had also introduced nutmeg, in 1667, when they ceded the nutmeg-rich island of Run to the Dutch. Cocoa had also been introduced to Sri Lanka for the first time in 1834 and then was reintroduced in 1880. Today, it is said, Sri Lanka still produces the best criollo cocoa, and it is one of the world’s leading exporters of tea.

When a cinnamon war unfolded between the Dutch and the English in the 16th century, the Kingdom of Kandy controlled the mountainous and thickly forested interior of central and eastern Sri Lanka. Kandy Kings ruled Sri Lanka from 1469–1815, allying themselves first with the Portuguese and then with the Dutch, and intermittently with neighboring kingdoms. From the 1590s until 1815, the Kingdom of Kandy was the sole independent native-state on the island, eventually becoming a protectorate of Great Britain in 1815. The Dutch first made contact and a trade agreement with the Kingdom of Kandy in 1602. And they intermarried.

Descendants of intermarriages between colonists and local women from the 16th to 20th centuries are known as Burghers, from the Dutch word meaning “town dweller” or “citizen.” By legal ruling, Burghers are descendants of a father born in Sri Lanka, with at least one European ancestor on one’s father’s side. Most are Portuguese and Dutch, with some French and German. Dutch Burghers tend to be the descendants of employees of the Dutch East India Company who chose to remain in Sri Lanka when the British took over the government of the country. Today the Burghers’ language is English, a language spoken only by about 10 percent of the population, and one constitutionally considered a “link” language. Almost three-fourths of the Sri Lankan population are Sinhala-speaking Sinhalese. About 18 percent speak Tamil, a national language along with Sinhala. Burghers are a mixture of East and West and are the most Westernized of Sri Lanka peoples but have contributed much to local and regional cultures, including sweet treats like love cake, *bol fiado* (layered cake; *bolo* is Portuguese for cake), and *ijzer koekjes*, “iron cookies” (wafer-like cookies made on a baking iron, much like the Dutch *stroopwafels*). Burghers tend to have a very strong interest in their family histories, and so we have a complete facsimile edition of the recipe book of Ada de La Harpe, a Sri Lankan Dutch Burgher born in 1883, which gives a direct look into their sweet treats repertoire of the times. “Taken as

a whole, a woman's *recipe* book is the record of her life," suggests her grandson, Paul van Reyk, and taken as a whole it is also a record of her culture (Van Reyk 2006; 2013). Ada's treasured treat recipes include the famed love cake, a classical Christmas cake (with three pages of ingredients and notes), and seven other cakes and sweetened breads. Ada has recipes for six different preserves, marmalades, and jellies—citron, guava, moss, yellow pumpkin (or paw paw), ginger, and pineapple—and four puddings—*jaggery*, cornstarch, sago, and a version of sago pudding called "Singapore pudding" (with sago boiled in milk with a little *jaggery* until thick, then served with *jaggery* and milk on the side, much like a porridge). Four *cajunut* (cashew) sweets, two custards, Dutch-type waffles, English-type scones, two sweet pastes and sauces, and iced coffee sweetened with condensed milk and sugar complete the book. Ada's 19th-century Christmas Cake Recipe is a classic. Why not try it out?

Sixty-nine percent of the population of Sri Lanka are Buddhists, about 8 percent are Muslim, and 7 percent are Hindu. Buddhists from India arrived first, in 250 BC. Only 15 percent of total population is urban, and therefore Sri Lankans have more limited access to restaurant and commercial sweet treats than do residents of most other countries. Except with the Burgher culture and perhaps the 10 percent of the population whose religious preferences are "unspecified," religion is a driving force in the annual cycle of sweet treats selection in Sri Lanka. Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians each celebrate their own feasts and festivals. Their followers generally maintain the basic customs of their respective ancestral cultures, but with each favoring fresh fruits for dessert, and adapting their sweet treats recipes to fit local tastes and utilizing locally plentiful ingredients—especially coconut, mango, banana, plantain, citrus, breadfruit, jackfruit, *jaggery* (a natural palm sugar), sugarcane, and rice, all seasoned, when appropriate, with the local world-class spices.

A dessert said to be made and loved by everyone is *wattalapam*, a rich coconut custard made with their prized cinnamon and nutmeg, eggs, coconut milk, *kitul jaggery*, chopped and roasted cashews, and, sometimes, vanilla. *Wattalapam* is said to have likely arrived with Malays who were imported by the Dutch as slaves and indentured servants. Locals, in addition, top the plain yoghurt with *kitul* syrup for another widely popular Sri Lankan dessert. And, of course, to accompany any treats Sri Lankans like to have some fresh coconut water (*thambili*), iced coffee sweetened with condensed milk and sugar, or some sweetened pure "Ceylon tea."

When Marco Polo first set foot on the Island of Sri Lanka he was immediately impressed by both its beauty and bounty. According to legend, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, somewhere over near where the Egyptian Mamluk spice merchants were thought to be fishing up cinnamon with nets, they first set foot on *Śrī Pada* otherwise known as "Adam's Peak," a mountain in south central Sri Lanka sacred to Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians alike. What

Adam and Eve found was not paradise, to be sure, but it still was “the finest island of its size in all the world.”

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Sweden

In an age of Ziplocs, Tupperware, Pyrex, and other disposable or reusable containers, what do you suppose the quote, “The Swedish culinary tradition is otherwise very much a culture of food storage,” means (Swanberg and Granqvist 2012)? The comment describes the origins and history of Swedish cuisine. Out of necessity, to survive long, cold winters, over a thousand years ago, Vikings developed ways to gather, harvest, and preserve fresh food—for both long winters and long voyages. Swedes dried, salted, dehydrated, and cured their food. Swedes still gather, salt, dehydrate, and cure some of their foods.

In addition to customs associated with food storage and preservation, the Kingdom of Sweden, sitting on the east side of the Scandinavian Peninsula in Northern Europe, enjoys other food traditions still embraced not only in Sweden but also in Swedish families and communities around the world.

Take fruit soup, for instance—usually served cold for starters, desserts, and holiday fare. Food historians suggest that soups are probably as old as the act of cooking, made by combining whatever ingredients one had on hand, dried or fresh, to create good, nutritious, satisfying food. It is no surprise, then, that many traditional Swedish fruit soup recipes contain available ingredients: fresh berries, cherries, and apricots, or local dried fruits. Typically, the fruits are combined with milk or cream, and are sweetened with sugar or honey, and may include wine or other spirits. Fruit soups are not common in American diets, for reasons that we do not quite understand; they are delicious, satisfying, nutritious, and beautiful in color and texture.

Beautiful colors and textures are signatures of the *smörgåsbord*, perhaps Sweden’s best-known culinary tradition, which, unlike the American-style buffet, has

specific customs to follow. A traditional *smörgåsbord* consists of four or five elegantly displayed courses, and, according to custom, diners fill clean plates with a small amount of food (large portions are considered inappropriate and wasteful), one course at a time. *Smörgåsbord* desserts follow the Swedish traditions of using local, in-season fruits, and include items such as mousse with cloudberries, apple-cake, *rhumtopf* with Swedish berries, cheese, fresh fruit, and other cakes or desserts of the season. *Jordgubbstårta* (a traditional midsummer strawberry cake) is a favorite treat, especially when served with almond cream. Menus vary with location, tradition, and the season, of course, but the food is always beautifully presented, the servings are well organized, and the guests are fittingly delighted.

The *smörgåsbord* array of desserts and sweets should come as no surprise because sugar, used both as a sweetener and as a morale restorative, has been around for a long time in Sweden. Sugar was first mentioned in Swedish literature describing the 14th-century funeral of Birger Persson, the father of St. Bridget of Sweden and a provincial judge in the east coast province of Uppland. Funeral guests offered each other sugar from small silver boxes to comfort and console one another. Over 300 years later, in 1647, Sweden built its first sugar refinery, but it was not until the mid-1800s that sugar production based on Swedish sugar beets became well established.



Jordgubbstårta, a traditional midsummer strawberry cake, is a favorite Swedish treat, especially when served with almond cream. (Birgitta Sjöstedt/Dreamstime.com)

In addition to sugar, ginger is a pantry staple in Sweden. Originally from India and brought to Northern Europe by Vikings, ginger is often used in Swedish baking and cooking. *Zingiber officinale* is the official name given to ginger by the 18th-century Swedish botanist and naturalist Carl von Linné. Ginger adds flavor to bread and cookies and is the famous ingredient in *pepparkakor* cookies, which are finely rolled and elegantly cut out ginger thins, *not* to be confused with gingersnaps, which are more cakey. *Pepparkakor* are brittlely crisp, sometimes frosted and decorated, sometimes not. They are traditionally served at Christmas but are common year-round. Legend has it that the gingerbread and cookie recipes came from Germany in the 15th century, when the *pepparkakor* really did contain pepper, the most widely sought-after and highly traded spice of that century (hence, the name). Ginger had qualities for diminishing gastrointestinal distress and was an ingredient in medicinal recipes prepared by the Bridgettine nuns in the tiny “city” of Vadstena in 1444, according to the early records. Today, people enjoy *pepparkakor* because they are light, delicious, crisp, and lovely to look at. If you are not good at baking fine, thinly rolled cookies, you can pick up this popular item in the IKEA food section.

Cardamom, a relative of ginger, is also a common pantry spice that lends a delicate flavor to Swedish sweet buns and breads. The aromatic spice dates back to the fourth century BC, when the Greeks prized cardamom as a spice and as a base for herbal medicines. You can buy ground cardamom, just as you can buy ground ginger, but for a genuine, Swedish taste you will want to use whole cardamom pods. The pods are best opened as you need them. Simply roll over the pods with a rolling pin, discard the white pod pieces, and grind the cardamom seeds. Enjoy your sweet buns when you *fika*. *Fika*, which literally translates to mean “coffee,” has become a cultural mainstay, and now means “taking a break to drink coffee or tea and eat something sweet—usually a cardamom bun” (“Fika A Definition” 2012).

Saffron is another spice closely tied to traditional Swedish baking. In the cold, long, dark days of winter, Swedish people celebrate the feast day of the patron saint of light, St. Lucia, a Swedish Christmas tradition going back hundreds of years. On the morning of December 13 (St. Lucia’s Day), a “Lucia” is chosen, usually among the young people. Draped in a beautiful white gown with red ribbons and a crown of candles on her head, Lucia (often the eldest daughter in a family) presents her family with a breakfast of hot coffee and Lucia Buns, sweet S-shaped buns, delicately flavored, and colored with saffron.

Unlike sugar, ginger, and cardamom, David Perry assures us in his article, “Saffron in Early Modern Sweden,” there was no exotic, long, or mysterious trade route through India, to Venice, to Germany, and then to Sweden to get the saffron for the St. Lucia Buns. The Swedish most likely used saffron produced in France or Italy, where the climate was more conducive to growing the millions of crocuses necessary to meet the extraordinary demand for the luxurious spice (it takes about

100,000 flowers to get enough powder from the stigmas to make one pound of saffron).

Easter, too, has its own traditional sweet treats. Both children and adults enjoy *Påskmust*, a cola-like soft drink with no caffeine, a “must” at Easter. Easter is also the busiest time of the year for sweet shops, where chocolate and marzipan are Easter traditions, with dark chocolate nowadays becoming more of a trend. Although enjoyed year-round, a tasty example of the love of chocolate and marzipan is the “vacuum cleaner cake.” A *dammsugare* (literally meaning “dust sucker”) is a pastry, so named because, apparently, in the early 1900s, ever-creative Swedish cooks gathered leftover crumbs, flavored them with punch liqueur and cocoa, and made them into a truffle-like cylinder which was rolled in green marzipan, with the ends dipped in chocolate. Today the Swedes regard *dammsugare*, or *punschrolle*, as one of their favorite pastries. Now widely commercially produced, millions of these pastries are eaten each year.

Spettekaka is an interesting Swedish concoction, a specialty dish in southern Sweden (Skåne). Imagine ribbons of sweet batter piped onto a cone-shaped form that rotates on a spit. *Spettekaka* has been a signature cake in south Sweden since the 17th century. It has Protected Geographical Indication status from the European Union, which means that the cake is only a *spettekaka* if it comes from Skåne (rather as “Champagne” can now only come from the French region of Champagne).

Finally, if you look at an index of any book on Swedish cuisine, you will notice that “Lingonberry” might easily win the prize for subheadings. There are lingonberries in breads, cakes, pies and other desserts, drinks, preserves, schnapps, and, of course, lingonberry jam, which is a condiment served even with fried fish or meat, according to Nils-Arvid Bringeus (2001), in *Man, Food, and Milieu, A Swedish Approach to Food Ethnology*. Swedes eat the small, tart, juicy lingonberries fresh, dried, and preserved. Stored easily at room temperatures, lingonberries early on became an essential part of Swedish cuisine. The iconic Swedish lingonberries, growing wild on low evergreen shrubs in areas cleared of trees, could easily be considered a national food. (Lingonberry jam is another item available in the IKEA grocery section, and you can test several lingonberry treats in IKEA restaurants.)

Some might argue that historically Sweden has not had as much of an influence on international cuisine compared to other European cuisines. But the traditions, the unique breads, the boundless use of local fruit, the cakes, pastries, and cookies, and the *smörgåsbord*, all accompanied by a hospitality that knows no bounds, are worthy of global respect, our curiosity, our appetites, and our appreciation for delicious, practical, ingenious, culinary delights. In recent years, the award-winning Gothenburg-trained Marcus Samuelsson has brought Swedish cuisine to the forefront of world gastronomy, introducing the world to Sweden’s wonderful culinary traditions, including its delightful sweet treats.

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Switzerland

Milk. Chocolate. Swiss.

It is virtually impossible to think of those three words in almost any language of the world without conjuring up images of a beautiful bucolic setting of the tiny Alpine paradise that leads the sweet treat world in chocolate innovation, production,

and consumption. Switzerland, the “Land of Cows and Chocolate,” has dominated the world of chocolate since the end of the 19th century. The Swiss love their chocolate, boutique and name-brand alike. They consume about half of what they produce. And that is a lot! In 2012, as in previous years, the Swiss had the highest per capita consumption of chocolate in the world, consuming 26.2 pounds per person per year. By contrast, Americans consume less than half of that, 11.7 pounds per person per year (2010 data). About three-fourths of the chocolate consumed in Switzerland is milk chocolate, and a fifth dark chocolate, with chocolate consumption peaking at Christmas and Easter. Switzerland’s European neighbors generally prefer dark chocolate.

Their neighbors—Italy, France, Germany, and Austria—have strongly influenced the Swiss sweet treats world beyond chocolate. Switzerland is a small compact landlocked country of about 8 million people, with four official languages. About two-thirds speak a dialect of German, a fifth French, 7 percent Italian, and only a handful in the easternmost canton of Graubünden speak Romansch (a residual language from the days when modern-day Switzerland was part of the historic Roman Empire). Switzerland is a tiny mostly mountainous pastoral country of about 16,000 square miles. It is historically a land of farmers, and hence, apart from the chocolate, their sweet treats tend to be plain and simple, and made from locally available ingredients; honey; native fruits; and especially dairy products, such as milk, cream, butter, cheese, and yoghurt.

Legendary Swiss neutrality breaks down when it comes to sweet treats. Apart from their all-pervasive chocolate treats, Swiss tend to prefer the sweet treats of their same linguistic group neighbors in Germany/Austria, France, and Italy—albeit adapted and adorned with local flare. The three major Swiss language communities, with their strong cultural ties to their respective neighboring groups, tend to have different customs and eat different homemade sweet treats, especially pastries.

German and Austrian style tarts naturally predominate and go by the name of *Wähen* in Switzerland, for example, *Apfelwähe* (Swiss-style apple tart). *Wähen* come in both sweet and savory forms—some filled with bountiful seasonal fruits such as apples, apricots, and plums, and with dairy-based quiche-style fillings. German-speaking Swiss make tarts, pies, and cheesecakes with a basic *süsser mürbeteig* (“sweet shortcrust”), a crust ideally suited to the German/Austrian style *Wähen*. The Swiss version of the Austrian *Linzertorte* is often eaten during Christmastide.

The Swiss also love cookies at Christmastime, *Weihnachts Guetzli* in Swiss-German. “Knee cookies” (*Chnüblätz*), a fried pastry dusted in sugar, traditionally stretched over one’s knee in the preparation stage, appear as Yuletide treats, as do the small, dark, soft, sweet, glazed gingerbread bar-cookies known as *Magenbrot* (“stomach-bread”), made from honey, dark powdered cooking chocolate, milk, flour, butter, eggs, sugar, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, citrus, and baking soda—to which is often added a little *kirschwasser* (*kirsch*—“cherry water,” cherry

brandy) for a little extra flavoring. *Kirschwasser* often also finds its way into *Brunslis* or *Basler brunslis* (“Basel little brown ones”)—also known as “Swiss brownies.” Unlike American “brownies,” they are a dark, rich, chewy, Christmas almond cookies made with cinnamon and cloves. *Basler brunslis* have been, a tradition and specialty of northern Switzerland since the 16th century, along with the famed 15th-century treat *Basler leckerli* (“Basel treats”)—rectangular sweet gingerbread made from honey, sugar, flour, candied fruits, nuts, and, of course, *kirschwasser*. *Schwabenbrötli* (“Swabia cookies”) are a very traditional egg- or milk-glazed ground almond and cinnamon flat cookie from the neighboring German region of Schwabia, which are molded or cut into various forms. *Tirggel*, a very hard, flat, decorative molded, strong-flavored, sweet honey cookie, is associated with the Swiss capital city of Zurich. *Tirggel* origins go back to the 15th century in the Canton of Zurich, where they were a luxury item for hundreds of years. Honey-rich *tirggel* are baked for a short time at very high temperatures, much like the famed Belgian *couques de Dinant*, and much the same as the Belgian cookie from Dinant, they are a rock-hard cookie often best sucked rather than chewed.



The 15th-century treat *Basler leckerli* (“Basel treats”) are hard rectangular sweet gingerbread biscuits made from honey, sugar, flour, candied fruits, nuts, and *kirschwasser* (a clear cherry brandy). (Quanthem/Dreamstime.com)

Most of the many Swiss Christmas cookies rest overnight before baking, and several varieties contain as much or more almond than flour. The list of Christmas cookies goes on and on. The *Mailänderli* (“Little Milano” cookies), perhaps the quintessential Swiss Christmas cookie, are a just slightly sweet egg-enriched, egg-washed shortbread with a hint of lemon that some say are actually the most popular Christmas cookie in all of Switzerland. *Zimtsterne* (“cinnamon stars”) are likewise found everywhere at Christmas. The most unusual looking Swiss Christmas creation is the *Chräbeli*, an anise-flavored cookie with little “feet.” And the best Christmas cookie in Switzerland? Not surprisingly, the Swiss agree. It is the one made according to your grandmother’s recipe.

Some “Swiss” sweet treats are not really Swiss, at least not Swiss in origin, including the famed meringue and “Swiss rolls.” Swiss legend has it that meringue was invented by an Italian chef named Gasparini in the 1720s in the beautiful little Alpine village of Meiringen. Food historians, however, suggest that is not likely; the first mention of it appears in print in François Massialot’s 1691 French cookbook, with the word *merengue* probably entering the French from the German language. Nevertheless, simple pure white meringue made of nothing more than egg whites and sugar is called “Swiss meringue,” and that fact is well known, appearing as it does in sweet treats throughout the world.

Throughout the world one also finds many variations of the “Swiss roll,” a confection often known in the United States as a jellyroll, made by rolling up a thin oblong sheet of sponge cake spread with jam, which when sliced cross-sectionally reveals a round spiral of thick yellow sponge cake with a thin strip of jam—or buttercream, or ice cream, or whipped cream, or chocolate. The exact origins of the term “Swiss roll,” like the origins of meringue, are unclear. In Switzerland, this variety of sponge cake, known to the rest of the world as a “Swiss roll,” is called *Biskuitroulade* or *Roulade* in Swiss German, *gâteau roulé* or *roulade* in French, and *biscotto arrotolato* in Italian.

Whatever you call your Swiss sweet treats, you will find them delicious and satisfying and often milk chocolatey. And wherever in the world you are when you call for them, they will likely be there, in one form or another.

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Syria

Since the end of the last Ice Age the lands of modern-day Syria have seen the rise and fall of almost 30 cultures and civilizations. Damascus, the capital of Syria, is said by many to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world and civilization in Syria to be one of the most ancient—notwithstanding the claims of first-century Philo of Byblos (*ca.* AD 64–141) that the early coastal Phoenician city of Byblos to the northeast of Damascus is the oldest city. Strategically located in the Eastern Mediterranean amid ancient trade routes to the Asian, European, and African continents, Syria incurred many settlements, invasions, and occupations over the past 12,000 years. Today on the streets of Damascus one can find sweet treats echoing the tastes of many of those past civilizations. Many of their traditional sweet treats now reflect their Muslim past and present. Today, 90 percent of Syria's 22.5 million people are Muslim.

Sweets are an important part of the religion of Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur'an*—the sacred book of Islam—and honey. The Prophet Muhammad's favorite sweets were honey, dates, and *hais*, which is a mixture of curds, dates, and clarified butter. Health in Islam reflects a state of equilibrium between body, mind and soul; hence honey, dates, and sweets in general, took on religious, medicinal, and culinary importance in all of the countries inhabited primarily by Muslims.

Sweets are central in the all-important observance of the month-long fasting of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Other food customs of Islam, like *tahneek*, likewise promote ritual sweet treats. Muslims following *sunnah* (the way of life prescribed and modeled by the Prophet Muhammad) break their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan fasting each day of the month with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with dates in commemoration of the Prophet's own breaking of the fast. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals. *Katayef*, one of the most popular and traditional Syrian sweet treats during all of Ramadan, are a customary treat served after the daily Ramadan fast is broken. *Katayef* date back to the Fatimids—a 10th-century Syrian religious movement mainly of the descendants of Fati-mah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. *Katayef* are sweet pancake-like pastries, which, after being cooked on one side, are filled with clotted cream, unsalted cheese, or sweetened goat cheese, or pistachios or walnuts or cashews, then folded, sealed, and deep fried. Family as well as regional recipes vary, but Syrians in general prefer pistachio filling for pastries.

The month of Ramadan fasting ends with the all-important three-day joyous feast of *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival. Visiting and gifting mark the feasting, and during *Eid al-Fitr* Muslim hosts offer sweets to visiting relatives and friends, traditional sweets such as *ghraibeh* (pistachio shortbread cookies), *ma'amoul* (a golden crumbly cookie filled with ground

pistachio or walnuts, or sweet dates), *karabeej halab* (a smaller special-occasion version of *ma'amoul*), and *batlawwa* (*baklava*).

Karabeej halab, small sweet pistachio-filled cinnamon and *mahlab*-flavored semolina cookies, originated in the ancient city of Aleppo, in northwest Syria, known in ancient times and in modern-day Arabic as Halab, the largest city in modern-day Syria, with a 5,000-year history. The formerly prosperous Silk Roads city is known for its pomegranates, and *samna* (ghee)-rich sweets and pastries, especially those using local pistachios. *Karabeej halab* is a Syrian favorite, flavored with *mahlab*—an aromatic spice made from pits of the St. Lucie cherry—and served with the Lebanese cream *natef*—an elastic meringue-like bitter-sweet tasting topping made with syrup, egg whites, and soapwort root sprinkled with cinnamon. Aleppo is also known for *mabrumeh* (a *baklava*-type rolled dessert made with *phyllo*, pistachios, and honey), and *balloriyyeh* (a sweeter-than-local-average white baked pistachio-filled pastry cut into squares and topped with sugar syrup).

Syrian *batlawwa*—one of the most celebrated Syrian sweet treats, known to most of the world as *baklava*—is a rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multilayered honey- or sugar-drenched *phyllo* pastry with chopped nuts. *Baklava* is frequently found in countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire and in parts of Asia. Although commonly identified with Greece, it is generally accepted by food historians that *batlawwa* was first documented as early as the eighth century BC in ancient Syria, with the Assyrians who put chopped nuts between their thinnish bread dough layers and drenched the lot with honey. Today, classic Syrian *batlawwa* is made from *phyllo*, a filling made with walnuts mixed only with sugar and *samna* (Syrian ghee), and then drizzled with syrup made from sugar, water, and few drops of lemon juice only—although there are many varieties of *batlawwa* in Syria, as there are throughout the Mediterranean. While traditionally diamond-shaped, *batlawwa* is available in different shapes and sizes, and with a variety of fillings; bakers from Aleppo, for example, use their famed local pistachios. Other versions contain cashews, pine nuts, and the traditional walnuts.

The Ottoman Turks at Istanbul (1453–1923), a major center of sweet treats and culinary inspiration from about 1465–1856, influenced *baklava* as it appeared in other countries, with Armenians having added cinnamon and cloves and Arabs contributing the rose water and cardamom. *Baklava*, a recurrent favorite in many countries, in other places and times absorbed the flavors and ingredients of adopting cultures, as is typically the case with the diffusion of popular sweet treats. And as is also typical of much-beloved iconic sweet treats in general, many countries claim ownership of invention. Greeks, Turks, Cypriots, Lebanese, Chinese, and other cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean, and Syrians as well, love their own version of *baklava* and love to claim both its superiority and credit for its invention. The best *baklava*, it turns out, seems to be the one from wherever you are eating it. And eating it is sort of a luxury. Historically, until mid-19th century, *baklava* was primarily a sweet treat of the elites.

Syrian sweets are famous for their cream, cheese, dates, honey, and especially pistachios. Aleppo's *halva* dessert with pistachios is a local perennially favorite version of a classic confection widely popular in the Middle East, Asia, Central Europe, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. While there are a number of Syrian cheeses, one of the most famous is Syrian string cheese (*jibneh mshallaleh*), which is a fine white semi-soft smooth and springy cheese generally made with cow's milk—although it can be prepared from sheep or goat milk—flavored with black cumin or nigella seeds, and the cherry-flavored *mahlab*. Syrian string cheese is similar to mozzarella, but with spices, and it is often still made at home. Brought to Aleppo by Armenian immigrants, the cheese became known as *Halabi* cheese (“cheese of Aleppo”). *Halabi* string cheese can be eaten in its original form, a very popular way to eat it, or it can be incorporated into pastries.

Syrians love pastry, especially pistachio-filled pastry steeped in *atar* syrup (rose water or orange blossom water and honey or sugar), and with *ashta* (a special Middle Eastern clotted cream). One can find other favorites virtually anywhere, including *borma* (“bird’s nest” pastry), a kind of vermicelli-looking shredded pastry with chopped or ground pistachios or other nuts (usually walnuts or almonds), and *knafeh*, a popular dessert that comes in a variety of shapes, textures, and fillings, but most often is presented in a pan, with fillings ranging from cheese to nuts. Popular cookie-like sweets include *barazeh*, small round, thin, flat, light and crumbly sesame-seed-coated cookies with pistachios on the bottom—a specialty of Damascus—and *karabeej*, sweet pistachio-filled semolina finger-shaped pastry.

Even with all of the world-class sweet pastries and cookies available, Syrians generally prefer to eat fresh fruits after a hardy meal—as is common throughout much of the Middle East and Africa and other areas of the world. Modern Syrians primarily share a love of dates—“the desert’s candy”—fresh, dried, and caramelized (*tamria*). And they also enjoy the other fresh and dried fruits no doubt loved by the earliest pre-urban citizens of the Levant as far back as 12,000 years ago. In addition to figs and dates, popular fresh fruits today include apples, apricots (especially

The World's Largest Marzipan Sweet

A 9,255 lb. 14 oz. pistachio-flavored marzipan made by 225 chefs in Aleppo, Syria, set the record for the world's largest marzipan sweet on July 1, 2003. The confection used about 264 lbs. of pistachios, 6,613 lbs. of sugar, 3,306 lbs. of almonds, 4.4 lbs. of vanilla, 138 gal. of water, and an undisclosed amount of bitter orange flower water. Pistachio nuts are a signature ingredient of Aleppo.

Guinness World Records. Accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>.

of Damascus), cherries, grapes, lemons, melons, pears, and pomegranates. Syrian fruit salad is popular, a combination of dried and fresh fruits. Dried fruits are soaked in apple or orange juice and rose water and orange blossom-flavored sugar water for 12–48 hours, with fresh fruits and chopped nuts (pistachios, walnuts, almonds, and pine nuts) added just before serving.

Fruits are also candied; candied pears with cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger are popular. *Qamar al-deen* (*amardeen*), thin dried sticky sheets of sweetened apricot purée, “apricot leather,” are common and are eaten as a snack like candy, or made into pudding, and used to make thick smoothie-like drinks. Except for the smoothie-like drinks made with *qamar al-deen*, Syrian treats most often are enjoyed with heavily sweetened Arabic coffee.

More than half of all Syrians live in urban areas, and hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, those who can afford it enjoy available international and commercial sweets. The not-so-sweet political situation in modern-day Syria, however, makes commercially available sweets and the money to purchase them difficult to come by. Nevertheless, the traditional sweet treats will endure, as they have for millennia—from the “desert candy” dates of ancient times to the sweetest *batlawa* of the modern-day world.

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T

Taiwan

Taiwan is a country composed of a group of islands off the southeastern coast of China. With a population of 23.3 million, 84 percent of whom are Taiwanese and 14 percent comprising mainland Chinese, the small country of Taiwan is one of the most densely populated places in the world. Taiwan is only slightly larger than Belgium, but has 1 million more people than giant Australia, the sixth largest country in the world.

The capital Taipei has around 20 streets dedicated to snacking. And snack Taiwanese do. Journalist Hiufu Wong points to a dozen sweet treats among the top 40 foods Taiwanese “can’t live without.” Slightly sweet sesame flat bread with a thin crispy layer and soft center, classical deep-fried Chinese donuts, and soymilk often start one’s day, followed by mid-morning snacks of cakes, fried dough delights, and sweetened breads.

Taiwan is perhaps best known for its iconic pineapple cake and emblematic sun cake. Pineapple cakes are mini pineapple pies filled with candied pineapple, preferably local pineapple. Round sun cakes (*tai yang bing*), the famous dessert of the western city of Taichung, the third largest city in Taiwan, are flaky pastries filled with maltose (malt sugar).

Throughout Taiwan, pan-fried buns offer the fluffiness of cake as well as the crunchiness of potato chips. Locals make these Shanghainese-type buns with spongy white Chinese bread, pan-fried on the bottom. A filled bun is nowadays called *baozi* or *bao*, while a classic Chinese unfilled bun is known by the older term, *mantou*. Deep-fried *mantou* served with sweetened condensed milk are an enduring Chinese dessert. In Taiwan, the pan-fried buns often contain a moist pork filling, but they are also filled with sweet things, like lotus seed paste, black sesame seed paste, or red *azuki* bean paste.

Sweet red *azuki* bean paste also commonly fills soft-as-marshmallow chewy sticky rice balls known as *mochi*. Traditional *mochi* are rolled in peanut powder. In recent years, strawberry jam, sesame paste, green tea jam, and peanut paste have also become popular fillings. *Fen yuan* refers to all the chewy dough that Taiwanese like to add to their desserts. *Fen yuan* are sometimes made with sticky rice flour, with various fillings. One version is like sweet sticky marbles. Its dough is slightly translucent when steamed, revealing colorful insides—typically red bean, green



Taiwanese enjoy traditional cakes, fried dough delights, and sweetened breads at tea time. (Lcc54613/Dreamstime.com)

flavorings, such as mango pieces, juice and sweet condensed milk, onto finely shaved ice. A more traditional treat, a smaller, less dramatic option, is made with mini rice balls. Shaved ice is sometimes simply served drizzled with condensed milk. Gelatinous *aiyu* jelly added to the shaved ice gives the liquid “a fun gloopy texture.” Made from the seeds of a variety of fig found locally in Taiwan, *aiyu* jelly is a very wobbly, neutral-tasting Jell-O-like creation, but it can be served on its own with honey and lemon juice; the *aiyu* jelly more often takes on the flavor of whatever it is eaten with. *Aiyu* jelly is not generally found outside of Taiwan and Singapore.

Taiwanese are also known for their love of stinky tofu, and pig’s blood rice pudding. Stinky tofu, next to the ripe durian fruit popular in many parts of Southeast Asia, may be the world’s number-one love-it-or-hate-it snack. Once popular with the royal family of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), which immediately preceded the establishment of the Republic of China, stinky tofu is a snack now commonly sold at roadside stands and night markets. Snackmasters deep-fry the “fragrant” cubes of bean curd, like a deep-fried tofu, then drizzle them with a sweet and spicy sauce. To stinky tofu aficionados, the smellier, the better.

tea, or egg custard. Another version of *fen yuan* is more commonly made from tapioca and without filling; basically it is a sweet tapioca pudding.

When black sugar is added to *fen yuan*, it becomes the black pearls in bubble tea, called pearl *fen yuan*. Taiwanese have come to love the texture of the chewy tapioca balls added to milk tea. It is said that Lin Hsiu Hui of the Chun Shui Tang teahouse in Taichung threw some sweetened tapioca balls into her Assam iced tea at a teahouse staff meeting in 1988, and a classic Taiwanese treat was born. Variations on the theme have since emerged, including taro-flavored tea, jasmine tea or coffee, but bubble tea remains a typically Taiwanese home-grown drink, served hot or cold.

Among the cold dessert varieties, shaved ice mountain is another indispensable Taiwanese treat. Ice mountain creators heap fresh fruits and

Another love-it-or-hate-it snack sold at night markets is pig's blood rice pudding, a black pudding mix of pig's blood and sticky rice, cut into rectangular pieces and served as a pigs-blood-on-a-stick treat. For the final Taiwanese touch, the black pudding is coated in a sweet peanut powder, with a sprinkling of cilantro.

Less adventurous folks looking for a snack at the night markets generally prefer something like flaky scallion pancakes or almost anything made out of sweet potatoes. Taiwan-grown sweet potatoes are roasted by street vendors in ovens converted from oil-drums, or are ground to flour and added to other dishes to give texture, or are fried into sweet potato chips. Night markets also sell ready-to-eat sweet potatoes. Taiwanese love them all; all are beautiful treats from a beautiful island.

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Thailand

The Kings of Siam—the ones who wrote cookbooks and poems about sweet treats in their spare time—reigned over the only country in Southeast Asia that had never been colonized by a European power. In 1939, Siam became known as Thailand.

The Kings of Thailand took great pleasure in hands-on "kitchen experiences." What sweet treats were the kings cooking up? In his most famous food poem, Prince Isarasundhorn, later known as Phra Bat Somdet Phra Borommarajabongjet Mahesvarasundorn Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai, more commonly referred to as King Rama II (1767–1824), generally known as a gentle ruler with a sweet tooth, lauds a number of sweet dishes and snacks (*khrueng wan*) and native fruits. The 47 stanzas of Rama II's poem are divided into three sections: savory dishes (*khrueng kao*), fruits (*phonlamai*), and sweets (*khrueng wan*) (Wongcha-Um 2010).

In "The Boat Song," King Rama II acclaims more than a dozen Thai sweet treats, reports Wongcha-Um in the definitive analysis of the king's work. The king's poem sings the praises of *sangkhaya na tang khai*, a sticky-rice steam-baked type of egg-based custard pudding still popular today. Common varieties of this coconut custard include screwpine (*pandanus* palm) and pumpkin. *Sangkhaya* is a dessert influenced by the Portuguese. *Sangkhaya fakthong* (pumpkin custard) is a dessert proudly promoted today by the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The sliced hardened creamy pumpkin custard is enjoyed with a spoonful of candied pumpkin and coconut custard.

King Rama II sings the praises of *sarim*, a beautiful multicolored sweet vermicelli-like food made of mung bean flour, possibly of Javanese influence, traditionally served with a sweet and creamy coconut milk (the liquid from coconut flesh) and a cooling mint-like spice known as *phimsen* or *patchouli*, and nowadays served with crushed ice. The king next extols *khanom lum-chiak*, also known as *khanom keson lum-chiak*, a pastry made of sticky rice dough wrapped around a filling made of a mixture of coconut, sugar, and jasmine-scented water (*num loi dok mali*). *Khanom* in the Thai language refers generally to “sweetstuff,” thought to be derived from the main sweet treat ingredients popular today, *khao* (rice) and *nom* (sweet). A sweet called *muskot*, rice dough mixed with crushed almond (*ma-tum*) and butter, is thought to be named after the Oman city of Muscat. A similar dish called *huara* is made with coconut milk rather than butter. The king lauds *luti*, a thin pancake made from rice dough, similar to Indian *roti*, and *khanom thian*, a ceremonial steamed pudding of northernmost Thailand. Sugared *khanom thian* sticky rice flour fillings are traditionally steamed wrapped in banana leaves.

Chinese Thais offer *khanom thian* to their ancestors during their New Year’s ceremonies, later gifting the treats to their relatives and friends. A round ball-shaped sweet and creamy cookie-like *khanom phing* also catches the King’s poetic whim. The baked tapioca flour, egg yolk, and coconut milk treat was likely introduced



Traditional Thai baked treats, such as *khao too*, contain only three primary ingredients—flour (originally powdered rice), sugar, and coconut. (Kajornyot/Dreamstime.com)

by the Portuguese in the 17th century. Portuguese sweets use a lot of egg yolks, a relic tradition from early times when Portuguese in Al-Andalus (Andalusia) used egg whites to clarify their celebrated port wines and the thrifty and clever famous sweets-making 17th- and 18th-century Portuguese nuns in their “confectionary epicenters” made use of the yolks in their baked sweet wares.

Traditional Thai baked treats, by contrast, contain only three primary ingredients—flour (originally powdered rice), sugar, and coconut—boiled, fried, steamed, and cooked over coals. *Kluai buat chi* (banana cooked in coconut milk), for example, contains the three primary ingredients plus bananas. Various combinations of these three ingredients and these preparation methods create hundreds of traditional Thai desserts. Of these, the king praises the traditional *rang-rai*, rice dough mixed with flour, coconut milk, sugar, and white sesame, simmered over a fire and sprinkled with coconut flakes before serving.

Thong yod (“golden egg yolks drops”), another Portuguese sweet, introduced by Maria Guyomar de Pinha, is a simmered egg yolk dish known in Portugal as *ovos moles*—“soft eggs,” made only of water, egg yolks, and sugar. Treats named *thong*, meaning “gold,” carry with them a wish for wealth. An extra-crispy, cigar-shaped, wafer-thin fried coconut snack called *thong muan* (“golden curls”), made with rice flour, coconut milk, and eggs, comes seasoned with black sesame seeds, salt, pepper, and, sometimes, garlic. *Thong muan* are similar to Piroulines.

The royal bard applauds *cha mongkut*, literally meaning a royal treat (*monkut* means a crown), served at special celebratory occasions. Made with dry-fried sweetened watermelon seeds, sugar, water with a touch of jasmine, wheat flour, and egg yolks, the dough is usually formed into small golden round treats. *Bua loi*, popular found-everywhere sticky-rice flour balls in coconut cream, are made by mixing sticky rice flour with pandan leaf juice (screwpine) and palm sugar and, traditionally, cooking the dough in a brass wok. *Bua loi* is served warm in coconut milk, and nowadays, a sweet-poached egg cooked in sugar syrup spooned onto the top of each serving is a popular option.

For candy, the king salutes *chit* and *tan*, both palm candies. The king ends his ode-like salutation praising *foi thong* (“golden threads”)—sweet shredded egg yolk. A dessert of 17th-century Portuguese seaman origin, known in Portugal as *fios de ovos*, they are jasmine-scented egg yolks simmered with sugar, which are then made into very thin noodles.

And so sings the King of Siam of his realm’s sweets, royal and common treats that have survived the centuries.

Why are there so many Portuguese sweets in a country never colonized by Europeans?

It was largely due to Maria Guyomar de Pinha, the wife of a Greek explorer who became the influential and trusted chief advisor to King Narai, Somdet Phra Ramathibodi III, in the mid-17th century. Maria (of many names) became King

Narai's official *Thao Thong Kip Ma*, "The Sweet/Snack Maker of the King," and when King Narai was deposed and Maria's husband assassinated in the Siamese uprising of 1688, Maria was condemned to the Royal Kitchens, where she remained until the new king's death in 1703, becoming, during her kitchen captivity, the influential head of the Royal Kitchen staff. Maria is widely known for introducing new largely egg yolk-based sweet treats found in her Portuguese ancestry and her personal experiences in her home region of the southern Siamese Kingdom of Ayutthaya. She was of mixed Japanese, Portuguese, and Bengali ancestry. Maria's treats became part of the widely imitated Thai Royal Kitchen cuisine which came to reflect how Thai society views itself in terms of social classes, gender roles, and its national identity. And a hundred years later the sweet treats became a major part of King Rama II's poetic reflections. Today, they are part of virtually everyone's top choices of Thai sweet treats, always served at celebrations and festivals, with regional variations.

The Thai Dessert Museum in the Amphawa District of Samut Songkhram in central Thailand chronicles the 700-year history of traditional Thai *khanom* "sweet-stuff" and proudly serves the sweet treats of both King Rama II and Maria Guyomar de Pinha, and regional favorites—like the popular regal "red rubies," which are tiny diced water chestnuts colored bright red and served in sweetened coconut milk. The local regional favorites are conveniently available not far from the Thai Dessert Museum, in Baan Khanom (literally meaning "sweets village") renowned for its delicious sweets and desserts made from mixtures of sesame, coconut, and watermelon seeds.

While the Thai are great sweet treat eaters, and love their traditional and Western desserts throughout the day, their customary top choice for dessert at the end of a meal is fruits—fresh fruits served plain and sliced in season, and various fruit preserves at other times of the year. The poet king, recognizing this, went on to immortalize their favorite fruits, including some of their most exotic fruits, in "The Boat Poem." King Rama II lauds their fruits and fruit-based treats: *nipah* or mangrove palm, with a little sugar syrup and salt to offset its sour flavor; *ma prang* (plumb mango); *mon tong* (a type of durian from eastern Thailand); *linchee* (lychee); *plum chin* (Chinese persimmon, which is also good, as the King suggests, for making *namtan kuan* dessert with dried *plum chin* and sugar); *noina* (sugar apple); *ked* (fruit of the *manilkara* tree); *tuptim* (pomegranate); *turian* (durian); *langsat* (the fruit from a *Meliaceae* tree); *ngo* (rambutan); and *sala* (a type of fruit from a *salacca* palm tree). Super-sweet mango on sweet sticky rice, covered in sweet coconut milk or coconut cream syrup (*kao niew ma muang*), is an especially popular dessert when mangoes are in season, which are sometimes topped with peanuts, toasted sesame seeds, or fried salty mung beans.

Most Thais espouse the official state religion, Buddhism. Three-fourths of the 67.5 million people in Thailand are ethnically Thai, 14 percent of people are

Chinese. Major festivals thus tend to follow the Buddhist lunar calendar. The Thai calendar began 543 years earlier than the Gregorian calendar, thus 2014 is their year 2557. Buddhist cuisine is basically an East Asian plant-based cuisine influenced to a large extent by India, where Buddhism began in the sixth century BC, and China, where Buddhism is today a main religion.

For Buddhists, quite unlike most major religions—like Islam, Judaism, and Catholicism—food choices in general and sweet treat choices in particular are mostly affected by cultural and personal food preferences, local traditions, and availability of ingredients, rather than by religious beliefs. Buddhist cuisine does, however, emphasize its general nonviolence principle of *ahimsa*, doing no harm, in this case to animal life. Very strict Buddhists thus sometimes eschew not only meat but also dairy products.

Only about a third of the Thai population is urban, with about one in ten people living in Bangkok, the capital city. Thus, unlike more urbanized countries, the availability of commercial and especially restaurant treats tends to be somewhat limited for most people.

In the world of food, Thais are renowned for their love of spicy food. A popular saying in Thailand is “*mai pet mai a-roi*”—“something that is not spicy does not taste good.” To that there is one major exception that virtually every Thai will agree on: sweet treats. The very same ones that are wonderful enough to inspire poetry.

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Tibet

Tibet, or *Bod*, to the Tibetans, at an average elevation of about 16,000 feet, is the highest inhabited region in the world. In 1950, neighboring China forcibly “took” Tibet and made it part of the People’s Republic of China; disputes about whether the incorporation is legitimate in the eyes of international law remain ongoing. Beginning in the 16th century, the orange-robed Buddhist dalai lamas provided the leadership of Tibet. The culture of Tibet is thus primarily that of a devout Buddhist nation—compassionate, peace loving, harmonious, and respectful of all sentient living things—albeit sometimes in conflict with the Chinese government.

Tibetan tribal peoples of the eastern plateau have lived for generations by raising sheep, goats, yaks (Tibet’s native cows), and horses. As the animals graze, the tribes

migrate with them. Everything Tibetans need, from wool for clothing to meat and dairy products, comes from their animals and small fields of grain, mostly barley. Milk, butter, dried cheese, yoghurt, and barley provide sustenance and characterize their food choices.

“Yak” (from the Tibetan *gyag*) refers to the male animal; the female, *dri*, produces milk year-round in the cold, high altitudes of Tibet (unlike some other animals, like goats and sheep, whose milk production slows down in harsh weather). Cheese, yoghurt, and butter from *dri* milk provide the primary energy and nutrition to the Tibetan people. The butter ferments after a time, and Tibetans add it to black tea for sipping all day long. (The Tibetans also use fermented butter as a moisturizer for hair and skin.)

While Tibetans seldom consume sweets in the form of fruits, they occasionally use small amounts of sugar and honey. *Dresil*, the sweet rice served at Losar, the Tibetan New Year, at life cycle celebrations, and on Buddhist holidays, is indeed a treat. Tibetans sweeten the rice with *droma*, sugar, and *dri* butter, and perhaps add a thread of saffron for color. *Droma*, small bulb-like roots with a taste similar to sweet potatoes, impart sweetness to the rice. They are scarce outside of Tibet, and in some parts of Tibet, if *droma* are not available, Tibetans, instead, add raisins to enhance the sweet flavor of the rice. On special occasions, fresh *dri* cheese embellishes the rice pudding for an extra special treat called *omdre*. *Kapse* fritters, another New Year treat, are sweet, fried, dough confections, made into a variety of shapes, sprinkled with powdered sugar, and glazed with honey.

Droma also serve as a sweet filling for a type of steamed roll similar to Tibetan *timo*, plain steamed rolls usually made from different combinations of wheat flour, baking powder, baking soda, yeast, and water, and sometimes served in place of rice. *Timo*, broken into small pieces and dripped with butter and honey, serve as sweet treats for children.

Yoghurt, cream cheese, sour cream, and nowadays, sweetened condensed milk, along with other dairy products, and sugar, are combined in myriad ways with different spices and nuts to make sweets enjoyed at festivals and events—sweets such as *barfi* (a fudge-like confection), *sikarni* (a pudding-like dessert, often served with pistachios), and *rasbari* (cheese balls in cream syrup). What Tibetans consider sweet treats may not be either sweet or treats to the Western palate.

Tibetans customarily share sweet tea when toasting or seeing someone off on a journey. Their sweet drink is black tea, milk, and sugar, boiled together, resulting in a sweet, gentle flavor. (It is common to boil the tea in the milk with the sugar at high altitudes.) Tibetans also enjoy *chang*, a sweet low-alcohol beer made from barley and served at room temperature in the summer, and heated in the winter to provide warmth.

The needs of the Tibetan people are modest. Their diets are unrefined, unprocessed, sustainable, and fit their dietary and nutritional needs. Nowadays, Tibetans

have more access to fruits, vegetables, and sweeteners like sugar and honey. Traditionally, Tibetan Buddhists were not necessarily vegetarians, simply because so few fruits and vegetables were available to them; they ate what was obtainable. Increasing access to more varieties of food allows Buddhists to follow a vegetarian regime, if they are so inclined, but that is a personal choice, not a tenet of Buddhism. As greater food choices continue to become available, time will tell how Tibetans' tastes will change, and how access to more sweets will affect their diets and health.

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Turkey

The elite imperial Janissary guards of the Ottoman Empire wore their official corps insignia proudly—an image of a cooking kettle, the *qazan-i şharif*, or sacred cauldron of *şorba* (soup), with their headgear ornamented *with a spoon*. The select Royal Janissary Guards were organized according to a model of a kitchen. But not just *any* kitchen. Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1494–1566) added on to the already famous enormous kitchens at what is now known as the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, expanding them to 10 huge high-domed kitchens, providing a separate special confectionary kitchen, with the confectionary kitchen door being one of three main portals of entry into the kitchen complex. By 1570, the imperial kitchens employed 1,570 cooks, capable of feeding about 4,000 people daily and 10,000 people on a festive occasion, with up to 300 dishes at a meal, including dozens of the finest sweet confections and desserts in the world. The confectionary kitchen at the Topkapi Palace was called the *Helvahane*, the “House of *Helva*.” *Helva* is also known as *halvah*, or *halwā*, meaning “sweet”/“sweetness” in Arabic. From the 15th to the late 18th centuries, the most frequently made sweets in the *helvahane* were *helva*, fruit candies, jams, stewed fruit dishes, and *sherbets* (*sharbats*). Many kinds

of jams and fruit candies were prepared in the special Jam Kitchen of the *Helvahane*. In 1608, the jams included apple, pear, lemon, bitter orange, walnut, sour cherry, cornelian cherry, peach, honeydew melon, watermelon, courgette aubergine, citron, quince, medlar, mixed jam, and rose jam. During this period, one milk pudding, *muhallebi*, and one dough-based sweet, *kadayif*, were common. The Topkapi Palace became the center of Ottoman Turkish cooking, where creative chefs from throughout the vast empire assembled, where other native chefs were trained, and where many of today's sophisticated sweet treats were born and nurtured. Topkapi, during Turkey's "Golden Age" (1520–1566), became the world's sweet treat epicenter.

Many kinds of the sweets called *helva* spread throughout the Ottoman Empire and beyond, and there were several kinds at Topkapi. In seventh century Arabia, the term *helva* referred to a paste of dates kneaded with milk. By the ninth century, another older type of *helva*, possibly of Persian origin, was made by frying or toasting semolina or wheat flour in clarified butter, and then adding honey or date syrup to form a thick paste, usually with a flavoring such as nuts or rose water, or even dates, apples, or carrots. The more recent type, commonplace by the 18th century, and the *helva* possibly of Ottoman invention, is often thought of as a sweet candy made from *tahini* (a paste made of ground sesame seeds), and honey (or in modern times, sugar), and often enriched with dried fruits and nuts. A French visitor to Topkapi Palace in 1675 noted that there were six or seven kitchens dedicated to confectionary alone, with perhaps 400 "*Halvadis*" dedicated to *helva* production. According to 17th-century records, 812 people worked under the head of *helva* chefs. Some of the sweets were prepared under the supervision of the chief

Ottoman Circumcision Feast

A feast held in 1539 on the occasion of the circumcision of the sons of Süleyman I of the Ottoman Empire consisted of over 50 different sweet treats:

15 kinds of *helva* and 22 kinds of jam are listed in the *Ziyafet Defteri* (Banquet Book). The guests were also served the traditional wedding party dish *zerde*, fruit candies, the milk pudding *muhallebi*, the "dough-based" *lokma* (something like donut in syrup), *şeker börek* 'sugar börek', *şeker boğaçı* 'sugar bun' and *şeker kurabiye* "sugar biscuit." 57 kinds of sweet, and the records of ingredients purchased inform us that a total of 60 *kantars* [3.75 tons] of sugar were used. 10,000 kilos [11.0 tons] of sugar were used in making of ornaments in the shape of miniature gardens, flowers, trees, fruit, birds, lions and camels.

Yerasimos, Marianna. *500 Years of Ottoman Cuisine*. Translated by Sally Bradbrook. Istanbul: Boyut Publishing and Trading Company, 2011, 228.

physician as the sweets were thought to have healing properties. *Helvas* by then were not just required to taste good and have healing powers, they were also supposed to be cleverly presented—in shapes such as miniature domes of a mosque, or fish, and the like.

After the 19th century, some *helvas* were made with semolina. *Helva* of the flour and ghee type was the favorite dessert of the famous 13th-century Sufi mystic and poet Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273), founder of the Mevlevi Order of the Whirling Dervishes popularly identified with Turkey. Ceremonial *helva* gatherings were held in Mevlana’s time and continued in his hometown until recently, when they were displaced by the arrival of television. For the Sufi, as well as others, *helva* takes on religious and ceremonial significance: “*Helva* is served to welcome newborn babies into the world, as well as to bid farewell to those who have died. It is eaten at all ceremonies between birth and death, such as engagements, weddings and circumcisions” (Halici 2005, 120).

The Mevlevi Sufi religion and life focuses on the kitchen and table, pursuing the belief that Islamic mysticism leads directly to an understanding of God. Mevlevi Sufi use food terminology to illustrate significant aspects of their beliefs, and *helva* was the sweet mentioned most frequently in Mevlana’s works. All Dervish training begins in the sacred kitchen, the heart of Mevlevi religious lodges. Both the Topkapi cooks and the famed imperial Janissary guards followed the Sufi order.

Mevlana’s home was the historically important city of Konya, in the central Anatolia region of Turkey, the capital of the Seljuk Sultanate (1077–1307), a predecessor to the Ottoman Sultanate of Istanbul (1299–1922). Types of sweets eaten by Mevlana and the Whirling Dervishes in the 13th century are still eaten in Konya today, including the flour and ghee type *helva*. Nevin Halici, one of Turkey’s leading food writers, and a native of Konya, in *Sufi Cuisine*, presents dishes mentioned by Mevlana in the 13th century that live on in the cuisine of Konya today. Mevlevi cuisine of Konya is one of the major regional cuisines of Turkey. The Sufi Dervish meal prayer begins, in their kitchen-and-food-focused belief, “May it be sweet / May God make it plentiful” (Halici 2005). And sweet it is. Mevlana mentions, besides his favorite *helva*, syrupy sweets like *baklava*, *kadayif* (a shredded string-like pastry with nuts, soaked in honey syrup); *lalanga* (a small eggy pancake-like dessert served with honey and chopped nuts); *aşure* (a pudding-like ceremonial dessert with many different recipes made of grains, dried fruits, nuts, pulses, and condiments, said to be one of the oldest, most traditional, and most renowned desserts of Ottoman cuisine, even connected in folklore to Noah and to Adam and Eve); *palüze* (a starch-thickened “water pudding” made with milk, sugar and rose water, and spices or sweet toppings); and *zerde*. Mevlana also mentions fruit and vegetable sweets made with grape *pekmez* (Halici 2005, 115). In Konya and other parts of Anatolia, a dessert called *hoşaf* (compote) is known as “the silencer,” as, by tradition, it is the last offering to appear on the table before guests are bid goodbye.

Sweet cherries, apricots, pears, apples, quinces, grapes, prunes, raisins, and dried figs are popular *hoşaf* fruits—served hot or cold. In Mevlana’s time, sweets were prepared with honey or the grape *pekmez*, and although sugar was rare and expensive, some sugar was already arriving from Egypt.

The people of Konya still prepare many sweetened fruit drinks called *sherbets* which were popular in the 13th century, including honey *sherbet*, milk and honey *sherbet*, rose water *sherbet*, pomegranate *sherbet*, sugar *sherbet*, milk and sugar *sherbet*, and grape *şıra* (slightly fermented grape must). Today, Konya’s residents also drink fig *sherbet* and, of course, commercially produced fruit juices. Sugar or honey *sherbet* is, to this day, a must-have traditional part of weddings and engagements in Konya. In early days, when sugar was still rare and expensive, special guests were served sugar *sherbet*, while the common people were given honey *sherbet*. *Sherbet* is thought to have been introduced into Ottoman cuisine via Persia, and from Istanbul versions spread throughout the empire or at least to the elites of the empire.

Besides ripe fruits and sweetened fruit drinks, the Ottomans had three types of sweets: pastries, milk custards and fruit desserts, and *baklava*. The *baklava* we know today by its Ottoman Turkish name is a rich, buttery, dense, ultra-sweet multilayered, honey- or sugar-drenched paper-thin *phyllo* pastry with chopped nuts, and is thought by most food historians to be an innovation of the Topkapı *helvahane* kitchens. Not only was it delicious, but as the Sultans’ favorite sweet it was also highly symbolic of wealth, sophistication, and special privilege. Historically, *baklava* began to gain importance after the 18th century, but until mid-19th century *baklava* was primarily a sweet treat of the rich and elite. *Baklava* was symbolically featured center stage in a famous Janissary ceremony not all that different in form from today’s Changing the Guard at Buckingham Palace in London: “On the 15th [day of the Muslim celebration of] Ramadan every year, the Janissary troops stationed in Istanbul used to march to the palace, where every regiment was presented with two trays of *baklava*. They would sling the trays in sheets of cloth from a pole and march back to their barracks carrying the *baklava* in what was known as the *Baklava Procession (baklava alayı)*” (Davidson 2006). And for centuries, on the festive payday, the Janissaries were served the same traditional menu: soup, rice, and *zerde*—a sweet gelatinous rice pudding made with water instead of milk and colored and flavored with saffron. *Zerde* is still popular at festive occasions, like weddings, birth celebrations, and religious festivals.

Baklava today is commonly found in all countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, and in parts of Asia. And the empire—sometimes known as the Turkish Empire (1299–1923)—was *extensive*, covering as it did parts of three continents and all or part of more than three dozen modern-day countries. Excluding fresh fruits and raw honey—and possibly modern-day ice cream—*baklava* could well be the most famous and widespread sweet treat of all time.

Although commonly identified with Greece, it is generally accepted by food historians that *baklava* was first documented as early as the eighth century BC in ancient Syria, with the Assyrians who put chopped nuts between their thinnish bread dough layers and drenched the lot with honey. It was at the Topkapi Palace that *baklava* was nursed and nurtured into the sweet honey treat made with the paper-thin *phyllo* we know today, with Armenians having added cinnamon and cloves, and Arabs having added the rose water and cardamom. Until World War I, the “great houses” of Istanbul kept two *phyllo* makers on staff, one just to make *phyllo* for *baklava*. *Baklava*, a recurrent favorite in many countries, and at many times, absorbed the flavors and ingredients of adopting cultures, as is typically the case with the diffusion of popular sweet treats. And as is also typical of much-beloved iconic sweet treats in general, many countries claim ownership of invention. Turks, Syrians, Greeks, Cypriots, Lebanese, other cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean, and even Chinese love their own version of *baklava* and claim both its superiority and credit for its invention.

In 2006, for example, Greek Cypriots claimed ownership to *baklava* as its “national” dessert, resulting in threatened demonstrations by 200 Turkish *baklava* bakers in Istanbul’s historic Sultanahmet district, in an international incident dubbed “The *Baklava* War.” On March 22, 2012, President Obama, speaking at a Greek Independence Day dinner at the White House, inadvertently became involved in the long-running international *baklava* dispute, causing an embarrassing diplomatic incident. Indeed, *baklava* is to be taken seriously by all parties.

Common people in Turkey historically had few sweets, as common people in most countries. Their sweets, as typical commoners’ sweets, were traditionally limited to hunted honey, ripe seasonal and dried fruits, milky puddings, and, in parts of Turkey, the sweet *pekmez* juice of the grape. The famed sweets of the Ottomans were imperial sweets. Except, perhaps, on festival occasions, the sweets of the palace were generally not the sweets of the people, nor were the refined Sufi sweets of the Anatolian Mevlevi Order.

Börek, a distinctive baked or fried filled pie-like pastry of Anatolian origin, adapted by the imperial kitchens in Istanbul, can be made either with *pide*, an ordinary slightly leavened soft, chewy, wheat pocket bread or, more characteristically, with rich once-imperial *phyllo*. Cooked originally on a flat sheet of iron used by the nomadic Turks (*saj*), a whole “family” of both sweet and savory layered-dough *börek*-type dishes had appeared early on in central Turkey and remains popular today throughout Turkey and former countries of the Ottoman Empire. Although normally thought of as a savory dish, sweet *böreks* have been made throughout the pastry’s recorded history. Sweet versions of *börek*, now fried or baked, include such popular treats as *laz böreği*, a festive-occasion specialty of the Rize region on the southeastern coast of the Black Sea, which is traditionally a *phyllo* filled with sweet custard and served sprinkled with powdered sugar and hazelnuts, almonds, or pistachios. Recipes vary widely. *Laz böreği*, the most popular dessert

in the Black Sea region, is like a *baklava* with a custard center. The custard is the traditional *muhallebi* popular throughout the Middle East, an Ottoman-style creamy milk pudding thickened with ground rice (or sometimes cornstarch, nowadays) and generally perfumed with rose water or orange blossom water. *Laz böreği* can also be made with *güllaç*, a rose-flavored pudding also dating back to the Ottoman Empire. *Güllaç*, phyllo cooked with rose water-flavored milk and pomegranates into a sort of pudding, is much admired for its delicacy. It is said to have been a favorite of the palace, and a part of the circumcision feasts for the sons of Süleyman I. *Güllaç* is named after its key ingredient, rose water (*gül suyu*). *Güllaç* has been described as “a reflection of Ottoman elegance.” It is a popular, relatively light, Turkish choice of sweets for ending the *Iftar* meal that breaks the Muslim Ramadan fasts, which is traditionally served with chopped walnuts.

Sweets are central in the sacrosanct observance of the month-long fasting of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; likewise, other food customs of Islam promote ritual sweet treats. Today, 99.8 percent of Turkey’s 80.7 million people are Muslims, and although Turkey is officially a secular state, religious sweets are often de facto part of national traditions. Sweets are an important part of Islamic religion. The Turkish culture of sweets developed with Arab Islamic influence. The Prophet Muhammad recommended two basic remedies for body and soul, the *Qur’an*—the sacred book of Islam—and honey. The Prophet Muhammad’s favorite sweets were honey, dates, and *hais*, which is a mixture of curds, dates, and clarified butter. Health in Islam reflects a state of equilibrium between body, mind, and soul; hence honey, dates, and sweets, in general, took on religious and medicinal as well as culinary importance in all of the countries inhabited primarily by Muslims.

Muslims following *sunnah* (the way of life prescribed and demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad) break their dawn-to-sunset Ramadan fasting each day of the month with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with dates in commemoration of the Prophet’s own breaking of the fast, but in Turkey they often begin with sips of water followed by either an olive or a dried date. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals. The month of Ramadan fasting ends with the all-important three-day joyous feast of *Eid al-Fitr*—the Festivity of Breaking the Fast, known also as the Sweet Festival.

Individuals classified by the government as “Turkish” make up about three-fourths of the population, while Kurds, with 18 percent of the population, or about 14.5 million people, are the main minority. Kurds are found mostly in western Turkey, with about the same number living in the adjoining bordering regions of northern Iraq, Iran, and Syria—the total area known to some as Kurdistan. Their Kurdish dialects belong to the Iranian (Persian) linguistics branch. Modern-day Kurds emerged from a number of tribal groups of pastoralists whose main economy until the end of the 19th century was based on dairy, and consequently sheep or cow yoghurt, butter, and cheese are prominent in their cuisine. Kurdish cuisine identity focuses on lamb, vegetables, herbs, and spices—showing a great similarity to the cuisines of Arabs,

Turks, Armenians, Assyrians, and Persians—and for sweet treats Kurds tend to prefer their clear, light honey, and ripe fresh fruits—especially grapes, pomegranates, watermelons, and figs—with walnuts, pistachios, or other nuts on the side. For drinks, they enjoy sweetened black tea, strong black coffee, and a traditional salted yoghurt-based drink mixed with water known as *mastow*. For pastry, they enjoy the classics of the region, including *baklava*. On the one hand, that may be, in part, a result of the state’s past attempts to suppress Kurdish cultural expression, but on the other hand, it may be that it is simply difficult to resist a good *baklava*.

Changes in animal husbandry and agriculture, aspirations and preparations to join the European Union (about 5 percent of continental Turkey is in Europe), and ambitions to become a full player in the international commercial geopolitical scene have resulted in an increased number of urbanites with urban-style eating habits. Turkey is now nearly three-fourths urban—Istanbul is an international city with a population of 10.4 million people, and the capital of Ankara has 3.9 million. Hence, as with people in other urban areas of the world, those who can afford it have virtually the full line of international and commercial sweets readily available.

And to the international world they have, in turn, given Turkish delight. Almost everyone is acquainted with the special sweet treat for which the Republic of Turkey is most famous, known locally as *lokum*. Originally it was called *rahatu’l-hulkum*, “comfort of the throat.” Actually a family of sweets, the corn-starch-and-powdered-sugar-dusted gummy jellied treats come in a variety of shapes, flavors, colors, and qualities. According to legend, *lokum* was invented by an Anatolian confectioner, Hadji Bekir, who came to Istanbul in 1776, and rose to be chief confectioner to the Sultan. No hard evidence supports the legend, suggests Davidson (2006), but the story is almost as good as the candy itself. Just as the *baklava* traveled to the ends of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish delight has traveled almost to the ends of the earth, first spread, as another story goes, by an anonymous sweet-toothed British visitor to Istanbul who shipped it back with him in the 19th century. “Lumps of delight,” did, however, actually arrive in England about 1850, with a “lumps of delight” shop appearing in Charles Dickens’s final-but-unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in 1870, and the candy reappearing as *enchanted* “Turkish delight” in C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the first of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Turkish delight, in fact, evolved from earlier sweets made from wheat starch and sweetened syrup or grape *pekmez*. Classic gummy Turkish delights—once described as “a lightly tacky candy cross between Jell-O and gummy bears”—are made with honey, molasses, and cornstarch, and flavored with rose water or orange blossom water, lemon peel, and bitter orange, and are slowly cooked, cooled, and rolled in confectioners’ sugar; chopped nuts and dates are often added, as are family secret ingredients.

Turkish delight became the fad sweet of the British Empire and European high society in the 19th century, much as—one can imagine—the sweet treats of the



The confection known as *lokum* or Turkish delight, originally called *rahatu'l-hulkum* (“comfort of the throat”), is actually a family of corn-starch-and-powdered-sugar-dusted gummy jellied sweets, which comes in a variety of shapes, flavors, colors, and qualities. (Bruno Ehrs/Corbis)

famed Ottoman Empire became the popular upper-class sweets of the Ottoman world. Marianna Yerasimos, an Istanbul native food researcher who best chronicles the sweets of the Ottoman Empire in her book *500 Years of Ottoman Cuisine*, gives the clearest picture of what sweet treats the elite were eating over the 500-year period of the Ottoman Empire: of the 227 sweets, she lists 57 *sherbets*, 45 dough-based sweets, 42 jams or fruit desserts, 34 *helvas*, and 23 Turkish-delight-type sweets (Yerasimos 2011). Most significantly, as Yerasimos notes, “With only the occasional small difference, most of the desserts named have survived to the present day” (Yerasimos 2011). *Helva* is the traditional sweet of the Muslim Turks.

What sweet did the Ottomans eat most?

Helva- ı sâbûnî. Take a sweet treat magic carpet trip back in time and try some edible history for yourself.

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U

Ukraine

An old fable describes much of what there is to know about Ukrainian attitude toward food. *Rukavychka* (“The Mitten”) tells the story of many little animals shivering from the cold on a Ukrainian winter day. They find one mitten, it stretches and stretches until each animal is inside the mitten, no one stays in the cold, and they keep each other warm. The story imparts to Ukrainian children the values of hospitality and community.

The values are embedded in the Ukrainian culture and, of course, its cuisine—an amalgamation of amazing flavors from present and past encounters with countries, including Russia, Poland, Germany, and Turkey. This eastern European country, bordering the Black Sea, has had a convoluted history. It went from being the center of the large and powerful Slavic state, Kyivan Rus, in the 10th and 11th centuries, to enduring Mongol invasions, and incorporation into the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, to absorption into the Russian empire, to surviving numerous struggles for independence, and to elections deemed by Western observers as flawed. Through it all, Ukraine, with its abundance of rich dark soil and the vast fields of wheat, rye, oats, barley, and sunflowers, has managed to live up to its title, “breadbasket of Europe.”

Bread is the centerpiece of Ukrainian hospitality and cuisine, where over 80 percent of the population belongs to an Orthodox religion. For the most part, the “sweet” in the Ukrainian culinary vocabulary describes the use of fruits, local honey, and some breads, and, because of the religious persuasion of most of the residents, they traditionally enjoy the sweet breads on the Easter and Christmas tables.

In the Orthodox religion, Easter is the foremost event of the liturgical year. In Ukraine, *paska* (which means Easter) is the sweet-yeast-egg-bubble bread baked in a round shape that the baker, usually the matriarch of the family, decorates with shaped-dough symbols, often a cross. *Paska* is made with pride and attention to detail because it is a primary constituent in the basket of food taken to Easter Sunday services for a blessing by the priest. The other Easter bread that graces Ukrainian tables is *babka* (from the Ukrainian word for grandma, *baba*). *Babka* is also sweet yeast bread, usually baked in a cylindrical mold. Not surprisingly, each family may have its own variation on the centuries-old recipes. Some add dried fruits (especially raisins), others add nuts, and some add both—with an occasional splash of rum or brandy and lemon zest. Some families serve their *babka* plain, while others

serve it with a dusting of confectioners' sugar, or a light fruit-flavored glaze and a sprinkle of colorful edible confetti.

Rose petal preserves are a centuries-old sweet treat in the Ukraine. *Pampushky* (yeast raised donuts) filled with rose petal preserves are traditional Christmas treats. At other times of the year, the fruit filling might be berries, prunes, jams, or ground poppy seeds. Usually a dusting of cinnamon sugar or confectioners' sugar tops off these sweet treats. *Kolach* is a lightly sweetened yeast bread that is either braided into an oblong loaf or is made into the more complicated form of three separate braids, each one stacked on top of the other, in graduated sizes. For Christmas Eve dinner, a candle stands in the stacked braids, but tasting the bread must wait until Christmas Day because the Orthodox Advent fasting period, which includes abstinence from eggs, extends to midnight on Christmas Eve. The 12-dish Christmas Eve supper (*Sviata Vecheria*)—a traditional meal consisting of 12 meatless dishes commemorating the Twelve Apostles—most often begins with *kutia*, a special Christmastide sweet grain pudding made primarily of wheatberries, poppy seeds, honey or sugar, nuts, and sometimes raisins. In Ukraine, *kutia* is thought by some to predate Christianity. Modern post-USSR versions sometimes



Ukrainian *babka*, one of the spongy sweet yeast blessed *Pascha* (Easter) breads that graces Ukrainian tables, is usually baked in a tall cylindrical mold, with each family proudly presenting its own version of centuries-old recipes, usually including dried fruits and nuts, with an occasional splash of rum or brandy. (Mallivan/Dreamstime.com)

include, in addition, orange zest and almonds. A liturgically blessed version of *kutia* is also traditionally eaten at Radonitsa, the “Day of Rejoicing” celebration of the second Tuesday of Easter, the ninth day after Easter, a joyful feast of atonement commemorating the departed, as well as, in effect, commencing the traditional season for weddings as it was believed that people marrying at this time would live well and happily.

And the weddings, of course, bring with them their own seasonal outpourings of exceptional sweet treats, such as *pryaniki*, a special treat also served on Radonitsa, a honey-spice cookie some of which are similar to the famous Russian “honey bread” from Tula. In times past, newlyweds also customarily took a gift of *pryaniki* to the bride’s parents several days after their wedding. Recipes for and presentation of the special treat vary, from simple to complex, both “painted” and pressed.

Ukrainian households generally have a stash of *povýdlo*, a fruit pulp, usually plums, cooked slowly in the oven until it becomes a thick sauce. *Povýdlo* uses little or no sugar or honey; the sweetness of the fruit is concentrated from the slow cooking. Ukrainians enjoy *povýdlo* as a sweet spread for bread, or filling for pastries or *pampushky*. Comparable to other Ukrainian food, *povýdlo* is simple, wholesome, and practical.

Like *povýdlo*, Ukrainian cuisine is famous for its simplicity, its straightforward flavor, its wholesomeness, and its practicality. Ukrainians live and practice hospitality and community—like the fabled little animals in the mitten. What a perfect combination of values, all manifested at the Ukrainian table where there is always an extra place and enough down-to-earth food for everyone.

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United States

What could be more American than apple pie?

Chinese fortune cookies, German chocolate cake, Belgian waffles, Häagen-Dazs ice cream, pie *à la mode*, Dairy Queen soft cones, Ben & Jerry’s ice cream, banana splits, peanuts popcorn and Cracker Jack, Toll House cookies, Hershey bars, s’mores, jelly beans, M&Ms and GORP, scotcheroos and Rice Krispy bars, Twinkies, Oreos, whoopie pie, the list goes on, and Americans love them all.

The saying “as American as apple pie” expresses a wonderful spirit that most Americans love and espouse, but if the truth be told, neither apples nor pie nor our beloved apple pie have their origins in America. An apple-bearing tree from Kazakhstan, *Malus sieversii*, is thought to be the ancestor of most of today’s sweet treat apples. Today our sweet treat apples are grafted—in a sense, domesticated. The most famous apple person in America is, of course, John Chapman (1774–1845), known by most as Johnny Appleseed, a figure who brought small and sour hard-cider apples to the American frontier, fruits that were generally not good for eating or making sweet treats. And indeed, the first use for apples when they arrived in America in the 1620s was for making cider, and the first pies were generally meat pies. However, the grafted tree stocks the Dutch brought with them to New Amsterdam in the middle of the 17th century thrived, reportedly sometimes bearing so much fruit that branches would break under their burden, and by the middle of the 18th century apple pie had become a popular year-round dessert in New Netherland, using fresh apples in season and dried apples during the winter months.

The first recorded mention of apple pie in America dates to 1697, in New England:

Samuel Sewall, distinguished alumnus (1696) of Harvard College and citizen of Boston, went on a picnic expedition to Hog Island on October 1, 1697. There he dined on apple pie. He wrote in his diary, “Had first Butter, Honey, Curds and cream. For Dinner, very good Rost [*sic.*] Lamb, Turkey, Fowls, Applepy.” (Metcalf and Barnhart 1997)

The American apple pie itself traces its origins to the large 10–12 inch yeast dough latticed-top fruit-filled tart popular in the southern Netherlands for centuries. Printed recipes for this Dutch apple pie go back to the 16th century. Made with sugared crisp-and-tart-apple filling, cinnamon, a touch of lemon juice, and sometimes raisins, with classic diamond-shaped latticed light dough top, it is like the ones we know today, but different from the streusel-topped version known in the United States as “Dutch apple pie.” “Real” Dutch apple pies are lighter, flatter, and thinner, giving an extra crunch to the sweet treat. “Mock” apple pie, an “apple pie” made with soda crackers and without apples, also goes back to pioneer days, and became popular again especially during the Great Depression.

Pie itself, of course, goes back to the traditions of central and northern Europe, and especially England, although it is in America where sweet pies fare most prominently, including pumpkin pie—the likely sweet treat dessert choice for the early “thanksgiving” feasts of the 17th-century Separatist English Pilgrims who came to America via sweet-pie-loving Leiden, Holland. Pumpkin pie recipes were already appearing in English cookbooks of the 17th century. Recipes for pie made with pumpkins first appeared in print in America in the 19th century, even though pumpkins are native to the Americas and their domestication goes back thousands of years.

Linguists suggest that the word *pie* itself may be a derivative of *maggie* a bird known to collect many things, like early cooks collected the many ingredients of their savory versions of the pastry. Pies in the sense of a filling encased in a pastry or crust (known as a “coffin” in early cookbooks, and early on serving as a tough inedible pan for the filling) go back to the flat olive oil-based “proto-pies” of Classical times, a treat which also figures prominently in early Arab cookery. Some regard sweet tarts, popular in England since at least the 14th century, as a pie without a top crust. Cherry tarts in England joined apple tarts as favorites, and after sugar became affordable, rhubarb tarts also became popular—much as what happened with pie in America with the 1629 arrival of sweet cherries with the English Colonists, and rhubarb from Britain a century later. Cherry pie became a legendary favorite of George Washington, albeit that he generally “partook sparingly of dessert.”

But forgetting about historical technicalities, apple pie remains one of America’s favorite and preeminent iconic sweet treats. It is one of the things Mark Twain missed most (along with peach pie and pumpkin pie) when reporting on his second trip to Europe in 1880. Apple pie is an American tradition, as are other regional favorites, like the molasses-based shoofly pie popular among the Pennsylvania Dutch and in the South, and pecan pie, the official pie of Texas. Add a dollop of whipped cream to a nice warm oven-fresh slice of shoofly pie, or a large scoop of real high-butterfat ice cream to a sweet-tangy apple pie, and you have, not one, but two of the world’s most popular and desired delights combined into one incredible sweet treat. American ice cream is rated one of the top 10 all-time foods in the world. Combined with pie, it seemingly goes beyond all ratings.

Professor Charles Watson Townsend generally receives credit for combining the two and inventing pie *à la mode*, on two occasions—at the Hotel Cambridge in the village of Cambridge in upstate New York in the mid-1890s and shortly thereafter at the famed Delmonico’s Restaurant in New York City. (There is no record of Townsend being present at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair where the



New generations of Americans carry on cherished sweet treat traditions. (Alison Shaw/Corbis)

pie *à la mode* more famously appeared.) Townsend’s obituary in *The New York Times* somewhat grudgingly acknowledges that he “inadvertently originated pie *à la mode*.” *À la mode*, in French, simply means “modern” or “trendy.” Inadvertent or not, Townsend’s personal sweet treat has become a modern iconic American classic. *The St. Paul Dispatch* in 1936 reported that around 1880 a restaurateur at the Hotel La Perl in Duluth, Minnesota, “began serving the same frozen top [vanilla ice cream] on blueberry pie, heated to a nicety” (Flaherty 2012). Blueberry pie *à la mode*, at the time, featured the same wild fruits as those collected and used for sweet treats by the native *Anishinabe* (Ojibwa) American Indian peoples of the region. How do you say “blueberry pie” in the native Ojibwa language? *Ji-gay-tay-uu-zo-mi-nI-biush-kumI-u-ssi-gu-du-bu-kway-jii-gun-i-ssI-gu-bun*—it is a listing of ingredients with instructions for assembly, in a sense, a one-word recipe of one of America’s earliest fusion sweet treats. Ice cream in Ojibwa is simply *ice cream*. In New York, Professor Townsend reportedly ate his pie *à la mode* with vanilla ice cream and American apple pie.

Ice cream, of course, although it is America’s favorite dessert, is not of American invention. Ice treats have been popular since the days of the Roman emperor Nero (AD 37 to 68). Later on, Sicilians made *sorbetto* with snow from the nearby Mount Etna, adding wine, wine must, and honey to it. Antonio Latini in Naples, Italy, first wrote down the recipes for making *sorbetto* at the end of the 17th century. But snow cones—which first appeared in America much later, in 1919 at the State Fair of Texas, courtesy of the Russian immigrant Samuel Bert of Dallas, Texas—however fancy, are just another version of shaved-iced treats. Latini went on to add flavors to his ices—lemon, strawberry, chocolate, and others. Eventually he developed a milk *sorbetto* laced with candied citron or pumpkin, cooked it, and then submerged it in a freezing mixture of snow and salt. Most food historians consider Latini’s milk sorbet “the first ice cream” (Weiss 2011). Sweetened cooked creams were common at the time; Latini’s method of freezing them was creative.

In the 1770s, Benjamin Franklin was so pleased with the experience of having ice cream in France that he wrote in a letter, “I am making an effort to acquire the formula so we may sample this lovely fare upon my return to Philadelphia” (Stock 1999). The first published ice cream recipe in the United States eventually appeared in Philadelphia, in 1792, in Richard Briggs’s *The New Art of Cookery*. The British confectioner Philip Lenzi, who advertised ice cream of “any sort,” established America’s first ice cream shop in New York City in 1774. Lenzi’s advertisement appeared in *The New York Gazette* on May 12, 1777, as the first advertisement for ice cream in America; it proudly announced that ice cream was available “almost every day.” Benjamin Franklin, a regular at the French ice cream shops in New York City, prepared the cool treat for visitors during the drafting of the American Declaration of Independence, with the ice cream recipe he brought back from France.

Benjamin Franklin loved ice cream, so did Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), George Washington (1732–1799), and Martha Washington (1731–1802). Thomas Jefferson, ambassador to France, 1784–1789, brought back an ice cream recipe to his home at Monticello, where he often made vanilla ice cream. Thomas Jefferson popularized ice cream in the North American colonies. A recipe for vanilla ice cream handwritten by Jefferson in the 1780s—with his own recipe on the backside for “Savoy biscuits” (heavily floured sponge cake-like ladyfingers) to accompany his ice cream—produced one of the most popular treats at Monticello. George Washington, a great ice cream aficionado regularly made ice cream on his Mount Vernon plantation. In 1784, Washington spent one pound, thirteen shillings, and three pence on a “Cream Machine for Ice,” the first ice-cream freezer in the colonies. It is said that as president, Washington spent about \$200 on ice cream during the sultry summer of 1790—a lot of money in those days. Martha Washington served ice cream regularly as First Lady, each Friday evening at 08:00 P.M., where, according to Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, the Vice President, “the ‘company’ were ‘entertained with Ice creams [*sic.*] & Lemonade.’” Senator William Maclay, a dinner guest at the presidential mansion, recalled, “The dessert was, first Apple pies puddings &ca.; then iced creams Jellies & ca.; then Water Melons Musk Melons apples peaches nuts [*sic.*]” (“George Washington’s Mount Vernon” 2013). In relatively short time, “ice cream quickly wrapped itself in a cloak of patriotism, as it became the treat of choice for Independence Day celebrations,” notes the ice cream historian Laura B. Weiss, with the ice cream signaling that an important celebration was taking place (Weiss 2011). American cookbook writers took up the call, including recipes for ice cream in their works. And ice cream became as American as apple pie.

In 1843, Nancy Johnson of Philadelphia received U.S. Patent 3254, the first for a small-scale hand-cranked ice cream freezer. With Johnson’s invention, the process of making ice cream became much less tedious, and by the 1850s, ice-cream freezers were a household item, in essence paving the way for the commercial ice

Thomas Jefferson’s Recipe for Vanilla Ice Cream

Among the most popular of Thomas Jefferson’s recipes, of the eight that survive in his own handwriting, is the one that he wrote in the 1780s for vanilla ice cream that he served at Monticello. Jefferson’s ice cream recipe includes his own recipe for Savoy biscuits (similar to ladyfinger cookies, but often made in a mold, akin to a *madeleine*) on the back. Jefferson grew to love ice cream while serving as ambassador to France (1784–1789), and is generally credited with popularizing ice cream in the North American colonies.

cream industry worldwide. In 1851, Jacob Fussell built his first ice-cream factory in Pennsylvania, becoming the first to produce ice cream on a commercial scale. In 1874, the ice-cream soda appeared, most likely invented by Robert Green of Philadelphia, and soon became “a *bona fide* national craze.” “Milkshakes” became popular by the 1880s, as first an eggnog-type alcoholic drink made with whiskey, served as a treat as well as a tonic. By 1900, “milkshakes” had morphed into the more familiar and popular ice cream treat made with chocolate, strawberry, or vanilla syrup found at all soda fountains.

From the end of the 19th century onward, soda fountains, ice-cream parlors, and malt shops—“allies of the temperance movement” of the times—sprang up overnight, soon dominating the ice-cream landscape—usually as part of pharmacies, as soda water was thought to possess therapeutic properties (even marketed as a miracle cure). Soda jerks and their theatrics became popular, along with the sweet flavored, ice-cream-and-soda-water treat. In 1892, a soda jerk from Ithaca, New York, at Chester Platt’s soda fountain, poured cherry syrup over a plain scoop of vanilla ice cream, placed a candied cherry at the top, and the ice cream sundae was born. His customer, legend has it, a Unitarian minister, named the delight after the Lord’s Day, as it was a treat served on “soda’s day of rest” in conservative places where the sale of soda was banned on Sundays. The ice cream sundae is a treat described by Weiss as “one of the greatest dessert innovations of all time . . . a near-perfect rhapsody of sauce, ice cream and whipped cream” (Weiss 2011). Ithaca’s Cornell University students spread the sundae gospel as they returned home on summer vacations.

In 2004, the Serendipity 3 restaurant in New York City—famous for its “Frrrozen Hot Chocolate”—introduced the “Golden Opulence Sundae,” legendarily becoming one of the most expensive ice cream sundaes ever made, selling for \$1,000. It is a sweet treat said to be made only from the finest ingredients, including 23-carat edible gold leaf, and one is permitted to take home the Baccarat crystal goblet that it comes in (a reported \$350 value; the 18-carat gold spoon is not included). Serendipity 3 requires reservations 48 hours in advance, if you are thinking of getting one. If you are not in the mood for its “Golden Opulence Sundae,” it also offers the “Frrrozen Haute Chocolate,” “a blend of 28 cocoas, including 14 of the most expensive and exotic from around the globe,” for \$25,000—the *Guinness Book of Records* world record price for a dessert.

At least four U.S. towns claim to be the home of the ice-cream soda. And several individuals claim to have invented the ice-cream cone, which first made its appearance at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri. The French seem to have had a cone with ice cream as early as 1807 and the English by 1888. But ice-cream patrons ate the English version “in the customary way,” with a set of utensils. It took the St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904 to bring French ice cream together with a Dutch waffle or wafer cone as a walk-around-while-eating

treat. Several people claim the St. Louis ice cream cone invention: Ernest Hamwi, a Syrian immigrant; Abe Doumar, a Lebanese immigrant; Nick Kabbaz, another Syrian immigrant; David Avayou, a Turkish immigrant; and Frank and Charles Menches of Canton, Ohio (who also claim to have invented the hamburger in 1885 at the Erie County Fair in Hamburg, New York). The International Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers consider Hamwi the cone's creator. Earlier Italo Marchiony, an Italian immigrant pushcart vendor from New York, and Antonio Valvona of Manchester, England, "invented" the edible ice-cream cup. Vendors made these early ice-cream cones and cups by hand. With mechanization of cone production in 1909, and its refinement in the 1920s, ice-cream sales soared. The ice-cream cone, it turns out, is also as American as apple pie.

Specialty ice-cream-type products followed. In 1919, frozen custard—soft, creamy ice cream with egg yolk—appeared at Archie and Elton Kohr's Coney Island stand in Brooklyn, reportedly selling over 18,000 five-cent cones the first weekend. For about a nickel in those days one could also buy a newly arrived ice-cream sandwich, ice cream sandwiched between two wafers or cookies. In 1922, the I-Scream-Bar appeared as chocolate-coated vanilla ice cream, invented by Danish immigrant Christian Kent Nelson of Onawa, Iowa, and produced in partnership with Russell C. Stover and his wife, Clara. At the suggestion of Mrs. Stover, they quickly rebranded the treat "Eskimo Pie." The Stovers went on to start a chocolate candy company in 1924 with the profits from selling their share of the Eskimo Pie enterprise. In 1923, Harry Burt of Youngstown, Ohio, received a patent for putting chocolate-coated vanilla ice cream on a stick. The Good Humor man sold his "Good Humor Ice Cream Suckers" from a small fleet of "sales car" vending trucks, outfitted with their famous bells. In 1923, Frank Epperston of Oakland, California, who had been toying with frozen sweet treats on a stick for some time, applied for a patent and started marketing the Epsicle, "frozen ice on a stick," a product quickly rebranded the "Popsicle," a change reportedly inspired by his children's name for the invention, "Pop's 'sicle." Meanwhile, also in 1923, the Dixie Cup Company put individual servings of ice cream in disposable cups; the first five-ounce cups sold for 10 cents—an expensive sweet treat in its day, but the company quickly reissued Dixie Cup ice cream as a 2½ ounce treat selling for a nickel. After World War II, soft-serve ice cream became popular, aided by American's love of the automobile and fascination with drive-ins. Unlike frozen custard, soft-serve ice cream contains no eggs and has plenty of emulsifiers and whipped-in air. National soft-serve ice-cream chains began to appear. The first Dairy Queen opened in Kankakee, Illinois, in 1938, and expanded rapidly through franchising, with each franchised establishment independently owned and operated. The website of the American Dairy Queen Corporation claims that the company is now one of the largest fast-food systems in the world. Howard Johnson in 1925 doubled the butterfat content of his ice cream, and also aided by America's fascination with the automobile following World War II,

he developed the “Hojo” 28-flavor roadside dining empire, which became the largest restaurant chain in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, with ice cream its biggest seller.

Today, American ice-cream lovers love their premium and “super-premium” ice creams, the likes of Häagen-Dazs, Ben and Jerry’s, and Baskin-Robbins. After 30 years of moderate success with the old family ice cream, Reuben Mattus, a Polish immigrant ice-cream peddler in the Bronx, enriched his ice cream with egg yolks and 17 percent butterfat (other ice creams are about 10 percent by weight, 16 percent in other premiums), decreased the amount of air churned into the mixture, and gave his ice cream an elegant Old-World-sounding name. “Having astutely observed that Americans were impressed by products with exotic foreign appeal and thus likely to pay more for them, he sat down with his wife, Rose, one evening and together they made up the absolutely meaningless, and nearly unpronounceable ‘Häagen-Dazs,’ which they hoped would sound richly Scandinavian. To further the image, Mattus put a map of Denmark on the package. Then he doubled his price” (Anderson 1997). In 1983, Mattus sold the company to the Pillsbury Company for \$70 million.

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield of Burlington, Vermont, created Ben and Jerry’s in 1978, after they took a correspondence course on ice-cream making from Pennsylvania State University. They built their company through creative packaging, marketing, advertising, and press relations, coupled with a commitment to social justice and community-oriented projects, and an especially rich intensely flavored excellent super-premium highly textured luxury ice cream made with natural ingredients. In addition, Cohen’s physical inability to smell (anosmia), and diminished ability to taste, led to the intensifying of flavors and adding of chunky textures—two of the hallmarks of their ice cream. And for Ben and Jerry, that was the recipe for success. In 2000, Ben and Jerry’s sold their ice cream realm to the giant Anglo-Dutch Unilever Company, for a reported \$326 million.

Burton Baskin and Irvine Robbins, bothers-in-law ice-cream enthusiasts and vendors in Southern California, amalgamated their ice-cream interests into Baskin-Robbins in 1953, offering one-flavor ice cream for every day of the month. Now owned by Dunkin’ Donuts, they take pride in their innovative flavors, more than 1,000 to date. Baskin-Robbins scientists carefully engineered their apple pie-flavored ice cream, one of their most popular flavors:

Once the team arrived at the decision [to market an apple pie-flavored ice cream], they tweaked the tastes and appearances to perfection. They asked themselves, What do Americans think is the perfect apple pie? . . . For the apple pie, the lab crew set out to grocery stores in the local area (a logical move, since that’s how so many people get their pie: they buy it rather than

baking it themselves). In general, that means apples sweetened with cinnamon, sugar, and perhaps apple juice, and a thick, satisfying crust.

The final flavor was a combination of a few brands, which the Baskin-Robbins team then matched with products from inclusion suppliers—companies who manufacture, say, chocolate chips or pretzels made specifically to incorporate into other snack foods such as ice cream. The apples here had to be Granny Smith and Golden Delicious, which stand up to freezing temperatures without getting mushy the way the Red Delicious might. The crust is specially treated with butter to prevent it from getting soggy when incorporated into pre-frozen ice cream.

The flavor pushed the limits to satisfy America's taste for 'big.' Each scoop is designed to pick up about fourteen half-inch pieces of crust, the maximum amount that allows the scoop to hold its shape without breaking apart. The crew was equally generous with the fruit 'filling'. Four scoops give you the equivalent of one apple—and every avid reader of health pages knows that apples are chock-full of nutrients (never mind that you're having ice cream with it). (Chen 2008)

Two cities, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and Wilmington, Ohio, claim the invention of the banana split, with both agreeing that it dates from the first decade of the 20th century. Restaurateur and food writer Michael Turback, in *The Banana Split Book*, explores 150 current versions of the ever-popular treat.

The year the banana split was invented in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, 1904, Cracker Jack—the molasses-flavored, candy-coated popcorn and peanuts, later packaged with a "mystery" trinket prize inside—was 11 years old. Two German immigrant street vendor brothers from Chicago—Frederick and Louis Rueckheim—had introduced Cracker Jack at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, where the treat was known simply as "Candied Popcorn and Peanuts." Food historian Andrew F. Smith considers Cracker Jack the first junk food, and as America's first nationally retailed commercial snack food, it created a new category of commercial foods in America. Their early slogan, copyrighted in 1896, "the more you eat, the more you want," fits most junk food of the modern era. The Rueckheims included trinket prizes from 1912 on (before that, from 1910 to 1912, coupons were included). "Came in a Cracker Jack box," meaning cheap, quite naturally joined the American English phrasebook early on, a bit ironically, as the term "cracker jack," after which the treat was originally named, was at that time slang for something first rate. Mascots Sailor Jack and his dog Bingo joined the company in 1918. By 1937, the company considered itself the producer of "America's Oldest, Best Known, and Most Popular Confection" (Smith 2009). The Rueckheim family continued to run the company until they sold it to the Borden Food Corporation in 1964.

In 1917, about the time Sailor Jack and his dog Bingo joined up with Cracker Jack, the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. started selling their iconic cookies to finance troop activities, with the cookies baked at home by the girls, with moms volunteering as “technical advisers.” The website of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. proudly notes that the Mistletoe Troop in Muskogee, Oklahoma, was the first troop to bake the now-famed cookies, and sell them in its high school cafeteria as a service project, just five years after Juliette Gordon Low started Girl Scouting in the United States. In 1922, the national Girl Scout magazine, *The American Girl*, featured an article that provided the cookie recipe that had been given to the council’s 2,000 Girl Scouts for similar fund-raising activities. The author, Florence E. Neil from Chicago, estimated the approximate cost of ingredients for six- to seven-dozen cookies to be 26 to 36 cents. The cookies, she suggested, could be sold by troops for 25 or 30 cents per dozen. In the 1920s and 1930s, Girl Scouts in different parts of the country continued to bake their own simple sugar cookies with their mothers. The scouts packaged their cookies in wax paper bags, sealed them with stickers, and sold them door to door for 25 to 35 cents per dozen.

Today, two licensed bakers, ABC Bakers and Little Brownie Bakers, produce a maximum of eight all-kosher varieties, including three mandatory flavors: Thin Mints, Peanut Butter Sandwich/Do-si-dos, and Shortbread/Trefoils. Each Girl Scout council chooses one of the bakers, and each baker uses different names for the cookies, except for the Thin Mints, the bestselling of all of the varieties. Year after year, you can count on the Girl Scouts’ sweet treats to “make the world a better place.” Unofficial reports estimate that Americans purchase approximately 175–200 million boxes each year.

Only Nabisco’s Oreo—the universally recognized sandwich cookie with two chocolate disks shielding a cream filling, one of which Oreo buffs first often remove to get at the sweet white filling—outshines the Girl Scout Thin Mints in the commercial market. Since their introduction in 1912, Oreo has been the perennial best-selling cookie in America, with an unofficially reported 362 billion sold to date. The origin of the name “Oreo” is unknown. “A Big Fat Oreo” refers to a cookie-like treat more widely recognized as a “whoopie pie”—two round pieces of chocolate cake sandwiching a white creamy filling, a treat of Pennsylvania Amish origin. The whoopie pie cake-cookie is the official “state treat” of the state of Maine.

The known origin of the word “cookie” is Dutch—from the word *koekje*—meaning “small cake.” The cookies the Dutch settlers introduced upon arriving in New Amsterdam (now New York) were very much like their famous “windmill cookies” of today (*speculaas*). Their thin and very crispy ginger-colored spice cookies were popular in early America, as they are in modern America. Cookies in any language are versatile, and adaptive Americans incorporated many versions in their sweet treats repertoire. Along with the Girl Scout cookies and Oreos, chocolate chip cookies are perennial American favorites. In a recent review of

the 50 greatest American foods, chocolate chip cookies ranked among the top 10. None is more famous in America than Ruth Wakefield's chocolate chip drop cookies from the Toll House Inn in Whitman, Massachusetts. Ruth Wakefield's 1938 cookbook, *Toll House Tried and True Recipes*, included the recipe "Toll House Chocolate Crunch Cookie," a treat that rapidly became an American favorite and classic. The cookie, according to the official Nestlé Toll House Story website, resulted from Mrs. Wakefield adding cut pieces from a bar of Nestlé Semi-Sweet Chocolate to a batch of butter drop cookies, a favorite cookie dating back to colonial days. Another, unauthorized, version of the story has the chocolate bars vibrating off the shelf and falling into the cookie dough whereupon a Hobart mixer pulverized them. Either way, before long Mrs. Wakefield's recipe appeared on the wrapper of the Nestlé Semi-Sweet Chocolate Bar. And in 1939, Nestlé introduced Toll House Real Semi-Sweet Morsels, with a version of Mrs. Wakefield's recipe printed on its package ever since. Nestlé Toll House Chocolate Chip Cookies, suggests Nestlé, have become "the most popular cookie of all time," and they invite cooks to share their inspired baking stories. It is difficult to top Nestlé's own stories, but in America, chocolate chip cookies have become the stuff of both legend and urban legend. A widely circulated story now known to be an urban legend involves the supposed purchase of the Neiman-Marcus chocolate chip cookie recipe for \$250. Essentially the same urban legend circulates about Mrs. Fields's chocolate chip cookies. As both legendary and urban legend cookies, few American sweet treats can beat the chocolate chip cookie. The famed Toll House Cookie recipe is still on the package. In the remote possibility that you have not yet tried them, you owe it to yourself to have one of America's finest cookies—after all, it is "the most popular cookie of all time." While you are at it, why not mix up a batch of the cookies like the one Mrs. Wakefield was working on that fateful day when she added the chocolate bits (or the chocolate bars mysteriously fell out of the cupboard) into the batter, a recipe both Nestlé and Mrs. Wakefield identified as "Butter Drop Do" cookies.

The 50 greatest American foods list also includes fortune cookies. The Chinese fortune cookie, absent in China, is a sort of crescent-shaped, crisp folded-over wafer usually made from flour, sugar, vanilla, and sesame seed oil. Researchers now think modern fortune cookies arose from an immigrant California version of a traditional Japanese rice cracker, with the addition of fortune-oriented bits of wisdom *inside*, rather than attached to the cookie itself as they had been with antecedent "fortune crackers" in Japan. Jennifer Lee, food writer for *The New York Times*, suggests that the 3 billion fortune cookies made each year have Japanese ancestry going back to obscure 19th-century fortune cookie-shaped crackers made by hand near a temple outside Kyoto. In Japan, the cookies are called, variously, *tsujiura senbei* ("fortune crackers"), *omikuji senbei* ("written fortune crackers"), and *suzu senbei* ("bell crackers") (Lee 2008). It is not clear how Japanese fortune cookies actually ended

up in American Chinese restaurants, but researchers suspect that it happened during World War II when bakeries on the West Coast closed as Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during the war, and Chinese bakers began making the cookies in their absence. In any event, it is commonly acknowledged that the Chinese in California were the ones who “explored the potential of the fortune cookie.” The American public, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, now enjoy the cookies and their messages at the end of a “traditional” Chinese meal—in America. Chinese fortune cookies, it turns out, are also as traditional and American as apple pie.

“Belgian waffles” are another American treat born on the West Coast. Walter Cleyman, a native of Belgium, publically introduced America to the “Belgian waffle” at the “Century 21” Seattle World’s Fair in 1962, where it instantly became the expo’s sweet treat sensation—piled high with whipped cream and fresh strawberries. The treat that became widely known as the “Belgian waffle” later gained enduring national fame when Maurice Vermersch and his wife brought their version of a yeasted waffle—the “Bel Gem Waffle”—from their home in Brussels to the 1964 New York World’s Fair where the whipped cream and strawberry-topped treat was again a memorable splendid success. Fifty years later people still fondly reminisce about eating their first World’s Fair “Belgian waffles.” In Belgium, each region has its own specialty waffle. What Belgians know in their French-speaking world as *gaufre de Bruxelles*, “Brussels waffle,” looks like its American counterpart, but, due to folded-in beaten egg whites, yeast leavening, and a special waffle iron, they are light and fluffy with high sides and larger deeper pockets, complimented by a crunchy and crispy outside. American waffles, by contrast, are more like flatter baking powder-leavened pancakes in the shape of an iron-grilled waffle. Unlike the American variety, Brussels waffles in Belgium are not often eaten for breakfast, except, of course, by American tourists, thinking they are “Belgian waffles.” In Belgium, locals usually eat Brussels waffles as a handheld casual snack or dessert food, often as a street food, similar to the ways Americans enjoy their donuts.

Anthropologist Paul R. Mullins thinks glazed donuts epitomize America. In *Glazed America: A History of the Doughnut*, he explores the development of America’s consumer culture through their relationship with the donut (Mullins 2008). The Dutch invented donuts and brought them to New Amsterdam in America, along with their apple pie, windmill cookies, and waffles. The Dutch know their donuts as *oliebollen*, “oil balls,” or *oliekoeken*, “oil cakes”—deep-fried yeasted donut balls or cakes. Their *smoutebol* (“lard balls”), popular in the southern areas of the Netherlands, are fried in lard, as were the donuts that immigrated with the Dutch settlers, and with the Pilgrims who lived in southern Holland for a few years before migrating on to colonial America. Washington Irving uses the term “dough nut” when discussing the Dutch treat in his 1809 *History of New York*:

The Donut Hole

By the mid-19th century, the donut looked and tasted like today's raised donut and was viewed as a thoroughly American food. The donut hole seems to have appeared sometime before 1861, most likely as a way to speed up cooking: "Since the speed with which heat penetrates a doughnut (or anything else) varies in proportion to the square of half the maximum thickness, and since the thickness of a doughnut is greatly reduced by making it in a ring shape, the doughnut with a hole cooks far faster than those without" (Davidson 2006, 255).

Davidson, Alan. *The Oxford Companion to Food*, edited by Tom Jaine. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 255.

[Dutch tea parties feature] more sturdy, substantial fare, [with their tables] . . . graced with immense apple pies, or saucers full of preserved peaches and pears; but it was always sure to boast an enormous dish of balls of sweetened dough, fried in hog's fat, and called dough nuts, or *oly keoks*: a delicious kind of cake, at present scarcely known in this city [Albany, New York], excepting in genuine dutch [*sic.*] families; but which retains its pre-eminent station at the tea tables in Albany. (Mullins 2008)

The word "donut" seems to have initially appeared in one of the first cookbooks published in America, Susannah Carter's 1803 edition of *The Frugal Housewife*. The 1803 edition is the first cookbook to provide a recipe for "dough nuts," to be boiled in hog's lard as Irving described (Mullins 2008). Significantly, the 1803 edition of *The Frugal Housewife* includes the "dough nut" recipe in an appendix of recipes entitled "Several New Recipes Adapted to the American Mode of Cooking." The identical addendum appeared two years later in the first American edition (1805) of Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, originally published in 1747, a cookbook very popular in England. Other recipes in these special American appendices include Indian pudding, buckwheat cakes, pumpkin pie, cranberry tarts, peach sweetmeats, quince sweetmeats, green gage (wild plum) sweetmeats, maple sugar, and maple beer. The first published American donut recipe, with the usual sparse instructions for preparation, is typical of its day:

Dough Nuts

To one pound of flour, put one quarter of a pound of butter, one quarter of a pound of sugar and two spoonfuls of yeast; mix them all together in warm

milk or water of the thickness of bread, let it rise, and make them in what form you please, boil your fat (consisting of hog's lard), and put them in. (Susannah Carter, 1803; Hannah Glasse, 1805 [borrowing materials in those days was common])

By the mid-19th century, the donut looked and tasted like today's donut and was viewed as a thoroughly American food. The hole appeared sometime before 1861, most likely as a way to speed up cooking. But not all American donuts have the hole. American "jelly donuts" are filled with jellies, jams, custards, poppy seeds, and the like, similar to some European fried-dough treats. Americans also sometimes eat the "donut holes" without the donut, and usually by the bagful. As with the American automobile and ice-cream cone, donut production became automated early in the 20th century. Following automation of cone production, the ice-cream cone quickly spread throughout the country, becoming a staple American sweet treat from coast to coast. With donut mechanization, state fairs, carnivals, and festival concessions quickly added the ever-popular Tiny Tim and other miniature donuts—a special treat also enjoyed by the bagful, like the donut holes. National chains got on and accelerated the donut bandwagon midcentury, including the large donut-focused chains such as Krispy Kreme, founded in 1937, Dunkin' Donuts in 1950, Mister Donut in 1956, and Yum-Yum in 1971. Dunkin' Donuts is the oldest surviving company to use the "*d-o-n-u-t*" spelling, changing its name early on from "Open Kettle." America is noted especially for its yeast-raised glazed and variously frosted donuts, which appear in an almost unlimited and unrelentingly tempting array along with the many hole-less filled versions: chocolate coated, cinnamon sugared, powder sugared, with nuts or raisins or candied peel stuck in the frosting; the list seems to go on forever. Most American donuts are made with flour, eggs, and milk, leavened with baking powder, yeast, or baking soda activated by sour milk. The generally smaller "cake donuts," made with a type of cake batter, have more fat or oil in the batter but absorb less oil during their shorter frying time. Cake donuts are more often eaten plain, or with a light cinnamon-sugar mixture topping, or dusted with confectioners' sugar.

In 2011, the CNN Travel staff selected the large yeast-raised American donuts as one of the world's 50 best foods. Try one, especially on the first Friday of June, National Doughnut Day—a successor to the Salvation Army's Doughnut Day event created in 1938 to honor the men and women who served donuts to soldiers during World War I. And while you are at it, try making one of Susannah Carter's original colonial American donuts fried in hog's fat.

Fried dough in and of itself, of course, is not unique, or even new, to America. Almost all cultures in the world enjoy a sweet treat version of their local fried dough, known variously as *fritter*, *cruller* (a doubled-over or interlaced deep-fried pastry), *beignet*, *beignet soufflé* (made with *choux* pastry), *doughnuts*, and *donuts*.

In America, “fry bread” has become an important part of modern-day native cuisines and a symbolically key food defining Anishinabe Indian identities. Fry bread is occasionally enjoyed with maple sugar, although less often now than in the past because of the high (money or effort) cost of maple sugar. Sweet *sopaipillas*—crispy, puffy, deep-fried pastry pockets similar to Mexican *buñuelos*, thought to have originated centuries ago in Albuquerque, New Mexico—are enjoyed especially throughout Texas and the American Southwest, and are often served warm as a dessert with honey, or a sweet syrup flavored with anise or cinnamon.

Most Americans love their cake as well as their cake donuts. One of the most famous is Martha Washington’s Great Cake—made with 40 eggs, four pounds of butter, four pounds of sugar, five pounds of flour, and five pounds of fruit. One of the best-loved American cakes is the “German chocolate cake,” a treat having nothing to do with Germany. The universally loved German’s chocolate cake was named after the American chocolate maker Samuel “Sammy” German, an English immigrant from Devonshire, who in 1852 developed a dark baking chocolate having a higher sugar content than the then-popular Bakers’ Premium No. 1 chocolate, and the one eventually used in what became known as German’s chocolate cake. Baker’s Chocolate Company—the oldest manufacturer of chocolate in the United States, established by Dr. James Baker and John Hannon in 1765—subsequently named its *Baker’s Sweet Chocolate* in Sammy German’s honor. German’s cake was popularized in 1957 with the *Baker’s German’s Sweet Chocolate* recipe in the *Dallas Morning Star*, sent in by Mrs. George Clay, a Dallas, Texas, homemaker—with an error, calling for an eight rather than four-ounce bar of Baker’s German’s Sweet Chocolate. Shortly thereafter, the recipe appeared in newspapers and publications throughout America, and in a recipe booklet published by Baker’s. With either eight or four ounces of chocolate, German’s cake became an American classic overnight. Baker’s German’s Sweet Chocolate sales reportedly jumped 73 percent for the year. In subsequent years, the possessive name was dropped, adding to the mistaken illusion that the cake is of German origin. For true German chocolate cake, try *Schwarzvalder Kirschtorte*, Black Forest cake (which, incidentally, is not from the Black Forest). And make yourself one of Sammy German’s cakes on June 11, National German Chocolate Cake Day in America; the recipe is still on the package and is traditionally made with sweet chocolate. In the state of Hawaii, German’s cake is made without the traditional coconut of the German’s Cake frosting and is called chantilly cake.

For a little rich chocolate cake variety, try the now-popular red velvet cake, a moist chocolatey dark-red layer-cake made with buttermilk and cocoa powder. Harold McGee, the guru food chemist of the kitchen, explains that cocoa contains anthocyanin (a red pigment found in foods like red cabbage), which reddens when cooked with acidic foods like buttermilk. Red velvet cake gets an additional red color boost from food coloring or beetroot (in recipes from the World War II era).

The more cocoa used, the more red food coloring or beet juice must be added to produce the red velvet effect. Recipes call for from a teaspoon to a half cup of cocoa. Thought by most food historians to be a Southern—even a Southern comfort—treat, there is no consensus on where exactly it came from, why it is colored an enhanced red, or how it should be made. Red velvet cake is often identified with the famed Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, which has been serving it as a signature sweet treat since the 1920s. In their 2006 *Waldorf-Astoria Cookbook*, they refer to it as a Southern dessert. The Waldorf-Astoria red velvet cake has become popular enough in America to be part of the urban legend series. The red velvet cake's traditional French-style butter *roux* icing is difficult to prepare, leading to increasing use of cream cheese or buttercream frosting in place of the more complex topping.

For an all-round less complex chocolate cake, Americans generally turn to the simple all-American devil's food cake, a sweet treat originating from many recipes, all of which generally contain butter (or a substitute), egg whites, more chocolate than a "standard" chocolate cake, and a little coffee, thereby making them darker. Some versions use no flour. James Beard, the distinguished American cook and food writer, proposed that the reddish tint produced by acid and cocoa might explain why some chocolate cakes are called devil's food. But no one knows why the name. Devil's food cake appeared at the turn of the 20th century and has been a perennial American favorite ever since. "Chocolate cake" prior to that time was, for the most part, mildly chocolate-flavored yellow layer cake, or a yellow or white cake with chocolate frosting, although in 1847, Eliza Leslie ("the Martha Stewart of her day") included a chocolate cake recipe in her *Lady's Receipt-Book*, one calling for 10 eggs for leavening. Marion Harland's 1873 chocolate cake recipe from her *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* calls for more sugar (2 cups), less butter (1 cup), the yolks of five eggs and whites of two, plus baking soda and "cream-tartar" to lighten the batter.

Harland was one of the first to include recipes for the kind of chemically leavened white cake and yellow cake commonly found at birthday parties today (Kronld 2011). Harland early on praised and promoted Royal Baking Powder, which appeared after the American Civil War, in 1866. Alfred Bird of Gloucestershire, England, a chemist and food manufacturer who invented the famous Bird's powdered egg-free custard in 1837, developed baking powder in 1843. Baking powder is typically a mixture of sodium bicarbonate and cream of tartar, along with an inert starch, usually cornstarch, used instead of yeast for leavening cakes and "quick breads." After the Civil War, American cooks started to use baking powder, powdered custard, powdered gelatin, and other newly arriving and increasingly affordable ingredients. Mass-produced kitchen bakeware, hardware, and gadgetry like apple peelers opened new sweet treat horizons for American homemakers. Metal cast-iron cook stoves began replacing hearth and brick-oven cooking early in the

19th century, and by midcentury cook stoves commonly appeared in urban middle-class households, adding to the convenience and productivity of homemakers.

In 1929, boxed cake mixes appeared on the scene, first introduced by O. Duff and Sons, a molasses company—with a 14-ounce “tin” selling for 21 cents—thus, further expanding the homemakers’ options and bringing a new mixed dimension to baked treats in America. World War II changed the world, including homemakers’ broader social options, and their baking and baked goods world. Wartime shortages and rationing put sweet treats on hold, or at least diverted them to the fighting forces, as the big flour manufacturers and other commercial food industries devoted their efforts to feeding the troops. After the war, both adapting to and promoting the new postwar social milieu, General Mills introduced “Betty Crocker’s” first “just add water” boxed cake mixes in 1947—in ginger, spice, yellow, and white flavors—but the cake mixes were not popular until later versions required homemakers to also add a fresh egg. In 1948, “Ann Pillsbury” introduced the first boxed chocolate cake mix. Today’s flavor favorites (at least for those who purchase boxed cake mixes) are yellow, followed by white, and then devil’s food.

Angel food, the older alter-ego cake to devil’s food, is truly an American treat. Unlike the devilish chocolate cake, angel food has not changed much since its apparition in the 1870s, not long after the appearance of mass-produced bakeware and the hand-cranked eggbeater (1856)—except for the arrival of angel food cake mix, the first said to be the just-add-water EZY Angel Cake Mix in 1942, in both 14- and 8-egg sizes. The plain, pure, pale, and puffy sponge cake—thought by many to be of southeastern Pennsylvanian origin—gets its light heavenly character from many egg whites beaten until stiff and then mixed with soft (with less gluten) cake flour. Some cooks, in fact, perceive angel food cake to be a good way to use up egg whites—much like the way the 16th-century Portuguese nuns devised various means to use surplus egg yolks left over from clarifying their famous port wines. To use up *whole* eggs, try an American chiffon cake, a combination of batter with yolks into which the beaten egg whites are gently folded, then baked, like the angel food, in a tube pan that leaves an opening in the middle of the cake. The rich-flavored cake, invented by Harry Baker in 1927, was rebranded “chiffon cake” by Betty Crocker in 1948. Both angel food and chiffon cake are best eaten plain, dusted with confectioners’ sugar or eaten with whipped cream. Some people like them sprinkled with chocolate bits or with fresh strawberries.

In America, cakes abound, pound cake among them—along with icebox cake, carrot cake, hummingbird cake, gooey butter cake, Appalachian stack cake, Boston cream pie, cheesecake, and strawberry shortcake. The pound cake is British, consisting of a pound each of flour, butter, eggs, and sugar, and is usually baked in a heavy bunt pan. Carrot cakes are also popular in Britain, and they and carrot puddings have been popular since the Middle Ages when sugar was expensive. During World War II, when sugar was scarce and rationing was operative, cooks

and bakers often used carrots to sweeten their wares because of their relatively high sugar content. Since the 1960s, carrot cake has become popular in America. And “carrot cake” sounds healthy, even when matched, as it usually is in the United States, with a generous layer of heavily buttered sweet cream cheese frosting, along with whatever fruits and nuts (raisins, pineapple, apples, walnuts, pecans, etc.) the baker chooses to add. The healthiest thing about carrot cake, as *The Guardian* of Manchester in England points out, is the name. Healthy or not, its various little carrot decorations generally take the prize for sweet treat cuteness.

Distinctive regional favorite cakes include hummingbird cake, which since the recipe appeared in *Southern Living* magazine in 1978 has been the magazine’s most requested recipe in history. Hummingbird cake is made up of three layers of banana-pineapple spice cake spread with cream cheese frosting and sprinkled with nuts. Goopy butter cake is a traditional favorite of St. Louis, Missouri, a sugar-laden treat born of a baker’s error in the 1930s, made of butter, cream cheese, eggs, and yellow cake batter (made either from a boxed mix or from scratch). St. Louisans generally serve the flat, rich, sticky, chewy, “goeey,” super-sweet, dense cake as a coffee cake, dusted with confectioners’ sugar. Appalachian stack cake, a historic special treat of Kentucky mountain people, arrived with James Harrod, as folklore has it, one of Kentucky’s pioneers and the founder of Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Known throughout Appalachia by many names, the stack cakes invariably contain ginger, sweet sorghum molasses, and sometimes brown sugar. Early on, neighbor folks gathering for mountain weddings brought cake layers cooked on cast-iron skillets, “hoes” (hoe cake pans), to donate to the brides’ families, which the host families joined with cooked, sweetened, and spiced dried apple spread between the arriving layers. Locals considered the number of layers of a bride’s wedding cake gauged her popularity—seven or eight were average, but some brides were 12-stack women. Stack cakes also became popular at holidays, family reunions, church suppers, and other large gatherings. Wherever Appalachian people migrated, they took along recipes for their favorite version of the old-fashioned stack cake.

Americans throughout the country enjoy Boston cream pie, a chocolate-frosted, custard-or-cream-filled, multilayered sponge cake delight invented in 1856 by a chef named Sanzian—said to be the first celebrity French chef in America—for the opening of The Parker House Hotel in Boston (now the Omni Parker House, also home of the Parker House roll). Boston cream pie in 1996 bested Toll House cookies for the honor of being the official dessert of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (In 2003, the Boston cream donut became the Commonwealth’s official donut.) Enjoy a piece of classical American cake, on October 23, National Boston Cream Pie Day.

Cheesecake comprises a category by itself, and one might technically say the same about Twinkies and things like cream-filled commercial cupcakes. Some consider baked cheesecake a cake, some a tart, some even a custard pie. Alan Davidson

weighs in on the side of cheesecake being a tart, “a flat, baked item consisting of a base of pastry, or occasionally some other flour preparation, with a sweet or savoury topping not covered with a pastry lid” (Davidson 2006). Martha Washington’s family recipe book contains three cheesecake recipes, two using fresh curds made with milk, and one made with thickened cream, eggs, and butter. America’s classic cheesecake, the favorite New York style, is cream cheese sweetened with sugar, enriched with eggs and cream, flavored with vanilla, and baked in a crumb, cookie dough, or sponge-cake crust (Smith 2007). America’s most famous cheesecake came from the former Lindy’s Restaurant in New York. American cheesecake is often served with fruit toppings—usually cherry, blueberry, pineapple, or strawberry—especially on July 30, National Cheesecake Day.

Strawberry shortcake—the famous and beloved dessert now generally made from sugared fresh strawberries and vanilla-flavored whipped cream and usually served on a sweet yellowish sponge cake or, more traditionally, a sweetened biscuit—has been an American favorite since colonial times when early settlers served it on a piecrust base. The “short” in shortcake comes from the 15th-century British usage meaning crumbly like, the first mention of which, as “short cake,” appeared in London in 1588. With chemical leavening, eventually baking soda—like that promoted by Marion Harland in the 1870s—American “short cakes” became lighter and fluffier than their English ancestors. In America, in the 1930s, the Continental Baking Company of Schiller Park, Illinois, baked a plain ladyfinger-shaped sponge cake for use in making strawberry shortcakes in season. During the Great Depression, James A. Dewar, manager of the company, seeking a product extension to make full use of their baking pans and equipment, pumped up the little finger cakes with banana-cream filling and sold them year-round, two for a nickel. Thus, Twinkies were born, said to be named by Dewar after a billboard advertisement for “Twinkle Toe” shoes. A banana shortage during World War II required a substitution of vanilla cream for the original filling. In 2012, CNN selected the iconic Hostess Twinkies as choice #45 in its article “American Food: The 50 Greatest Dishes List.” Collectively, Americans have a love–hate relationship with the “golden roll of classic lemon genoise, scooped out and filled with a delicate sweet cream,” as Jeffrey Steingarten, food editor of *Vogue* Magazine once called it, a national relationship that in most cases probably does not transfer to the individual level (Steingarten 1997). In 2012, Twinkies disappeared from shelves in the United States when its American bakers went on strike and Hostess Brands chose to liquidate the company. In March 2013, a private American equity company purchased the snacks business of Hostess Brands, including Twinkies, for a reported \$410 million, returning Twinkies to America on July 15, 2013.

S’mores are another of the listed “50 Greatest American Foods.” “Goosey, melty, warm, and sweet—nothing evokes family vacations and carefree camping under the stars quite like s’mores” (Joseph 2012), the traditional campfire-side treat popular

in the United States and Canada, consisting of a roasted marshmallow and a layer of chocolate sandwiched between two pieces of graham cracker. The first recorded version of the recipe can be found in the publication *Tramping and Trailing with the Girl Scouts* of 1927. Be sure to remember to try some s'mores on August 10, National S'mores Day.

Most people make s'mores with plain Hershey bars, the iconic treat bequeathed to America by Milton Hershey, a Pennsylvania-Dutch-speaking descendent of Swiss and German immigrants who settled in southeastern Pennsylvania. Hershey brought affordable chocolate to America in 1904, with his famous nickel milk-chocolate candy bar. In 1907, he added the now equally famous Hershey chocolate kisses. Milton and his wife, Kitty, in 1918, donated their entire estate to the private Milton Hershey School Trust to maintain their Hershey Industrial School, a school for orphan boys they founded in 1909 to provide full-time education and care for disadvantaged children in perpetuity. The Hershey Trust website currently (2014) reports assets exceeding \$8 billion.

Another truly American marshmallow-based treat, the Kellogg Company created Rice Krispies Bars in 1939 as a fundraiser for Camp Fire Girls (now known simply as Camp Fire). Snap, Crackle, and Pop appear with chocolate, butterscotch, and peanut butter flavors in a sweet treat version known as scotcheroos. Peanut-butter-based Reese's Pieces more recently became a favorite American treat when, in 1982, they became the favorite sweet of E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial.

Today, in outer space, U.S. NASA teams enjoy specially designed snacks and astronaut desserts like plum-cherry cobbler, honey cake, "berry medley" and chocolate breakfast drink. Powdered commercial breakfast drinks were introduced in 1964, providing on-the-go, on-the-ground Americans with instant protein, vitamins, minerals and, of course, sugar.

Other out-of-this-world iconic American commercial treats over the years have included Tootsie Rolls, jelly beans, M&Ms, and GORP. An Austrian immigrant to the United States, Leo Hirschfeld, who wanted a "chewy" candy that would not melt easily in the heat, and a sweet treat that would be an economical alternative to traditional chocolates, created Tootsie Rolls, in New York City in 1896. Tootsie Rolls, named after his daughter, Clara "Tootsie" Hirschfeld, became the first individually wrapped penny candies. Today Tootsie Roll Industries boasts the number-one-selling chewy chocolate candy in America, made with the same recipe since 1896, which Leo Hirschfeld brought from Europe, a recipe that "required the incorporation of the previous day's Tootsie Rolls into each newly cooked confection," a graining process that Tootsie continues to this day. As such, notes Tootsie Roll Industries, "there's (theoretically) a bit of Leo's very first Tootsie Roll in every one of the sixty four million Tootsie Rolls that Tootsie produces each day. And with at least one variety still selling for just a penny apiece, it's no wonder that Tootsie Roll has remained America's favorite candy" (Tootsie Roll Industries 2014).

Jelly beans, a sugar, corn syrup, and starch fruit-flavored candy some consider an American descendent of Turkish delight, date back to at least 1886. Originally sold as a penny-candy Christmas treat, a handful for a penny, they are today, since the 1930s, more often associated with Easter and Easter eggs. Jelly bean fortunes were re-invigorated by Ronald Reagan, who kept a jar handy on his desk when he was governor in Sacramento, California, and on *Air Force One*, and at the White House in Washington, D.C. Three-and-a-half tons of Reagan's favorite jelly beans were shipped to the White House for the 1981 presidential inaugural festivities. Although some American firms sell as many as 50 flavors, about 8 are standard. Blueberry, one of the most popular current flavors, was developed for President Reagan's inauguration so there would be red, white, and blue jelly beans at the festivities. President Reagan himself was partial to the black licorice-flavored treat.

Forrest Mars (son of the founder of the Mars, Inc.) and Bruce Murrie (son of the president of The Hershey Company) founded the M&M candy company in the United States to begin producing their now-iconic "Melts in Your Mouth, Not in Your Hand" milk chocolate bits in 1940, in red, yellow, green, orange, brown, and violet colors. M&M peanuts were added in 1954. As part of the American soldiers' rations during World War II, M&Ms gained worldwide recognition, along with a near-global following. Today M&Ms are sold in over 100 countries, and they are still part of American soldiers' rations. For the same reasons as they appear as part of military rations, M&Ms have become popular in American GORP—a trail mix made with peanuts, raisins, and M&M's: they produce a taste-good, light-weight, easy-to-pack, nutritious, quick-energy sweet treat. The etymology of GORP is unknown, although it *is* known to be truly American, rating #40 on the list of the "50 Greatest American Foods."

The American sweet treats landscape, like America itself, is vast. For a truly great sampling of regional American sweet treats consult what are commonly known as church, charity, community, or club cookbooks—the locally produced fund-raising publications of dedicated women and men who, like the Girl Scouts, aim to make a better world by sharing their versions and visions of the best of what America has to offer (a tradition begun by Maria J. Moss, who published *A Poetical Cookbook* in 1864 to subsidize medical costs for Union soldiers injured in the Civil War). Church and charity cookbooks include inventive and creative regional sweet treats, along with personal favorites and classics, put forth with love and care and American ingenuity.

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V

Venezuela

When Christopher Columbus arrived off the east coast of what is now Venezuela in 1498, during his third voyage to the Americas and his only voyage to South America, he wrote to King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I of what was to become Spain that he had landed in paradise. To the Tuscan Florentine Italian navigator and cartographer Amerigo Vespucci, after whom America is thought to have been named—landing a year after Columbus had arrived “in Paradise” in 1499—“Paradise” was like . . . well, it was like . . . *Italy!* . . . what else? And more specifically it was like a *Venziola* to Amerigo—a “Little Venice”—to be exact, from which the name *Venezuela* eventually emerged. Although relatively neglected in its early days, Spain ruled Venezuela until it won independence under Simón Bolívar in 1821 as part of “Grand Columbia.” The Republic of Venezuela was later formed in 1830, and from the 19th- and 20th-century “political turmoil” emerged modern-day Venezuela, with a new constitution enacted in 1999, with a new federal focus on local independence, and new turmoil.

From the 1990s on, Venezuela, as the seventh largest oil producer in the world, has focused on oil revenues, which account for about 95 percent of its exports. With oil predominating, Venezuela now exports essentially no sugar, but still produces sugarcane and sorghum. In 2008, one of the main economic actions of President Hugo Chávez was essentially to nationalize the sugar industry, along with cement and steel. Sugar price controls have been part of a national goal to achieve Venezuelan “food sovereignty,” as sugar is considered an essential food item in accordance with the laws of the Institute for the Defense of Peoples’ Access to Goods and Services. By 2012, Venezuela had become an importer of sugar.

As in other South American countries along the 4,300 miles of Andes mountain range, Venezuela has at least three main areas, *las sierras* (mountains), *los llanos* (the plains), and the tropics (*zona tropical*). And as in the other South American countries native sweet treat patterns are reflected in the various habitats and great biodiversity and the cultural and political histories of these areas.

Venezuela, as in all tropical countries, has an abundance of fruits. And Venezuelans enjoy sweet fresh fruits and *frutas en almíbar* (fruits in syrup), all through the day and year-round, especially in the lowlands. Venezuela has one of the shortest listings of “sweets” in Helen C. Brittin’s inventory of foods in 195 nations. The list contains just four items, sugarcane, sugar, honey, and wine-soaked cake (Brittin 2011).

Prior to the arrival of sugarcane, Venezuelans relied to some extent on honey, but they used honey to a much lesser degree than did other peoples in Middle and Central America. And that has probably always been the case. Today, in Venezuela, most bees are of African descent, sharing DNA with the modern-day bee colonies in Spain, Morocco, and probably Portugal, suggesting movement of bee colonies in recent times into areas relatively void of feral bees (Clarke et al. 2001)

By taste or by default the “wine-soaked cake” that Brittin mentions takes center stage in Venezuela. And rightly so. It is the traditional Venezuelan *very sweet* sweet treat. Brittin’s full listing for the cake describes: “Wine-soaked cake topped with coconut cream (*bien me sabe de coco*)” (Brittin 2011). When we asked the folks at Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Washington, D.C., about their sweet treats, they kindly sent four recipes and invitations to discuss their favorites. The number-one recipe, they said, was for *bien me sabe* (Venezuelan coconut cream cake). And, they also added, encouraging “the American audience” to make it and try it:



Creamy and sweet Venezuelan *quesillo* is a caramel custard dessert made with eggs, sweetened condensed milk, whole milk, vanilla, and sugar. Others enjoy a similar treat as one or more versions of *crème caramel*. (Gabriela Medina/Blend Images/Corbis)

Bien me sabe is a delicious Venezuelan dessert—a rich coconut cake with layers of cream and meringue. The name translates to “tastes good to me.” This cake is similar to *tres leches* cake in that it is served chilled and is extremely moist, sweet, and rich. You can prepare this cake using a cake mix to save time, or use your favorite white cake or sponge cake recipe. *Bien me sabe* is best if allowed to chill overnight, so plan ahead if possible.

The Embassy folks also gave recipes for three other sweets: *polvorosas*, *dulce de lechoza* (caramelized papaya), and *quesillo* (“little cheese”). The well-named rich little *polvorosas*—“dusty cookies”—have been enjoyed for well over a half century. “The word is Spanish for ‘dusty,’ and the cookie, besides being generously covered with fine sugar, turns to a delicious powder when you bite into it” (“Latins Love *Polvorosas*” 1953).

Quesillo refers to different foods throughout Latin America (Quesillo 2010). In Venezuela, *quesillo* is a caramel custard dessert made with eggs, sweetened condensed milk, whole milk, vanilla, and usually sugar. “Creamy and sweet, it’s one of Venezuelans’ favorite desserts,” added the folks at the Embassy. Others throughout much of the world enjoy a similar treat as one or more versions of *crème caramel*.

The fourth recipe from the Embassy, *dulce de lechoza*—literally, “sweet papaya”—is a cooked dessert made especially for the Christmas holidays, and comes directly from paradise.

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W

Wales

Stunningly beautiful mountains, green valleys, Welsh male choirs, and seemingly unpronounceable village names like *Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch* are popular images of Wales, a visually enchanting part of Great Britain, the official name given to the island of England, Scotland, and Wales. Wales, *Cymru* in the Welsh language, is a land of witchcraft, dragons, and druids. Welsh culture and identity carries Celtic myth, legend, language, and fantasy. Ancient castles and ruins dot the landscape, as do primeval burial chambers, primordial monuments, and prehistoric artifacts dating back thousands of years.

During the Iron Age, the Celtic Britons and the British language dominated the region. The Romans ended the Iron Age by invading Britain in AD 43, gaining control of what is now northeast Wales. The Romans left, and in the fifth century Anglo-Saxons arrived, and this invasion led, more or less, to a fractured British language and culture. By the 11th century, the Welsh, the largest of the splinter groups, had firmly established their own culture and language in the region. After several unsuccessful attempts at independence, 18th-century Wales became a part of the kingdom of Great Britain. Even English dominance could not dampen the Welsh spirit; their language, culture, and cuisine survived and are important to the Welsh identity today.

From earliest prehistoric times to the 11th century, the inhabitants of this green, leafy, rivers-running-through-it land, like other people in other places at that time, sweetened their diets exclusively with fresh fruits, dried fruits, or honey. Honey, wild and domesticated, was the sweetener of choice and its popularity as a sweetening staple lasted into the 18th century, and for many Welsh honey remains a key sweetener to this day.

Wales is a land of hard-working people; historically, they had neither an abundance of wealth nor a bevy of aristocrats. Their glamour lay in the beauty of the land and not in their lifestyles. There was neither time nor money for the sugar-filled fancy delicacies served elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Their food traditions came from common citizens. There was a conspicuous absence of any written recipes among the Welch; their lore of traditional dishes was passed orally from mother to daughter and reflected a culture of practicality and frugality without compromising the pleasure of taste.

In the United Kingdom, a “pudding” is a dessert; it may or may not be a pudding as Americans define it (usually a custard-type dessert made with a base of eggs, milk, and sugar). The March 1 feast of St. David, the patron saint of Wales, would not be complete without Monmouth pudding, named after the Welsh border town (now renamed Gwent). Practicality pervades the preparation of this dessert. Bread-crumbs, fruits of the season, and sugar or honey are the main ingredients. Almost everyone has his or her own special concoction for making this pudding; no two cooks seem to have the same recipe as it is a “use what you have” dessert.

As in other British countries and colonies, people in Wales have their own version of a pudding traditionally cooked in a cloth bag, now more often cooked in ramekins. For the Welsh, *Pwddin Eryri* (“Snowdon pudding”) is a steamed pudding dating back to the 19th century, with the usual ingredients of raisins, suet, eggs, sugar, flour, and breadcrumbs, but with the unusual ingredient of lemon marmalade. The pudding is named after the highest mountain in Wales, Snowdon, in the area of Snowdonia. Legend says a hotel chef at the foot of Snowdon invented the cake to “award” guests who successfully trekked up and down Wales’s highest peak. Typically, custard sauce tops the Snowdon pudding, which is especially savored on cold, wintery evenings.

For centuries, Welsh women cooked on a griddle, with a stronghold of griddle users remaining in Wales today. As far back as Elizabethan times, Welsh women “griddled” teacakes. These tiny cakes look like what Americans might call a hybrid of a pancake, muffin, and cookie. The Welsh cakes, containing flour, sultanas, raisins, and/or currants, and perhaps now-common spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg, are small—about two inches in diameter and half inch high. They are eaten hot or cold but typically did not have an accompaniment such as jam or clotted cream, as Wales was a mining country, and legend tells that the local coal miners carried Welsh cakes in their pockets. The cakes, loaded with lard or butter, dried fruits, and sugar, not only had a wonderful taste, but they also contained necessary nutrients for energy. Not so common today, as they take time to make and are best made by hand, Welsh cakes are now enjoyed with butter, honey, and/or jam.

British baking has a long-standing tradition of creating breads containing dried fruits, leavened with baking powder, destined for the tea table, and each region has its own favored recipe for the bread. *Bara brith*, or “speckled bread,” the Welsh version of the bread, uses dried fruits steeped in cold (leftover) tea, and whatever spices are available (cinnamon, nutmeg, and cardamom). *Bara brith* can be made as an individual loaf or as buns. As with the Welsh cakes of days gone by, locals today serve *bara brith* with butter and frequently as a sweet treat with afternoon tea.

Celtic culture and tradition permeate the Welsh cuisine; it is creative, colorful, and practical—befitting the people themselves. Welsh sweet treats and desserts reflect the practicality and customs of the Welsh people. In earlier times, the people of Wales were farmers, fishermen, and miners. Their sweet treats early on reflected



Small Welsh “griddled” teacakes are eaten hot or cold but traditionally did not have an accompaniment such as jam or clotted cream. Not so common today, as they take time to make and are best made by hand, Welsh cakes are now enjoyed with butter, honey, and/or jam. (Marfle/Dreamstime.com)

the need for substantial, satisfying, and filling food for their hard-working laborers, and their time-honored wares remain popular today as sweet symbols of a rich history.

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West Africa

(Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire [Ivory Coast], The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo)

Sixteen countries make up West Africa, 15 if Mauritania is included with the countries of North Africa, as is often the case. The 15 countries constitute the Economic Community of West African States. These countries share similar sweet treats, framed in similar history, traditions, and geography. Bordered on both the west and south by the Atlantic Ocean, and the north by the Sahara Desert, the eastern edge of West Africa is politically defined by the eastern Niger and Nigerian borders. Most of West Africa south of the Sahara Desert is tropical savanna. Modern country borders reflect former colonial boundaries and cut across a wide variety of pre-colonial ethnic and political divisions. All countries except Liberia are former colonies of the French, British, or Portuguese. Until 1960, France controlled most of the territory of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. Britain controlled the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, while Portugal controlled Guinea-Bissau and the historically important island country of Cape Verde off the coast of West Africa. Only Liberia remained independent, having been established by the United States in the 1840s as a home for freed slaves. Much of the slave trade was based in West Africa, and especially in Benin and Nigeria.

West Africa has been settled by various peoples for nearly 15,000 years and has, over the years, witnessed many migrations and the rise and fall of major states and empires such as the Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Hausa. Because of its enormous wealth and political power, the Mali Empire of the Mandinka peoples (*ca.* 1230–1600)—the second largest geographical empire ever and home of the legendary center of Islamic learning and trading at Timbuktu—early on developed extensive trade with other parts of Africa, from Senegal to Egypt, and had a profound influence on West Africa as well as other regions of Africa and beyond. West African gold, spices, ivory, and other riches and grandeur became the stuff of great legends throughout the known world of the time. As a result of its long political history, geographical setting, and cultural intermixing, West Africa is today a region of tremendous diversity.

Nigeria, for example, the largest country in West Africa, with 174.5 million people—the seventh largest country in the world—speaks English as its official language, and over 500 indigenous languages. Nigeria is 50 percent Muslim and 40 percent Christian, while 10 percent practice indigenous beliefs. In Guinea Bissau, 40 percent follow indigenous beliefs, while half are Muslims. People in northern West Africa are primarily Muslim, with the followers of Islam comprising over 90 percent of the population in the Gambia, Mali, and Senegal. Many other countries, especially those along the southern coast of West Africa, are predominantly Christian, primarily Roman Catholic. The smallest country, Portuguese-speaking Cape Verde, with only 500,000 people, is primarily Roman Catholic, but is said to be “infused with indigenous beliefs.”

As in most other parts of Africa, fruit and honey are the primary sweet treats throughout West Africa, and especially in the tropical regions of the south. Fruits commonly enjoyed by the West Africans are those frequently found throughout most of Africa: dates, bananas, baobab fruit, coconuts, pineapples, mangoes, papaya, watermelon, guava, kiwis, citrus (mandarin oranges, lemons, and limes), and akee apples.

Akee apples are native to tropical coastal areas of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, although they are today better known from Jamaica where they were brought to the New World by 1778 to furnish food for the slaves. “Akee” is a term from the Akan language spoken by the largest ethnic group in both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. The akee is a member of the soapberry family (*Sapindaceae*), a group that also includes the lychee and longan. Akee skin, unripe fruit, and seeds are poisonous and potentially fatal. The leathery green pear-shaped apple-sized akee ripens to a bright orange-red fruit and “yawns” or opens naturally, and only then, after it has been exposed to sunlight, can the mild slightly nutty soft spongy fruit be safely eaten. The ripe white-to-yellow seed-covered fleshy pulp clusters of the akee apples are enjoyed throughout most of Central Africa, either eaten raw, cooked in soup, or fried in oil.

Dates are a main sweet treat throughout West Africa, as they are in other parts of Africa. Dates are also of special religious importance to the Muslim majority. Muslims following *sunnah* (the way of life prescribed and modeled by the Prophet Muhammad) break their Ramadan fasting with an evening meal called *Iftar*, traditionally beginning with sweet dates in commemoration of the Prophet’s breaking of the fast. Sweet dishes and desserts are prominent in *Iftar* meals.

In addition to the normal uses of dates, as a gastronomically sweet fruit and religious symbol, one finds in West Africa date syrup (“date honey”) used as a sweetener, similar to its use in North Africa and the Middle East. In Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, and parts of North and Central Africa, India, and Pakistan, date palms are tapped for the sweet sap, which in West Africa is converted into palm sugar or molasses. In Muslim countries, because of religious prohibitions on the use of alcohol, palm sap is generally not fermented.

And as in other parts of Africa, urban settings and larger towns show the influence of former colonial dominance—in this case French, British, and Portuguese—although to a lesser extent than in other parts of Africa, especially North Africa. The biggest international culinary exchange for the West African nations unfortunately came about because of the slave trade. Marcus Samuelsson, the Ethiopian born celebrity chef, notes that the English settlers introduced very few of their native dishes to their colonies, with “avocado fool” being one exception, and the one now served throughout West Africa (Samuelsson 2006). The rich, creamy, quintessentially British dessert is typically made with berries, but Samuelsson prefers avocados, a relatively recent arrival to Africa via Mauritius in 1780. Portuguese, and to a greater extent, French influence, are visible principally in the urban areas, and especially in colonially inspired pastry, pudding, and custard treats. Liberians, on the other hand, because of their historical contact with the United States, tend to love American pastries such as sweet-potato pie, coconut pie, and pumpkin pie.

Traditional West African snacks tend to be simple and easily prepared. The classic Sierra Leonian snack *kanyah* (sugar peanuts), for example, has only three ingredients: one cup of parched rice, one cup of roasted groundnuts (peanuts), and one-half cup of sugar. Pound the groundnuts and rice into small pieces, combine the mixture with sugar, form the mixture into balls, cubes, or pyramids, press into a pan, cut into squares, and you are finished. *Kashata* (coconut sweet), a popular snack of both West and East Africans, is made simply of raw sugar, freshly grated coconut, cinnamon, cardamom, and a pinch of sea salt. For roasted sweet groundnuts (peanuts), a snack widely enjoyed throughout West Africa, one simply needs water, sugar, and roasted peanuts. Bananas are combined with peanuts and simple ingredients for more modern treats like banana peanut cake. Lemon, coconut, sugar, and molasses are combined to make the popular lemon coconut candy, while papaya, sugar, and lemons make papaya candy. The list of simple snacks goes on, with the ingredients lists only slightly longer than the sweets’ names. Fried plantain may be the simplest and most widespread snack in West Africa, next to just chewing on a sweet piece of freshly cut raw sugarcane. Across West Africa, as in many other parts of the African continent, fried or baked bananas with honey, sugar, or coconut, and fried sweetened dough balls are popular. These are usually fried in palm oil or more expensive peanut oil. (Bananas, it should be noted, are different from plantains, although to the Western eye they look alike.) Once one gets the poison out of the cassava, as with the akee, sweetened *garri* (basically a tapioca-like treat) is a simple and popular West African sweet made of cassava and sugar. And for a more complex treat, one can add roasted peanuts and/or evaporated milk. Yoruba peoples of Benin add pepper and other spicy ingredients to the mix. In West Africa, even the most complex sweet snacks tend to be simple.

Apart from just chewing on a piece of raw sugarcane, what could be more delightfully simple than a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich? In West Africa, peanut

butter—groundnut *paté* (*paté d'arachide*)—is a popular traditional food commonly made only with roasted peanuts. West African peanut raising zones overlap with the former West African slave trade territories, with each one historically influencing the other. Few people need to be convinced about the convenience and delight of a well-made peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich. One West African version might well take the form of a groundnut *paté* and pawpaw jelly on banana-rice bread treat. Fruit jellies, jams, and marmalades are common. African exotic fruit preserves are now internationally popular sweets available online.

Why not have a West African-inspired peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich for lunch? If you do not have pawpaw or akee apple preserves, try your groundnut *paté* with grape jelly—and add a banana and garnish with native sesame seeds for even greater West African authenticity.

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RECIPES

The following recipes are traditional recipes typical of their countries or regions, developed over time, and often passed down by oral tradition until they were recorded. They are only guides to signature sweets around the world. Each recipe has many variations, and they differ from family to family, region to region, and among the generations; even the way these treats are spelled differ. Making these sweet treats is not an exact science, but some recipes do require practice. Ingredients vary, methods vary, and temperatures and cooking utensils vary—after some experience and experimentation, you will discover what works for you. Actual oven temperatures, for example, often vary from set and indicated temperatures, and cooking and baking times are longer at high altitudes. Keep in mind, also, that most of the world uses metric measurements, and they measure ingredients by weight, not volume, so there may be some unusual measurements due to the process of conversion. It is always a good idea to read a recipe through to the end before you begin, noting, for example, that occasionally some things must be prepared a day or more in advance, or that cooling and resting times are required, or that you may now and then need special ingredients. Resting times are very important; do not overlook them.

In general, recipes with ingredients that are not available in the United States (including speciality food shops) or by mail order, and recipes requiring highly specialized equipment are not included in this collection. The recipes keep to the original, traditional ingredients, as practicality dictates, but in some cases they may occasionally include commercial products such as frozen *phyllo* pastry, and even cake mixes. Unless otherwise specified, “flour” refers to unbleached, all-purpose or “plain flour,” having a protein content of 10–12 percent.

If rolling the dough or assembling a recipe seems complicated, check it out on www.youtube.com/, where you will find excellent cooking and baking demonstrations by great bakers and chefs from all over the world. More information on materials in this volume, including additional recipes, is available online at <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/SweetTreats.html>.

***Goash-e-feel* (Elephant Ear Pastry, Afghanistan)**

(Adapted from Saberi, Helen, *Afgan Food and Cookery: Noshe Djan*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 2000.)

1 egg	½ cup confectioners' sugar, for dusting
½ ounce butter, melted	
¼ cup milk	3 tablespoons pistachios, finely ground, for garnish
1 cup flour	
⅛ teaspoon salt	Oil for frying

1. Beat the egg with melted butter.
2. Add the milk, salt, and flour to the egg mixture, and mix to form dough, adding more liquid or flour, if necessary. Knead on floured surface until dough is smooth and elastic.
3. Form 8–10 balls, cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap, and set aside to rest for about a half hour.
4. When the balls of dough have rested, flatten (or roll) each ball to about 6–7 inches in diameter, which will be quite thin. To shape the “elephant ear,” with wet fingers, moisten one tip of the “ear” and gently make a small fold or pleat to shape the ear.
5. In a shallow heavy pan, heat enough oil to fry the pastry, 1–1½ inches deep. Add each “ear” to the very hot oil, quickly fry one side until golden brown, then turn.
6. Gently remove the “ear” from the oil when both sides are golden, rest on paper towels to absorb excess oil, and sprinkle with mixture of confectioners' sugar and ground pistachios.

Sheer Payra (Cardamom Fudge, Afghanistan)

(Adapted from Saberi, Helen, *Afgan Food and Cookery: Noshe Djan*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 2000.)

Formerly, *sheer payra* was made with dried milk and water. Nowadays, fresh milk is used, and it is made like traditional fudge, using a candy thermometer.

2 cups sugar	1 ounce butter
⅔ cup whole milk	½ teaspoon ground cardamom seeds
2 tablespoons corn syrup	3–4 tablespoons walnuts or almonds, finely chopped
¼ teaspoon salt	3–4 tablespoons pistachios, finely chopped
1 teaspoon rose water	

1. In a heavy-bottomed pan, heat milk, sugar, corn syrup, and salt over medium heat until sugar dissolves, stirring constantly.
2. Continue cooking and stirring the mixture until it reaches 240°F on a candy thermometer.

3. Remove the mixture from heat, add butter and rose water, and set aside to cool to 120°F.
4. Add the cardamom and beat the mixture until thick.
5. When mixture is thickened, stir in the nuts and spread in a buttered pan.
6. When firm, cut into bite-sized squares.

Maamoul (Shortbread Cookie-Like Pastry, Arabian Peninsula)

(Contributed by Mayssam Tamim of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Ingredients for Dough:

1½ cups coarse semolina	1 cup boiling water
½ cup fine semolina	12 ounces butter

Ingredients for Nut Filling:

1 teaspoon orange blossom water	¾ cup fine sugar
1 teaspoon rose water	1¼ cup crushed walnuts

Ingredients for Date Filling:

2 cups date paste	Confectioners' sugar,
4 ounces butter	for dusting

1. Mix semolina, butter, and boiling water to make dough.
2. Knead the dough until it is smooth and elastic.
3. Cover the dough tightly. Allow it to rest overnight (or at least 4 hours).
4. Knead date paste and butter together.
5. On the second day, knead the dough again thoroughly, and make small balls. Hollow out centers with your thumbs. Fill the hollows with either the nut filling or the date filling. Press the dough back over the filling.
6. Press each cookie onto a buttered baking sheet, flatten, and decorate with the tines of a fork. Or, shape the dough in the carved molds made especially for this purpose.
7. Bake the cookies in moderate heat 10–12 minutes or until light brown.
8. Dust cookies liberally with confectioners' sugar while hot.

Alfajores (Dulce de Leche Sandwich Cookies, Argentina)

(Adapted from Brooks, Shirley Lomax, *Argentina Cooks!* New York: Hippocrene Books, 2001.)

Alfajores are sweet treats with *dulce de leche* spread between two crisp butter cookies.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

12 ounces butter, room temperature	⅓ cup almonds, finely ground
1 cup confectioners' sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract or the seeds from a vanilla bean
1 cup granulated sugar	3 cups flour
¼ teaspoon salt	1 cup <i>dulce de leche</i> (see the next recipe)
1 egg	
½ teaspoon lemon zest	

1. Beat the butter until light and fluffy, add the confectioners' sugar, granulated sugar, and salt.
2. Add egg, lemon zest, ground almonds, and vanilla, and continue mixing until the mixture becomes smooth and light.
3. Mix in the flour, and divide into two or three portions and chill.
4. One at a time, roll out a portion of dough to ⅛ inch thickness, and cut dough into 2-inch circles.
5. Bake the cookies on greased cookie sheet for 8–10 minutes, until the tops begin to brown.
6. Remove and cool on wire racks.
7. When cool, spread each of the bottom-halves of the cookies with about 1 tablespoon *dulce de leche*, and top with another cookie to form a “sandwich.”

Makes about two dozen sandwich cookies.

Dulce de Leche (Caramel Cream, Argentina)

(Adapted from Brooks, Shirley Lomax, *Argentina Cooks!* New York: Hippocrene Books, 2001.)

There are many ways to make *dulce de leche*, a sweet, caramelly, condensed, pudding-like mixture used as a spread. Here is a traditional recipe where you make your own sweetened, condensed milk in the cooking process. (Some recipes call for a can of sweetened condensed milk.)

1 quart whole milk	1 teaspoon baking soda
1½ cups sugar	1 vanilla bean or 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1. Combine all the ingredients in a heavy-bottom pan and stir the mixture until sugar is dissolved.

2. Bring the mixture to a boil, then turn the heat down to medium low, and cook until the mixture turns a caramel color with a smooth texture (not grainy), which could take 3–5 hours, stirring occasionally.
3. Remove the vanilla bean.
4. *Dulce de leche* is ready when it does not run when a spoonful is dropped on a plate, but is still spreadable.
5. Set aside to cool.

Dulce de leche can be stored in a glass jar in the refrigerator for one to two weeks.

***Choereg* (Easter Bread, Armenia)**

(Adapted from allrecipes.com. Accessed December 5, 2013. <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Choereg-Armenian-Easter-Bread/>.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

1 tablespoon dry yeast	½ teaspoon <i>mahlab</i> (an aromatic spice made from the pits of the St. Lucie cherry)
1 cup milk, warmed	
½ cup sugar	
6 ounces unsalted butter, melted	6 cups flour
3 eggs, beaten	1 egg yolk
1½ teaspoons salt	

1. Dissolve yeast in warm milk. When it is dissolved and beginning to foam, add the sugar and melted butter.
2. Add the eggs, salt, and *mahlab*.
3. Add flour, gradually, and mix until dough is firm and does not stick to the sides of the bowl.
4. Knead the dough for about 10 minutes, until it is smooth, handles easily, and can be shaped into a ball.
5. Place the dough in a greased bowl, and rotate to coat the dough with grease. Cover it to keep moist, and set aside in a warm draft-free place for about an hour, or until it doubles in volume.
6. When the dough has risen, divide it into two portions. Divide each portion into three sections and roll each section into a rope about 12–14 inches long. With moistened fingers, pinch three ropes together at one end, and loosely braid until there is just enough of the rope left to tuck the ends under.
7. Repeat with other portion to make a second braided loaf.
8. Cover the loaves and let rise again, until double in size.

9. Before baking, moisten the surfaces with a beaten egg yolk and sprinkle with sesame seeds or sliced almonds.
10. Bake in preheated oven for about 25–30 minutes, until golden brown.

Makes two loaves.

Chocolate Macadamia Nut Cookies (Australia)

(Adapted from *Cook Eat Share*. Accessed December 14, 2013. <http://cookeatshare.com/recipes/chocolate-macadamia-nut-cookies-116842>.)

There are dozens of varieties of macadamia nut cookies, made with the same basic recipe. Some are made with coconut, some with oatmeal, white chocolate, or chocolate chips, but they all have macadamia (“Queensland”) nuts in them. This recipe is a chocolate, fudge-like macadamia nut cookie recipe. Some people prefer their cookies chewy, so they bake them a shorter time, or they prefer their cookies crispy, which requires another few minutes of baking time.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1 cup brown sugar	1 egg
4 ounces butter, softened	1 cup flour
2 teaspoons vanilla extract	½ teaspoon baking powder
2 ounces bitter baking chocolate, melted and cooled	½ teaspoon salt
	1 cup macadamia nuts, chopped

1. Beat sugar and butter until light and fluffy, add vanilla, chocolate, and egg, blending thoroughly.
2. When thoroughly blended, mix in flour, baking powder, salt, and nuts.
3. Drop the dough by rounded spoonful onto ungreased cookie sheet.
4. Bake cookies 9 to 11 minutes or until slightly firm when touched in the center.
5. Cool cookies until somewhat firm (a minute or two, or slightly longer if you prefer a crispy cookie), then move to wire rack.

Lemon Delicious Pudding (Australia)

(Contributed by Carolyn Molloy of Pretty Beach, Sydney, Australia.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 lemons	3 eggs, separated
2 ounces butter	3 tablespoons self-rising flour
1½ cups castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	1½ cups milk

1. Butter a 1-quart square or rectangular baking pan.
2. Zest one of the lemons and juice both the lemons.
3. In a food processor, cream the butter with the zest and sugar, then add the egg yolks to the mixture.
4. Add the flour and milk alternately to the mixture to make a smooth batter.
5. Add the lemon juice to the batter.
6. In a clean bowl, whip the egg whites until firm.
7. Pour the batter into the egg whites and gently fold in the batter.
8. Pour the mixture into the prepared dish.
9. Set the dish in a larger, deeper, pan. Pour hot water halfway up the sides of the larger baking dish.
10. Bake for 15 minutes, then lower the oven temperature to 300°F and bake for 45–50 more minutes.
11. Lemon Delicious is best served hot, topped with heavy cream.

Pavlova (Fruit Meringue Dessert, Australia)

(Contributed by Anne-Louise Vidgen of Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.)

Preheat oven to 400°F, then immediately lower the temperature to 225°F–275°F.

4 egg whites	1 level dessert spoon (about
Pinch of salt	2 teaspoons) cornstarch
1 cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	½ cup heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon vinegar	½ teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon vanilla extract	Fruits of the season

Remember to lower preheated oven immediately to 225°F–275°F.

1. Beat the egg whites with the pinch of salt for 5–6 minutes, or until stiff peaks form.
2. Gradually add the castor sugar, vinegar, and ½ teaspoon vanilla to the egg whites. Beat the mixture until stiff (using an electric mixer).
3. Sift one level dessert spoonful of cornstarch onto the mixture and gently fold it in.
4. Wet the pavlova plate (round, flat, and ovenproof china) with cold water and heap the mixture onto the dampened plate, spreading the mixture to about seven inches in diameter.
5. Bake the meringue undisturbed for 1½ hours (no longer that that) on lowest shelf of preheated oven.

6. Meanwhile, whip the cream, fold in $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla.
7. Spread the whipped cream on the baked, cooled meringue.
8. Artfully decorate the meringue with the fruits of your choice: kiwifruit, strawberries, and, if using passion fruit, be sure to drain.

***Apfel Strudel* (Apple Strudel, Austria)**

(Adapted from Weismüller, Maria (Ed.), *Austrian Specialties*, Innsbruck: Kompass, 2002.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Ingredients for First Filling:

4 ounces butter 1 cup breadcrumbs

1. Heat the butter in a pan over low heat until foaming (be careful not to let the butter burn), then add the breadcrumbs.
2. Toast the crumbs, stirring constantly, until they are golden brown. Set aside to cool.

Ingredients for Second Filling:

½ cup raisins	¾ cup granulated sugar
4 tablespoons orange juice	1–2 teaspoons fresh lemon zest
5–6 large baking apples, peeled, and chopped into $\frac{1}{3}$ inch-sized pieces	4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

3. Soak the raisins in the orange juice until they are moist and plump (heating in the microwave for a minute speeds this process).
4. Add raisins to the finely chopped apples, sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest, and ground cinnamon and mix thoroughly.

Ingredients for Dough:

1½ cups flour	1 egg yolk, beaten
¼ teaspoon salt	½ cup lukewarm water
2 ounces butter, cold (for the mixture)	4 ounces butter, melted (for the brushing)

Great strudel dough requires practice. Here are the directions for making and stretching the dough:

5. In a food processor, blend together the flour and the salt.
6. Add the cold butter to flour mixture and pulverize.

7. In a small bowl, stir together egg yolk and the water.
8. Blend the egg yolk mixture into the flour mixture, process for 30 seconds. Stop for a minute, and process again for about 30 seconds. Dough should be in a ball.
9. Throw dough onto hard surface for about two minutes, or about one hundred times, to activate the gluten. Knead into a ball.
10. Cover the kneaded dough with damp cloth and allow it to rest for one hour at room temperature.
11. Cover a large surface (at least 4 × 3 feet) with a large cloth or sheet, and lightly flour the entire surface of the cloth. In the meantime, place the apple mixture into a colander to drain.
12. Place the dough on the cloth, and roll into a 15-inch square.
13. Cover the dough with damp cloth and let it rest for 30 minutes.
14. With the palms or the backs of your hands, stretch the dough from underneath. Begin in the middle of the square and work toward the edges, gently lifting and pulling your hands apart, working the dough away from the middle without handling the dough with your fingers. Continue stretching until the dough is paper thin, forming a 40 × 20-inch rectangle. Use a knife or scissors to trim edges.
15. Brush entire surface with melted butter.
16. Assemble the strudel by gently sprinkling the breadcrumbs over the top $\frac{2}{3}$ of the thinly stretched dough.
17. Place the drained apple mixture on the remaining bottom $\frac{1}{3}$ of the dough, leaving about 2 inches on each edge.
18. Trim any thick or unkempt edges of dough. Using the towel, not your fingers, lift the exposed edge of the apple end of the dough over the filling and roll gently.
19. Continue rolling the dough up and over the filling to form a log, continue generously brushing with butter after each rotation.
20. When rolling the *strudel* is completed, brush again with butter, then cut and pinch the ends together.
21. Use the cloth to maneuver strudel to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, seam side down.
22. Brush top with melted butter.
23. Bake the *strudel* in preheated oven for 20 minutes and then reduce heat to 350°F and bake further for 40–60 minutes, until it is golden brown and the apple filling is tender. Remove from oven.
24. Brush the *strudel* again with melted butter and dust with confectioners' sugar.
25. Using the parchment, lift onto serving platter.
26. Serve the *strudel* slices with whipped cream, vanilla custard sauce, or ice cream.

***Linzertorte* (Multilayer Jam- and Nut-filled Pastry, Austria)**

(Adapted from Weismüller, Maria (Ed.), *Austrian Specialties*, Innsbruck: Kompass, 2002.)

Do not substitute jelly for jam in this recipe! The pieces of fruit are an important part of its deliciousness!

Preheat oven to 350°F.

8 ounces unsalted butter, chilled, cut into small pieces	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup flour, sifted	2 egg yolks
1½ cups ground almonds	1 teaspoon lemon zest
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup red currant jam, or enough to spread on bottom crust
$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cloves	$\frac{1}{2}$ egg white, slightly beaten

1. In a food processor, grind almonds and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar to a powder, being careful to stop before a paste forms. Set the almond/sugar mixture aside.
2. Blend butter, egg yolks, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar in processor until the mixture becomes light and fluffy.
3. Add ground almonds, flour, zest, salt, ground cinnamon, and cloves; pulse the mixture until sticky pastry-like dough is created.
4. Divide the dough into two portions: one $\frac{1}{3}$ portion (for the top) and one $\frac{2}{3}$ portion (for the bottom).
5. Gently form each of the dough portions into a round, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill for 2 hours.
6. When chilled, place the larger piece of dough in a 9-inch springform pan. With damp fingers, press the dough to the edges of the pan, and up the sides for about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
7. Bake this bottom crust until it turns golden brown, 20–25 minutes, and then set it aside to cool completely.
8. Roll out remaining dough between two sheets of plastic wrap into a 9-inch circle, place on a plate and freeze 10 minutes.
9. Remove the top sheet of plastic wrap and trim the dough into 12 strips about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wide. For ease of handling, freeze the strips for about 5 minutes.
10. Spread the jam evenly over cooled bottom crust to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the edge.
11. Carefully place 6 strips 1 inch apart on the jam, pressing ends onto exposed edge of the bottom crust.
12. Place remaining 6 strips 1 inch apart diagonally on top of first strips (to form a diamond patterned lattice top).

13. Trim edges of all strips neatly at the edge of the pan.
14. Bake on the middle rack of preheated oven, until the lattice is golden brown, for about 30–40 minutes.
15. Place the pan on a cooling rack for about 10 minutes before removing the edge portion of the springform pan. Allow *Linzertorte* to cool completely before serving.

***Kuzunak* (Easter Bread, Balkans)**

(Adapted from Piskov, Ivaylo, *The Bulgarian Cookbook*, Self-published, 2010.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	8–9 cups flour
2 tablespoons sugar	2 ounces butter
¾ teaspoons salt	¼ cup vegetable oil
1⅔ cup warmed milk	1 cup sugar
½ cup raisins	6 eggs
¼ cup rum	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 lemon for juice and zest	½ cup almonds or walnuts

1. Mix the yeast, sugar, salt, and ⅔ cup of warm milk in a large bowl.
2. Cover the mixture and set it aside in a warm place for 40 minutes.
3. Soak the raisins in rum and set aside.
4. Zest and juice the lemon and set aside.
5. Sift about 8 cups of the flour onto a large work surface, and make a large well in the center.
6. Melt the butter and mix with oil.
7. Combine the remaining 1 cup warm milk and sugar.
8. Separate 2 eggs and set aside yolks for glazing.
9. Add the whites to the remaining eggs.
10. Add a handful of flour to the warm yeast mixture.
11. Place the yeast mixture, the milk and sugar mixture, the beaten eggs, and the oil and butter mixture into the well of the flour and begin to mix it in with your hands.
12. Add the lemon juice, zest, and the vanilla to the mixture.
13. Add more flour, if necessary, and knead the dough until it is smooth and holds together nicely.
14. Set the dough aside in a warm draft-free place for about an hour, or until it doubles in volume.

15. When doubled in size, punch the dough down and knead the drained raisins into the dough (it is easier if they are first dredged in flour).
16. Divide the dough into 4 portions, and divide each portion into three parts.
17. Roll each part into a rope about the length of the baking sheet, and braid the three “ropes,” pinching the ends together with damp fingers.
18. Braid any remaining raisins into the dough.
19. Place on baking sheet and set aside to rise until double in size.
20. Brush the dough with the egg yolk and garnish with nuts on the top.
21. Bake for about 30 minutes, or until golden brown.

Makes 4 braided loaves.

Slavski Kolac (Slava Bread, Balkans)

(Adapted from Rolek, Barbara, “Eastern European Food.” About.com. Accessed 12 December 2013. <http://easteuropeanfood.about.com/od/holidaysfestivals/r/slavabread.htm>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

4¼ cups flour	½ cup sugar
4 ounces butter	1 egg and 2 egg yolks
2½ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	1 tablespoon freshly grated lemon zest
1 cup milk	¾ teaspoon salt

1. Separate the eggs (you will have one dish with two egg yolks and one whole egg, and another dish with two egg whites, which you will not use in this recipe).
2. Dissolve the yeast, 1 teaspoon sugar, and 3 tablespoons flour in ½ cup warm water. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine 1½ cups warm water with the salt, butter, eggs, lemon zest and juice, and sugar; add the yeast and nearly all flour into this mixture and blend thoroughly.
4. If the dough is still sticky, add the remaining flour, as necessary.
5. Knead the dough for about 10 minutes until it is smooth and elastic. Place it into a well-greased bowl and set aside in a warm draft-free place to rest and rise for about an hour, or until it doubles in volume.
6. When doubled in size, punch down the dough and knead again. (Here, you may set aside a bit of the dough to decorate the top of the cake. Place the dough in a thoroughly greased deep, round, pan (usually about 3 inches deep and 9 inches across). Traditionally, with the dough that was put aside, you can decorate the cake with a small braid, cut outs, or a cross in the center. Set the decorated cake aside until it doubles in volume.

7. Brush the cake lightly with the egg yolk mixed with 1 teaspoon of water.
8. Bake for about 1 hour or until golden brown.
9. When cool to the touch, remove the cake from the pan and place on wire rack.

Traditionally, a little bouquet of blooming basil sprigs garnishes the cake top.

Aguonu Sausainiukai (Poppy Seed Cookies, Lithuania)

(From Rolek, Barbara, "Eastern European Food." About.com. Accessed 14 December 2013. <http://easteuropeanfood.about.com/od/lithuaniandesserts/r/poppycookies.htm>.)

Nowadays, even some traditional cooks buy prepared poppy seed filling, as this recipe suggests.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

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| 1 (12½ ounces) can poppy seed filling,
or blend two cups of poppy seeds
into a paste in a food processor | ½ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup flour |
| 3 large eggs, beaten | Pinch of salt |
| 2 tablespoons sour cream | Confectioners' sugar, for dusting |
| 1 ounce butter, melted | |

1. Mix poppy seed paste and eggs together.
2. Thoroughly mix in the remaining ingredients, except confectioners' sugar.
3. Place teaspoons of cookie dough onto parchment-lined baking sheets.
4. Bake about 15–20 minutes or until cookies are golden.
5. Remove cookies from pan when cooled.
6. Dust with confectioners' sugar and store in an airtight container.

Makes about two dozen cookies.

Rupjmaizes Kārtojums (Sweet Rye Trifle, Latvia)

(Contributed by Nora Vicinska of Talsi, Latvia.)

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| ⅓ cup dried or oven-dried dark rye
bread grated finely, combined with
a small amount of ground cinnamon
and sugar (about ½ teaspoon each) | amount of sugar (about 1 teaspoon,
or to taste) |
| 3½ tablespoons of sour jam or freshly
squeezed cranberries with a small | 1½ tablespoons sugar
3½ tablespoons heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Dark chocolate for decorating |

1. Whip the cream with 1½ tablespoons sugar.
2. Layer the ingredients in an individual or a dessert-serving dish starting with the rye bread mix, then adding the jam or freshly squeezed cranberry mix, and finishing with the whipped cream.
3. Decorate with a few cranberries and grated dark chocolate.

Makes one serving.

Gajor Halva (Carrot Halva, Bangladesh)

(Adapted from Sperling, Veronica, and McFadden, Christine, *The Complete Book of Indian Cooking*, Bristol: Paragon, 1997.)

1 pound carrots, finely chopped or grated	2–3 tablespoons sugar
2 cups whole milk	1 ounce butter
5 cardamom seeds, finely ground	2 teaspoons raisins
3–4 sticks cinnamon	2 teaspoons nuts, finely chopped (cashews, almonds, or pistachios)

1. Toast the nuts and set aside for garnish.
2. Boil the milk on medium-high heat until it reduces to about to 1 cup, stirring often, then set aside.
3. Melt the butter in a large frying pan on medium heat, add the shredded carrots, and fry for 7 or 8 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. When carrots become tender, add the milk, and cook until the liquid is absorbed or evaporated.
5. In about 8 or 10 minutes, the mixture will become quite thick.
6. Add the sugar, cardamom powder, and cinnamon, and stir-fry the mixture for another 3–4 minutes until the *halva* starts to leave the side of the pan.
7. Serve when cool and garnish the *halva* with toasted nuts.

Makes about 6–8 servings.

Mishti Doi (Sweet Yoghurt, Bangladesh)

(Adapted from Sarker, Petrina Verma, “Indian Food.” About.com. Accessed December 14, 2013. http://indianfood.about.com/od/sweetsanddesserts/r/mishti_doi.htm.)

1 quart cream or whole milk	1¼ cups sugar
3 tablespoons plain yoghurt	

1. Bring the milk to a boil in a heavy-bottomed pan, stirring constantly, until it is reduced by half.
2. Cool the milk until it is lukewarm.
3. Put the sugar in a separate, heavy-bottomed pan over low heat.
4. When the sugar begins to melt, watch carefully as it turns brown and caramelizes, being careful not to let it burn.
5. When sugar is caramelized, add the reduced milk and mix thoroughly over low heat. (There may be lumps of caramelized sugar in the mixture, but they will dissolve as you stir.) Stir until sugar is dissolved. Set aside.
6. When the milk mixture is lukewarm, stir the yoghurt into the mixture.
7. Pour the mixture into an earthenware vessel and keep in a warm place overnight, or until the mixture thickens.
8. After the *mishti doi* has set, place in refrigerator or cool place.

Apple Pie (Belarus)

(Adapted from Belarusian Food. November 7, 2007. Accessed December 7, 2013. <http://www.belarusianfood.com/2009/11/apple-pie.html>.)

This pie is traditionally made with Antonovka apples, typical apples of Belarus. This pie is akin to a basic cobbler.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

5 Antonovka apples	1 cup sugar
(or other available	1 cup flour
firm baking	1 tablespoon oil
apples)	

3 eggs

1. Peel, core, and slice the apples.
2. Vigorously beat the eggs with the sugar, gradually adding the flour to the mixture.
3. Oil the baking pan, and arrange the apples in the pan.
4. Pour the dough mixture onto the apples, and set aside for a few minutes to allow the dough to seep down through the apples.
5. Bake in preheated oven for about 1 hour, or until apples are done.
6. Serve with soft fresh cheese, sour cream, or whipped cream.

***Paskha* (Eastern Orthodox Molded Cheesecake, Belarus)**

(Adapted from whats4eats. *Paskha*. Accessed December 7, 2013. <http://www.whats4eats.com/desserts/paskha-recipe>.)

2 pounds farmer's cheese (farmer's cheese is similar to cream cheese or ricotta cheese)	1 cup heavy whipping cream
8 ounces unsalted butter, room temperature	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup almonds, finely ground
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar	2 tablespoons fresh lemon zest
	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
	Raisins for garnish

1. If using farmer's cheese, drain it overnight in a sieve or cheesecloth. Press through a sieve or whip the cheese vigorously until smooth and fluffy.
2. Vigorously blend the butter and sugar into the mixture.
3. Gently blend in the cheese, butter-sugar mixture, cream, almonds, lemon zest, and vanilla.
4. Pour the dough into a *paskha* mold or a clean traditionally shaped flowerpot lined with clean, damp cheesecloth.
5. Place small weighted plate on top of the mold and refrigerate overnight. (If using a flowerpot, place the mold in a bowl, just in case there are any drips.)
6. Unmold the *paskha* onto a serving plate and decorate it with raisins.

Serves 6–8.

***Cramique* (Sweet Breakfast Bread, Belgium)**

(Adapted from Van Waerebeek, Ruth, and Robbins, Maria, *Everybody Eats Well in Belgium Cookbook: 250 Recipes from a Rich Culinary Tradition*, New York: Workman Publishing, 1996.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

7 cups flour, plus or minus, as necessary	$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt
2 cups warm milk	2 cups dark raisins or currants
5 ounces butter, softened	2 tablespoons dry yeast
3 eggs	1 egg mixed with 1 teaspoon water for egg wash
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar	

1. Dissolve the yeast in the milk. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.

2. Add to lightly beaten eggs and sugar.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the flour, salt, and butter.
4. Add the liquid mixture.
5. Rest for about 10–15 minutes, then knead for about 10 minutes (less time if using a machine), knead in raisins at the end (it is easier if they have been dredged in flour). When dough becomes smooth and elastic, divide it into two portions, and cover each portion with plastic wrap and set aside until nearly double in size.
6. Butter and flour two loaf pans.
7. Punch the dough down, shape the loaves, and place in the loaf pans, brush with the egg wash, and set aside again to rise until doubled in size, for about 1 hour.
8. Bake in preheated oven for about 30–35 minutes.
9. Remove the bread from the pans and cool on wire rack.
10. Cool completely before slicing.

Makes two loaves.

***Gaufre de Bruxelles* (Brussels Waffle, Belgium)**

(Adapted from Van Waerebeek, Ruth, and Robbins, Maria, *Everybody Eats Well in Belgium Cookbook: 250 Recipes from a Rich Culinary Tradition*, New York: Workman Publishing, 1996.)

2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	½ cup granulated sugar
3 cups warm milk	¾ teaspoon salt
3 eggs, separated	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
6 ounces butter, melted	4 cups flour

1. Dissolve the yeast in ¼ cup of the warm milk with a pinch of sugar. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
3. In a large bowl, mix together the egg yolks, another ¼ cup of warm milk, melted butter, and sugar.
4. Gently stir in the yeast mixture, salt, vanilla, and fold in flour and remaining milk, being careful to incorporate air as you fold.
5. Cover the bowl with a warm cloth and set aside in a warm draft-free place for about an hour, or until it doubles in volume.
6. When it doubles in volume, bake the batter in a Belgian style waffle iron.

2. Add the eggs, then the milk, a little at a time to the mixture.
3. Mix thoroughly until the dough is smooth and elastic.
4. Place the dough on a floured surface and knead it for a few minutes.
5. Cover with a cloth while it rests for 10–15 minutes.
6. Divide the dough into two portions. Using the palms of your hands (not your fingers), from underneath, stretch one portion of the dough until it is paper thin, working out from the center. Cut the dough into diamond-shaped pieces, about 1½ inches wide.
7. Cover the cut pieces with a cloth to keep them warm and moist. Repeat this process with the second portion of dough.
8. In a large, deep pan, heat the oil to a high temperature.
9. Fry several pieces of the cut dough in the oil, and turn them when they become golden on one side. When they are golden on both sides, remove from the oil and drain them on paper towels.
10. Place the fried pieces on a tray and drizzle with honey or sugarcane syrup.

Bolo de Rolo (Guava Cake Roll, Brazil)

(Adapted from Flavors of Brazil. *Bolo de Rolo*. April 3, 2010. Accessed December 7, 2013. <http://flavorsofbrazil.blogspot.com/2010/04/recipe-bolo-de-rolo.html>.)

This cake, recognized by Brazilian law as an official national sweet treat, is delicate and a challenge for amateurs. Be sure to use the cloth, and not your fingers, to roll the cake.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1½ cups sugar	Water to thin paste, or jam, if necessary
8 ounces butter	6–8 ounces commercially prepared guava paste (or other jam of your choice)
1¾ cups flour	
¼ cup cornstarch	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting
5 eggs, separated	

1. Sift the flour and cornstarch together three times.
2. Dice the prepared guava paste into small pieces, and melt in microwave (about a minute). Set aside to cool.
3. Line two 11 × 17-inch rectangular baking sheets with baking parchment paper.
4. In a large bowl, whisk the sugar and butter until thoroughly blended and then add the egg yolks to the mixture, one at a time.

5. Gently fold in the flour mixture, making an effort to keep the batter light and fluffy.
6. Gently fold in beaten egg whites, being careful to keep air in the batter.
7. Spread a thin layer of the batter onto each baking sheet.
8. Bake for approximately 5–6 minutes, until just done, still slightly sticky on the top.
9. If cakes are sufficiently done, then gently remove the cakes from the pans, using the paper, and place the baked cakes on a damp cloth.
10. As quickly as possible, while one cake is still warm, spread a thin layer of guava paste onto the cake, and roll it up quickly, using the cloth, not your fingers. The first few turns might break, but do not worry. The cake rolls most easily when it is still warm. Roll gently but tightly.
11. Repeat the process by placing the next baked layer where the last one ended and spread it with paste, and continue with the rolling.
12. Repeat the process until all the cakes and guava paste are used.
13. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve at room temperature, sliced thinly across the layers, with more of the filling on top, or with whipped cream (if desired).

Crème de Abacate (Avocado Cream, Brazil)

(Adapted from Christina, Brazilian Food. Avocado Cream. Accessed December 5, 2013. <http://brazilianfoodrecipes.com/avocado-cream.>)

2 large, ripe, avocados, peeled, pitted, and mashed 6 tablespoons sugar, or sweeten to taste
4 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1. Place all ingredients in a blender and make a purée.
2. Garnish the purée with a sprig of mint.
3. Serve in dainty bowls.

Makes 2–3 servings.

Butter Tarts (Pastry Shells Filled with Brown Sugar, Raisins, and Eggs, Canada)

(From *Everyday Favorites: Canadian Living's 30th Anniversary Cookbook 2005*, Quebec: Transcontinental, 2005.)

Preheat oven to 425°F.

1½ cups flour	1 egg yolk
¼ teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon vinegar
4 ounces cold butter, cubed (or 2 ounces cold butter and 2 ounces cold lard, cubed)	Ice water

1. In large bowl, mix the flour and salt together.
2. Cut in cold butter and lard (if using) until mixture resembles coarse crumbs with pea-sized clumps.
3. In a separate dish, vigorously mix the egg yolk with vinegar. Add ice water to the egg yolk mixture to make ⅓ cup liquid.
4. Sprinkle the cold liquid mixture over the flour/butter mixture a tablespoon at a time, stirring briskly until the pastry dough holds together.
5. Shape the dough into a smooth mound, wrap it in plastic wrap, and refrigerate it for about an hour (or up to three days).
6. When ready to use, roll out pastry to ⅛-inch thickness on a lightly floured surface. Cut the dough into 12 4-inch circles. Gently place each circle into a cup of a standard-sized muffin pan.

Filling Ingredients:

½ cup packed brown sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ cup corn syrup	1 teaspoon vinegar
1 egg	Pinch of salt
1 ounce butter, softened	¼ cup currants, raisins, chopped pecans, or shredded coconut

1. To make the filling, combine the brown sugar, corn syrup, egg, butter, vanilla, salt, and vinegar and stir vigorously.
2. Place the currants, coconut, raisins, or nuts (or any combination) in the pastry shells.
3. Spoon the filling into the pastry shells, until each cup is about ¾ full.
4. Bake in the bottom third of preheated oven until the filling is puffy and bubbly, about 12 minutes.
5. Let stand on a rack for 1–2 minutes.
6. Remove from muffin pans by running a metal spatula around the tarts, then very gently slipping the spatula under the tarts to move to a wire rack to cool.

Makes 12 tarts.

***Tarte au Sucre* (Quebec City Sugar Pie, Canada)**

(Adapted from Driver, Kate, *Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

2 eggs and 1 egg yolk	2 cups packed brown sugar
1 cup milk	1 unbaked 9-inch piecrust, either commercially made or homemade
2 teaspoons vanilla extract	
2 tablespoons flour	2 cups heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon salt	

1. Beat the eggs and the egg yolk in a bowl until foamy, add the milk and vanilla, and continue beating.
2. Slowly stir in the dry ingredients.
3. Pour the mixture into the prepared piecrust.
4. Whip the cream and chill.
5. While the cream is chilling, bake the pie in the middle of preheated oven for 10 minutes.
6. Lower the temperature to 350°F and continue baking the pie, until the center is set, about another 35–45 minutes.
7. Cool on a rack.
8. Serve at room temperature on a plate with a generous amount of the chilled whipped cream.

***Caakiri* (Sweetened Couscous Pudding, Cameroon Style, Central Africa)**

(From The Congo Cookbook, *Caakiri*. Accessed December 12, 2013. http://congocookbook.com/snack_recipes/caakiri.html.)

2 cups uncooked couscous	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup evaporated milk	1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
2 cups plain yoghurt	
1 cup sour cream	1 tablespoon orange zest
1/2 cup sugar	

1. Prepare the couscous according to package directions and set it aside to cool.
2. Mix the remaining ingredients together, and stir the mixture into the cooled couscous.

3. Add more sugar (to taste).
4. Garnish with raisins, mint, or fruit.

Cocada Amarela (Golden Coconut Pudding, Central Africa)

(Adapted from Chef Jean, Food.com. *Cocada Amarela Yellow Coconut Pudding*. May 21, 2011. Accessed December 7, 2013. <http://www.food.com/recipe/cocada-amarela-yellow-coconut-pudding-456824>.)

1 cup sugar	6 egg yolks
3 cups water	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
4 whole cloves	
½ coconut, freshly grated, or 2 cups unsweetened commercially grated coconut	

1. Bring the sugar, water, and cloves to a boil, stirring constantly in a medium-sized pan.
2. Let the mixture continue boiling until it reaches 230°F on a candy thermometer.
3. Reduce the heat to low. Remove the cloves.
4. Add the grated coconut to the mixture, a little at a time, continuing to cook and stir, for about 10 minutes, or until the coconut becomes translucent. Set the mixture aside.
5. Beat the egg yolks for about 1 minute, then add about ½ of the coconut mixture to the egg yolks while stirring.
6. Pour this mixture back into the saucepan and mix thoroughly.
7. Continue cooking over medium heat until the pudding thickens and pulls away from the bottom of the pan.
8. Put in serving dishes, sprinkle with ground cinnamon (to taste) and serve.

Atol de Elote (Corn Beverage, El Salvador, Central America)

(Adapted from Door to El Salvador. Accessed December 7, 2013. http://www.door-toelsalvador.com/Cuisine/atol_de_elote.php.)

An ancient and contemporary thick, sweet dessert made of ground corn, cinnamon, and milk, *atol de elote* is often enjoyed with *tamales de elote* (corn tamales), both made as part of a *fiesta* called *atolada* which is held after harvesting the corn.

Several beliefs attend to the making of the *atol de elote*: only one person can stir the *atol de elote* or it will taste badly, no one in a bad mood is allowed to stir it or it will taste badly, and pregnant women may not stir it.

6–7 ears ripe and recently harvested yellow corn on the cob	3–4 teaspoons cornstarch (optional, if needed)
About 4 cups water	2 cinnamon sticks
$\frac{1}{3}$ –1 cup sugar, or 3–10 tablespoons honey (to taste)	Milk (for thinner <i>atol</i>)
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	Ground cinnamon, for garnishing

1. Obtain ripe and recently harvested corn. Clean it by removing the husks and silk and place the clean corn ears in a pot of water. Bring to a boil and cook until corn is tender.
2. Using a knife, cut the kernels off the corn ears; save the water used to boil the corn.
3. Grind the kernels.
4. Add 1–2 cups cold water to the water you used to boil the ears and then add the ground corn.
5. Using a cloth, sieve the mixture to another container. You might need to add some more water if the mixture is too thick to pass through the cloth.
6. Bring the sieved mixture to a boil and add sugar or honey to taste, salt, and the cinnamon sticks. Stir occasionally. (If the *atol* does not thicken to a creamy consistency, because of the type of corn used, mix the cornstarch with a little cold water and whisk into the liquid until it is just thick enough to coat a spoon.)
7. For thinner *atol*, boil a sufficient amount of milk in a separate pan to bring *atol* to desired consistency. Once the milk has boiled, add it slowly to the *atol* mixture, always stirring. Let *atol* cool a little.
8. Serve warm in mugs or small bowls, garnishing with ground cinnamon.

***Cajeta de Coco* (Coconut Fudge, Costa Rica, Central America)**

(Adapted from Food.com. Accessed December 12, 2013. <http://www.food.com/recipe/costa-rican-coconut-fudge-cajeta-de-coco-125603>.)

2 cups sweetened condensed milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup graham cracker crumbs
1 cup fresh coconut, shredded	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
8 ounces butter	

1. Combine all the ingredients in a pan and cook over low heat, stirring constantly.
2. Continue to cook the mixture for 5 minutes after it reaches a boil.
3. As soon as it is cool enough to handle, make small balls.
4. Store the *cajeta de coco* in an airtight container.

Makes 20–30 balls.

Cassava Pone (Flour Cake/Pudding, Belize Style, Central America)

(Adapted from IslandFlave.com, *Cassava Pone*. Accessed November 30, 2013. <http://www.islandflave.com/recipes/67-trinidad-recipes/322-cassava-pone>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

3 ounces butter	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 cups fresh or frozen sweet cassava, finely grated	1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
2 cups fresh sweet potato, grated	2½ cups coconut <i>milk</i> , fresh or canned (reminder: coconut <i>milk</i> comes from grated coconut; it is not the <i>water</i> that leaks out when you crack open a fresh coconut)
¼ cup whole-wheat flour	
1 cup sugar	

1. Melt the butter over low heat.
2. Mix the grated cassava, sweet potato, flour, sugar, ground cinnamon, and nutmeg together in a large bowl.
3. Add the coconut milk and vanilla to the mixture.
4. Add the butter and thoroughly mix all ingredients together.
5. Place in greased casserole dish or Dutch oven.
6. Bake in preheated oven for about 50 minutes or until done.
7. Remove from oven, and set on rack to cool.
8. Serve warm or cold.

Cemita de Piña (Pineapple Jam-Filled Pastries, El Salvador, Central America)

(Adapted from López, Tracy, LATINAish. June 2, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://latinaish.com/2012/06/02/salvadoran-semitea-recipe/>.)

A special El Salvadorian pastry made with guava or pineapple which should not be confused with *cemita*-roll sandwiches popular in other Spanish-speaking countries. Sweet *cemita* is also popular in Nicaragua and in Honduras, where it is more like a light sweet bread, sometimes dusted with sugar and ground cinnamon.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

4 cups flour	2 eggs
8 ounces unsalted butter, in pieces, at room temperature	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons yeast	1 jar pineapple (or guava) jelly, jam, or marmalade
1 cup sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm water

1. Combine the warm water, 1 tablespoon of sugar, and the yeast. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Put the flour in a large mixing bowl. Create a well in the center for remaining ingredients.
3. Place butter, yeast mixture, eggs, sugar, and salt into the well. Mix all the ingredients, kneading them together until the dough becomes smooth and silky.
4. Cover the dough and set aside in a warm place until double in size.
5. Remove a baseball-sized amount of dough and set aside. Divide the remaining dough into 2 equal balls.
6. On a floured surface, roll a ball of dough out until it is as thick as pie crust (not too thin or you will not be able to pick it up) and will fit an 11 × 17-inch baking sheet.
7. Place the dough on a greased baking sheet, and trim to fit. Top it with a thick layer of pineapple jam.
8. Roll another large piece of dough. Place on top of the jam and trim.
9. You should now have 1 rectangular *cemita*, and 1 ball of dough, and dough scraps from when you cut out the rectangles.
10. Take the dough scraps and create a ball. Roll it out on a lightly floured surface and cut it into long strips about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch wide. Place on top of the *cemita* in a criss-cross pattern, similar to the top of a latticed-topped pie. Sprinkle with a tablespoon or two of sugar.
11. Bake for 30–40 minutes on the middle rack of preheated oven until it turns golden brown.

Makes 1 11 × 17-inch *cemita*.

***Gofio* (Spiced *Pinol* Corn Flour Cookies, Nicaragua, Central America)**

(Adapted from All Things Nicaraguan. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.angelfire.com/amiga/peacecorps/gofio.html>.)

This diamond-shaped soft crumbly cookie made from *pinol* (roasted fine corn flour, and spices) is a traditional homemade sweet very popular throughout Nicaragua during the feast of *La Purísima*, given out in León on December 7.

5 pounds dried corn kernels	1 ounce cloves (or to taste)
1 ounce ginger	1½ teaspoons vanilla extract (or to taste)
1 ounce anise	
1 ounce ground cinnamon	3 cups brown sugar

1. Place brown sugar in a saucepan over low heat and stir until melted and slightly syrupy. Cool to room temperature.
2. Stir vanilla into the sugar syrup.
3. Toast the corn in a skillet until it is a deep golden color.
4. Grind corn with the spices to produce a very fine powder. This is called *pinol*.
5. Dust a work surface with some of the *pinol* (saving about a handful to use later for garnish) before gradually stirring the rest of it into the brown sugar syrup.
6. When it is well mixed, turn the mixture out onto the *pinol*-dusted table, then spread the dough out into the shape of a rectangle, about ½-inch thick.
7. Cut diagonally to form diamond-shaped pieces.
8. Sprinkle the reserved *pinol* over the tops.

Makes about 50 pieces.

***Molletes* (Sweet Custard-Filled Muffins, Guatemala, Central America)**

(Adapted from Bendfeldt, Paula, October 23, 2013. *Día de los Muertos* Traditional Dish from Guatemala: *Molletes*. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://spanglishbaby.com/food/dia-de-los-muertos-traditional-dish-guatemala-molletes/>.)

Traditionally made for the *Día de los Muertos* celebrations, Guatemalan *molletes* are very different from the Mexican treats of the same name. Guatemalan *molletes* are more similar to French toast.

For the *Molletes*:

10 small <i>molletes</i> (sweet bread rolls, or small buns)	¼ cup raisins
	Oil for frying (about 2 cups)

For the Custard or *Manjar*:

2¼ cups whole milk	1 cinnamon stick
½ cup sugar	¼ teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons cornstarch	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Egg Mixture for Dipping:

3 eggs, separated
2 tablespoons flour

1 tablespoon sugar

For the Syrup:

2 cups *panela* or raw sugar
3 cups water
½ cup rum (optional)
Zest from 1 lime

½ teaspoon ground allspice
3 cloves or ⅛ teaspoon ground
cloves
1 cinnamon stick

To Make the Custard:

1. In a saucepan over medium heat, bring 2 cups of milk, sugar, cinnamon, and salt to a boil.
2. While milk is heating up, mix the cornstarch and ¼ cup cold milk in a bowl.
3. Once milk has reached the boiling point, reduce heat.
4. Take ½ cup of the hot milk and add it to the cornstarch mixture, blending well.
5. Pour cornstarch and milk mix back into saucepan and heat, stirring constantly until custard thickens.
6. Remove the mixture from heat, stir in vanilla. Set aside to cool.

To Make the Syrup:

7. Place the *panela* or raw sugar, water, lime zest, allspice, cloves, cinnamon stick, and rum (optional) in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer.

To Make the Egg Mixture for Dipping:

8. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
9. Add the yolks, flour, and sugar, and beat for 2 more minutes.

To Assemble the *Molletes*:

10. Slice off the top of each of the *molletes* (rolls).
11. Remove some of the bread, creating a cavity in the center of each *mollete*.
12. Place 3–4 raisins inside the cavity of each *mollete*.
13. Fill with custard and replace the “lid,” pressing lightly to close.
14. Heat the oil in a large pan.
15. Dip the stuffed *molletes* into the egg mixture and carefully place them in the hot oil.
16. Fry briefly, for a minute or more, on each side, until the *molletes* turn golden.

17. Remove *molletes* from pan and place them on a wire rack over the sink. Pour boiling water over the *molletes*.
18. Pat them dry to remove excess water.
19. Place the *molletes* in the syrup, and cook them over low heat until they are soft, about 5 minutes.
20. Serve the *molletes* warm or cold, drizzled with syrup. They are traditionally garnished with a sprinkle of red sugar.

***Pastel Tres Leches* (Three Milks Cake, Central America)**

(Adapted from Bayless, Rick, Frontera. *Celebration Cake (Pastel de Tres Leches)*. Accessed December 15, 2013. <http://www.fronterafiesta.com/cook/desserts/155-pastel-de-tres-leches-celebration-cake>.)

Pastel tres leches can also be made as a single-layer cake using a 9 × 13-inch, 10-inch round or springform cake pan.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

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| 1½ cups flour | 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk |
| 1 teaspoon baking powder | 1 (12 ounce) can evaporated milk |
| 4 ounces unsalted butter | 1½ cups heavy whipping cream |
| 2 cups granulated sugar | 2 teaspoons vanilla extract (for whipped cream) |
| 6 eggs | |
| 2 teaspoons vanilla extract (for cake) | |
| 2 cups whole milk | |

1. Grease and flour two 8-inch round cake pans.
2. Sift the flour and baking powder together and set aside.
3. Cream the butter and 1 cup sugar until fluffy, add the eggs and 2 teaspoons vanilla, and mix thoroughly.
4. A little at a time, add the flour mixture to the butter mixture. When thoroughly blended, pour the batter into the greased cake pans.
5. Bake for about 30 minutes or until done.
6. Pierce the cakes many times with a fork when you take them out of the oven.
7. Mix the three milks together (whole, condensed, and evaporated) and pour over the tops of the cooled cakes.
8. Whip the cream.

9. Fold the remaining cup of sugar and 2 teaspoons vanilla into the whipped cream.
10. Spread the whipped cream mixture between the layers and over the top of the cake, and refrigerate.

Queque Seco de Naranja (Orange Pound Cake, Costa Rica, Central America)

(Adapted from *CostaRica.com*. January 14, 2014. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://costarica.com/recipes/queque-seco-de-naranja-orange-pound-cake/>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

3 cups refined wheat flour (or white whole wheat flour)	1 cup milk
3 teaspoons baking soda	4 tablespoons fresh orange juice
1 cup sugar	1 ounce butter
2 eggs	1¼ cups soy or canola oil
4 egg whites	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
	Grated zest from 1 orange

1. Beat oil and butter in an electric mixer set on high-speed. Add 2 eggs and 4 egg whites. Beat with the mixture for a few minutes.
2. Add flour, sugar, and baking soda to the mixture and beat until the batter is smooth and creamy.
3. Add orange juice, milk in small portions, and vanilla extract to the batter and beat until smooth.
4. Butter a deep (3–4 inch) 8-inch cake pan. Pour the batter into pan.
5. Bake for 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
6. Cool the cake in the pan on wire rack for 10 minutes.
7. Invert onto wire rack, allowing the cake to cool completely.
8. Transfer cake to a serving plate.

Makes 12 servings.

Tableta de Coco (Coconut Tablet, Honduras, Central America)

(Adapted from *Cocina Hondureña y Mas*. April 19, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://cocinahondurasymas.blogspot.com/2010/04/tabletas-de-coco.html>.)

1–2 pounds sugar (to taste)	1½ cups milk
½ pound shredded coconut	2 cinnamon sticks

1. Add the coconut and sugar in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir the mixture for about 10 minutes.
2. When the sugar begins to turn brown, add the milk and cinnamon, stirring the mixture until it is well combined.
3. When the sugar and coconut begin to thicken a little bit, remove the mixture from the stove, place it in the form of a large square on a work surface.
4. Cut into small squares and set aside to cool.
5. Serve when cool.

***Baursaki* (Fried Bread, Kazakhstan, Central Asia)**

(Adapted from duonyte, Food.com, *Baursaki (Kazakhstan Fried Bread.)* May 28, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.food.com/recipe/baursaki-kazakhstan-fried-bread-480044>.)

4 cups flour	3 eggs
1 tablespoon dry yeast	1½ ounces butter
½ cup warm water	2 tablespoon sugar
½ cup warm milk or yoghurt	½ teaspoon salt
	Oil for frying

1. Combine the yeast with the warm water and 1 tablespoon sugar. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. In large mixing bowl, combine yeast mixture with remaining ingredients (except the oil).
3. Knead the dough until smooth and elastic; add more flour if necessary. When dough is smooth, cover and set aside to rest for about 30 minutes.
4. In the meantime, heat about two cups of oil until very hot.
5. Pull off a small piece of dough, roll it into a ball about the size of a walnut, then stretch or flatten the dough a bit, drop it carefully into oil, and fry until golden on both sides.
6. Remove from hot oil and drain.
7. Repeat with small pieces of dough until all the dough is used.
8. Sprinkling with sugar is optional.

***Çäkçäk* (*Chak Chak*, Honey-Drenched Sweet Pastry Balls, Central Asia)**

(Adapted from Martin, Sasha. *Global Table Adventures, Chak Chak*. September 18, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://globaltableadventure.com/2011/09/18/recipe-chak-chak/>.)

2 cups fresh noodles, either homemade or commercial (thick spaghetti, linguini, or other pasta, about 2–3 inches in length)	4 ounces butter ½ cup honey ½ cup sugar
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1. Toss the noodles in a bit of flour and then toss and fry in the butter until they are a bit crispy (cooking time varies, depending on the thickness of the noodles).
2. Boil the sugar and the honey until the sugar dissolves. When the sugar is dissolved, pour the syrup over the fried noodles (while it is still bubbling) and toss the noodles.
3. Wet your hands with cold water (to prevent burning and to prevent the *çäkçäk* from sticking to your hands) and shape into round individual size servings.
4. The *çäkçäk* should be chewy and sticky, with just a hint of crunchiness.

***Mote con Huesillos* (Wheat Berries with Dried Peach Compote, Chile)**

(Adapted from Van Waerebeek-Gonzales, Ruth, *The Chilean Kitchen*, New York: Berkley, 1999.)

8 dried peaches	Zest from ¼ orange
8 cups water	1 cup cooked wheat berries (according to instructions on package)
1⅓ cups sugar	
1 cinnamon stick	
Zest from ¼ lemon	

1. In a large bowl, combine the peaches, 6 cups water, and ½ cup sugar. Set the peaches aside to soak for 8–10 hours.
2. After the peaches have soaked, boil the lemon and orange zests, cinnamon stick, and the remaining water and sugar in a large saucepan.
3. When the mixture boils, lower the heat and add the peaches and the remaining liquid they were soaked in.
4. Simmer until the peaches are tender (10–20 minutes), then discard the cinnamon stick, and taste for sweetness.
5. Add more sugar, if necessary, according to taste.
6. Set the peaches aside to cool, then refrigerate.
7. To serve, place two or three tablespoons of the cooked wheat berries in the bottom of individual bowls or stemmed glasses. Add one peach to each dish and cover with syrup.

***Navegado* (Mulled Wine, Chile)**

(Adapted from Smith, Eileen, Nile Guide, Santiago Travel Blog. *Making navegado, a mulled wine perfect for winter in Chile (or wherever you are)*. June 22, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.nileguide.com/destination/blog/santiago/2010/06/22/making-navegado-a-mulled-wine-perfect-for-winter-in-chile-or-wherever-you-are/>.)

1 quart or liter robust red wine	4 cloves
3 oranges, thinly sliced	1 cup sugar
2 cinnamon sticks	

1. In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, bring the wine, sugar, cinnamon, and cloves to a boil.
2. When the boiling begins, lower the heat to simmer and add the oranges.
3. When the oranges have absorbed some red color, the *navegado* is ready to be served hot, usually in mugs.

Baked Moon Cakes (China/Malaysia)

(Adapted from Traditional Baked Moon Cake Recipe, House of Annie. August 23, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.houseofannie.com/traditional-baked-mooncake-recipe/>; and Traditional Baked Moon Cake, Simple Indulgence. October 13, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://joyce-simpleindulgence.blogspot.com/2012/10/traditional-baked-mooncake.html>.)

Traditional Chinese Moon Cakes are typically eaten during the Mid-Autumn Moon Cake Festival. More than a billion people annually eat moon cakes at festivals, about a fifth of the world's population. Next to sweet fruits and ice cream, moon cakes are one of the world's most-eaten sweet treats. Because of their prominence in the world, a moon cake recipe is included here, albeit that it is somewhat complicated, and ingredients will need to be obtained from a speciality food shop or by mail order. But, as more than a billion people can tell you, they are delicious.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Ingredients for the Skin:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup moon cake “golden syrup” (see later in this section)	21 ounces lotus seed paste filling (available in specialty shops or homemade), shaped into balls of about $5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces each
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup cooking oil	Egg yolk wash (add 1 teaspoon of cold water to 1 egg yolk and mix well)
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda	Egg yolks, steamed (optional)
$\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon alkaline water (<i>kan sui</i> , “lye water,” or add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon additional baking soda)	
$2\frac{1}{3}$ cups superfine flour	

Moon Cake “Golden Syrup”

(Adapted from Traditional Baked Moon Cake, *Simple Indulgence*, October 13, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://joyce-simpleindulgence.blogspot.com/2012/10/traditional-baked-mooncake.html>.)

2 cups sugar

2 slices of lemon

6 cups water

To Assemble and Bake the Moon Cakes:

1. Mix the sugar and water together in a saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Add the lemon slices and bring to boil again.
3. Reduce heat. Do not stir the mixture.
4. When the sugar syrup turns amber in color and when its consistency is like runny honey, turn off the heat. (When you put a drop of the syrup into a bowl of water, the syrup should not disperse.)
5. Transfer the syrup to a clean glass jar and let it cool completely. (It is best to age the syrup for about 3 months before using it. The longer you keep the syrup, the better its color, taste, and luster.)
6. Combine moon cake “golden syrup,” peanut or other cooking oil, baking soda and alkaline water (if using) in a bowl and mix until smooth, but do not overstir.
7. Slowly add the superfine flour to the liquid, using your hands to mix the ingredients well. The dough should be sticky like taffy.
8. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap, or cover the bowl containing the dough with plastic wrap, and set aside for at least 3 hours and up to 3 days.
9. After the rest period, divide the dough into pieces of about 1³/₄ ounces each. Roll each piece into a ball.
10. If you are planning to use salted egg yolks in your filling, you need to separate the yolks from the whites and steam the yolks for 10 minutes over medium-low heat. Let the yolks cool before using.
11. Roll out a ball of dough into a thin circular disc.
12. Put a portion of lotus seed paste filling into the center of the dough. If using an egg yolk, first enclose it in the lotus seed paste filling, then put the lotus seed paste filling into the center of the rolled-out ball of dough. (A little practice in molding your moon cakes will allow you to judge the amount of filling and dough wrapping to use. In general, the ratio, by weight, should be about one part skin dough to three parts filling, including the egg yolk.)
13. Gently but firmly wrap the skin dough (about 1³/₄ ounces) around the lotus paste filling (about 5¹/₄ ounces). Check often to see if there are any breaks in the dough. Shape it all into a ball.

14. Traditional moon cakes are made in moon cake molds, which are round ramekin-shaped presses that form the moon cakes and stamp intricate patterns on the tops. Moon cake molds come in different sizes. If you do not have a moon cake mold, use a tall 3½-inch ramekin or a 3-inch individual dessert mold to shape your moon cake.
15. Flour the mold (or ramekin) and shake off excess flour. Press the ball of dough with its filling(s) into the mold (or ramekin) to shape it, and with the moon cake mold press down firmly to impart the design and eject the moon cake. Set the molded cake on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
16. Repeat the same procedure with the other balls of dough for the other portions.
17. Bake the mooncakes in preheated oven for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for 10 minutes.
18. Lightly brush the top and sides of the cake with the egg yolk wash.
19. Return the sheet to the oven and bake for another 8–10 minutes at 400°F.
20. Remove cakes from the oven and cool them completely before storing them in an airtight container. Leave the baked moon cakes for 1–2 days before consuming. You will notice that the color of the moon cake will turn darker with a shinier luster; and the skin will be softer.

***Nian gao* (Steamed New Year Cake, China)**

(Adapted from Parkinson, Rhonda, About.com, “Chinese Food.” The Kitchen God and Sticky Cake [*Nian Gao*, Steamed Chinese Fruit Cake]. Accessed December 9, 2013. <http://chinesefood.about.com/od/chinesenewyear/a/stickycake.htm>.)

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| 2 cups water (for softening the sugar) | 10 dried seedless Chinese red dates, also known as jujubes |
| 1 pound Chinese brown sugar | ½ teaspoon toasted sesame seeds, for garnish |
| 3 cups sticky rice flour | |
| 1 tablespoon vegetable oil | |

1. Heat the sugar in 2 cups of water, just until boiling and the sugar dissolves. Set aside to cool.
2. Fill a large wok with 1–2 inches of water, and place a bamboo steamer in the wok, being careful not to let the water touch the bottom “shelf” of the steamer. Bring the water to a simmer.
3. Oil a 9-inch round cake pan and set it aside.
4. Gently, but thoroughly, mix the rice flour and sugar water until the batter is smooth.

5. Add the tablespoon of vegetable oil, and continue to stir until the oil is mixed thoroughly into the batter.
6. Pour the batter into the oiled cake pan.
7. Place the pan in the steamer, and keep the water at a strong simmer. Cover the steamer or the wok with a lid (do not directly cover the cake, as it needs to absorb the steam/heat).
8. Check the wok for water levels while steaming the cake and add hot water when necessary.
9. When the cake is firm to the touch (it may take as long as 3 hours), remove from heat and garnish with jujubes (red dates) or toasted sesame seeds, if desired.
10. Gently lift the cake out of the pan when it has cooled.

***Tang Yuan* (Sticky Rice Balls with Red Bean Paste Filling, China)**

(Adapted from *Tang Yuan* (Glutinous Rice Balls with Red Bean Paste Filling. Accessed December 12, 2013. <http://www.rotinrice.com/2012/12/tang-yuan-glutinous-rice-balls-with-red-bean-paste-filling/>.)

½ cup sticky rice flour	2 cups water
⅓ cup water	3 tablespoons brown sugar
¼ cup sweet red bean (azuki) paste	3 thin slices fresh ginger

1. Mix the rice flour and ⅓ cup of water together, until the dough can be shaped into a smooth ball. Divide the dough into 12 portions and roll each piece into a ball.
2. Using your fingers, shape each ball into a small bowl shape, about the size of the palm of your hand.
3. Place a teaspoon of bean paste in the center, and fold the dough around the paste to make a round, dumpling like, ball (this requires some practice). You may need to moisten your fingers to get the dough to stick; the dough will be fragile.
4. Boil water in a medium-sized saucepan, and drop the rice balls into the water. When they float to the surface, remove them.
5. In the meantime, put 2 cups of water, the brown sugar, and ginger in a smaller pan and bring to a boil. When the mixture boils, reduce the heat and simmer for about 5 minutes.
6. Serve the rice balls hot, with a generous portion of the sweetened ginger water poured over them.

Makes about 12 balls and serves 3–4 people.

***Arroz con Leche* (Rice Pudding, Colombian Style)**

(Adapted from McCausland-Gallo, Patricia, *Secrets of Colombian Cooking*, New York: Hippocrene Books, 2004.)

1 cup long-grain white rice	1½ ounces butter
3–4 cinnamon sticks	2 tablespoons vanilla extract
2 cups water	1½ cups sugar
4 cups whole milk	1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
Pinch of salt	

1. In a large pan, boil water and cinnamon sticks for about 10 minutes. Remove the cinnamon sticks.
2. Place the rice in the cinnamon water, and cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes.
3. Add salt, butter, half the milk, and sugar. Mix well, and continue cooking over medium heat for about 15 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Reduce the heat to low, add remaining whole milk and sweetened condensed milk to the mixture.
5. Gently cook for an hour or more, until the pudding is done to your desired consistency and creaminess.
6. Stir and remove the pudding from heat; set aside to cool and then refrigerate overnight.

Makes 8 large servings.

***Cocadas* (Chewy Coconut Balls, Colombia)**

(Adapted from Dinho, Erica, My Colombian Recipes, *Cocadas Blancas (Colombian-Style Coconut Candy)*. November 11, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.mycolumbianrecipes.com/cocadas-blancas-colombian-style-coconut-candy>.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

3½–4 cups shredded sweetened coconut	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
¾ cup sweetened condensed milk	½ teaspoon almond extract
2½–3 tablespoons cornstarch	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting (optional)

1. In a medium-sized bowl, mix coconut, cornstarch, condensed milk, and vanilla and almond extracts.
2. Set the mixture aside for about 5 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.

3. Drop the mixture by the spoonfuls onto a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet, about 12 cookies *per* sheet.
4. Bake the mixture for about 15 minutes, or until lightly golden in color.
5. Remove from oven, and cool on wire rack.
6. Dust with confectioners' sugar (optional).

***Dulce de Uchuvas* (Sweet *Uchuvas*, Colombia)**

(Adapted from McCausland-Gallo, Patricia, *Secrets of Colombian Cooking*, New York: Hippocrene Books, 2004.)

1 cup <i>uchuvas</i> washed (yellow goose-berries may be substituted)	½ cinnamon stick, or a pinch of ground cinnamon, and/or 2 cloves or a pinch of ground cloves (optional)
⅓ cup water	
⅓ cup sugar	1 tablespoon lime juice

1. In a small pot over medium-high heat, add the water and sugar and bring to a boil just until the sugar is dissolved.
2. Add the cinnamon and cloves.
3. Reduce the heat to medium-low, add the *uchuvas*, and cook about 20 minutes.
4. Remove the *dulce de uchuvas* from the heat, add the lime juice, transfer to a glass container and refrigerate.
5. Serve *dulce de uchuvas* warm over soft white cheese, like farmer's cheese or brie.

***Daktyla Kyriou* (Ladies' Fingers, Cyprus)**

(Adapted from Liacopoulou, Ivy, "*Mint, Cinnamon & Blossom Water*" *Flavours of Cyprus*, Kopiaste! Self-published, 2010.)

4 cups flour	1 cup water (approximately)
¼ cup olive oil	Dash salt
1 tablespoon vinegar	Oil for frying

Ingredients for the Filling:

1 cup almonds, finely ground	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ cup sugar	3 tablespoons orange blossom water

Ingredients for Syrup:

1½ cups water	Lemon peel
2 cups sugar	4–6 cloves (optional)
⅛ cup orange blossom water	1 cinnamon stick (optional)

For the Filling:

1. Mix all the filling ingredients, and add enough orange blossom water to make a mixture that sticks together enough so that it does not fall out of the filled cookies.
2. For the dough, in a large bowl, combine flour, salt, and oil.
3. Slowly mix in enough water to make a smooth and elastic dough. Mix well, cover with damp cloth, and set aside in a warm place to rest for 1–2 hours.
4. Roll portions of the dough on a floured surface to about ¼-inch thick, and cut dough into 3 × 4-inch rectangles.
5. Place a spoonful of the almond mixture onto each rectangle of dough.
6. Roll the dough up into small cylinder shapes (like fingers), sealing edges with a fork or damp finger. Prepare all the “fingers” before beginning the frying process, as they cook quickly.
7. Deep fry the “fingers” in hot oil. Watch carefully and remove when golden. Drain on paper towels.

For the Syrup:

8. Boil 3 cups water with 2 cups sugar, 1 cup honey, lemon peel, and cloves and cinnamon, for 5 minutes.
9. Remove the syrup from heat and stir in the orange blossom water.
10. Dip cooled *daktyla* into the hot syrup, place on a platter and enjoy.

Loukoumades Kypriacoi (Donuts in Honey Syrup, Cyprus)

(Adapted from Liacopoulou, Ivy, “*Mint, Cinnamon & Blossom Water*” *Flavours of Cyprus*, Kopiaste! Self-published, 2010.)

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| 2 cups flour | ½ teaspoon salt |
| 1 cup mashed potatoes | Ground cinnamon, for dusting |
| 2 cups warm water | Oil for frying |
| 2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package) | |

Ingredients for the Syrup:

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| 1 cup sugar | 1 tablespoon rose water (optional) |
| 1 cup water | 1 cinnamon stick |
| 1 cup honey | |

1. For the dough, mix the flour and salt together. Stir in mashed potatoes.
2. Dissolve the yeast in 1 cup warm water. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.

3. In a large bowl, pour the yeast into the flour and potato mixture and blend well.
4. Add more warm water to the flour mixture as necessary; knead until the dough is smooth and elastic.
5. Cover the dough with a warm, damp cloth and let rise for about 2 hours or until double in size.
6. While the dough is rising, combine all the syrup ingredients, *except* the rose water, in a saucepan.
7. Bring the mixture to a boil and then lower the heat until it bubbles gently. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sugar and honey are dissolved.
8. Remove the mixture from the heat, stir in the rose water, and set aside to cool.
9. In a deep heavy pan, heat enough oil for frying the *loukoumades*.
10. Using two tablespoons carefully drop balls of dough into the hot oil. Keep them separated, turning them, and frying until they are golden brown.
11. Remove *loukoumades* with a slotted spoon, and while they are still hot, gently submerge them in the honey syrup, so they are completely coated.
12. Place the *loukoumades* on a platter, and if you like, sprinkle lightly with ground cinnamon and serve hot.

***Bábovka* (Light Rich Coffee Cake, Czech Republic)**

(Contributed by Markéta Křížová and her mother, Alena Hanakova, of Prague, Czech Republic.)

Preheat oven to 300°F.

10 tablespoons cream (30 percent milk fat)	2½ teaspoons baking powder
3 whole eggs	2 teaspoons of cocoa powder (optional)
1 cup sugar	Raisins, pieces of chocolate or candied fruit (optional)
1½ fine flour (plus more to dust the cake pan)	

1. Mix eggs and sugar until the mixture is completely smooth.
2. Slowly add the cream and flour mixed with baking powder to the mixture.
3. Again stir until the batter is smooth. You can add raisins, pieces of chocolate, or candied fruit at this time.
4. Place the batter into the pan, greased with butter and sprinkled with flour (so that the batter does not stick to the sides during baking).
5. Put into preheated oven and bake slowly.

6. You could put only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the batter into the form, and mix the rest with two teaspoons of cocoa powder to make it chocolate, and put it to the center of the form. It gives a “marble effect” to the *bábovka*.
7. Bake for about 30–40 minutes, until the *bábovka* turns light brown and the batter is no longer moist.

You can use a bundt pan or any small and relatively deep form for a round cake; the Czech form for *bábovka* has a very special shape, circular with a central tube.

***Ovocné Knedlíky* (Fruit Dumplings, Czech Republic)**

(Contributed by Markéta Křížová and her mother, Alena Hanakova, of Prague, Czech Republic.)

½ pound quark	rougher “semolina” for puddings)
1 egg	
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup wheat flour, semi-fine (in the Czech Republic, there are 3 basic types of flour: fine, for baking of cakes; semi-fine, for dumplings or pancakes; and “rough,” for potato dumplings; then there is even	2 tablespoons vegetable oil (preferably sunflower)
	Pinch of salt
	Pieces of fruit: apricots, peaches, and plums
	Fine flour for dusting the work surface

1. Knead the dough until it does not stick (if it does, add a little more flour).
2. Make the dough into thin rolls (you have to spread the work surface with a bit of fine flour).
3. Flatten the rolls, cut them, place the fruit on the pieces of dough and make the dumplings.
4. When all the dumplings are ready, put them into boiling water, and cook for 6–8 minutes, with occasional stirring.
5. Serve the dumplings immediately with melted butter, sugar, and ground cinnamon/cocoa/grated cottage cheese/crushed poppy seeds—as you like.

Aunt Else’s *Æbleskivers* (Popover-Like “Apple Slices” Pancakes, Denmark)

(Contributed by Chad Gillard, President, Aunt Else’s *Æbleskivers*, Minneapolis, Minnesota.)

2 cups buttermilk	1 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
3 eggs, separated	2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder	Vegetable oil for cooking

1. Beat the egg yolks and add buttermilk to yolk mixture and stir.
2. Sift together the dry ingredients and add to egg/buttermilk mixture.
3. Beat egg whites until stiff, then fold into the mixture.
4. Put about ½ teaspoon of vegetable oil in the bottom of each cup of a monk pan (a heavy pan resembling an egg poacher designed for æbleskivers) and heat on stovetop until hot.
5. Fill each batter cup nearly full. As soon as bubbles appear around the edges, gently lift the edge with a chopstick or knitting needle until about half the cooked portion is above the cup rim and uncooked batter flows down into cup, then quickly partially *rotate* the æbleskiver about a quarter turn. Allow the developing crust to set after each turn. Repeat three more times, allowing the æbleskivers to cook about 1½ minutes after each partial rotation. The last partial rotation should position the æbleskiver with the original bottom side facing up. The æbleskiver is done when the chopstick can be inserted into the golden brown æbleskiver and it comes out clean. Total cooking time is usually about 7 minutes.
6. Remove the æbleskivers from the pan and serve hot, with your choice of jam, honey, fruit, confectioners' sugar, syrup, whipped cream, or other topping. Applesauce is a favorite. Traditionally æbleskivers (“apple slices”) are made with an apple filling.

Danske Smorkager (Butter Cookies, Denmark)

(Adapted from Cooks.com. Accessed December 7, 2013. <http://www.cooks.com/recipe/932p079v/danske-smorkager-or-danish-butter-cookies.html>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

24 ounces unsalted butter, room temperature (Lurpak, if available)	6¼ cups flour
2¼ cups granulated sugar	2½ teaspoons vanilla extract
6 egg yolks	½ teaspoon coarse salt
	1 teaspoon baking powder

1. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in the egg yolks and vanilla.
2. Slowly and thoroughly mix the remaining dry ingredients into the batter.
3. With a cookie press, press the cookies onto an ungreased cookie sheet about 2 inches apart, or make 1-inch balls and flatten with a fork or spoon.

Bake for 8-10 minutes and remove the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.

Indian-Style *Kulfi* (Frozen Dairy Dessert, East Africa)

(Adapted from Jaffrey, Madhur, *Indian Cookery*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982.)

5 cups whole milk	¼ cup ground pistachios
⅓ cup sugar	Pistachios, coarsely chopped,
½ teaspoon ground green cardamom seeds	for garnish

1. Place the milk in a large, heavy-bottomed pan and bring to a boil while stirring; boil for 2–3 minutes.
2. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring constantly, until the milk reduces to about 2 cups, usually about 45 minutes.
3. Add the sugar, cardamom, and ground pistachios. Cook and stir until the sugar melts.
4. Continue cooking the mixture for about 7 minutes; the mixture will become thin, but will thicken again.
5. Transfer *kulfi* to molds or ramekins. Cover and freeze. When ready to serve, dip each serving dish into hot water until the *kulfi* slips out and is easily placed onto the dessert plate. Garnish with the chopped pistachios.

***Colada Morada* (Spiced Black Corn Flour Fruit Drink, Ecuador)**

(Adapted from Kijac, Maria Baez, *The South American Table: The Flavor and Soul of Authentic Home Cooking from Patagonia to Rio de Janeiro*, Boston: Harvard Common Press, 2003.)

1 whole pineapple, including the peeling, the core, and 2 cups of the flesh, cut into chunks	2 lemongrass leaves (optional)
6 cinnamon sticks	2 cups blackberries
4 cloves	2 cups blueberries
4 whole allspice berries	1 cup purple or black corn flour
2¾ cups brown sugar	14 ounces frozen <i>Naranjilla de Quito</i> pulp (sometimes called <i>lulo</i>), thawed
Zest of 1 orange	
2 lemon verbena leaves (optional)	2 cups sliced strawberries
	12 cups water

1. Boil the pineapple skin and core, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, and brown sugar in a large pot with 8 cups of water for about 25 minutes. Add the lemon verbena,

lemongrass, and orange zest to the mixture and simmer for about 15 minutes. Remove from heat and strain.

2. In another pan, boil the blueberries and blackberries for about 20 minutes in the remaining 4 cups of water. Set it aside to cool. When cooled, strain the mixture.
3. Mix vigorously the purple corn flour into 1 cup of the spiced pineapple liquid.
4. In a large pan, combine the strained berry mix, the *naranjilla* pulp, the remaining spiced pineapple liquid and the purple flour mixture. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly.
5. Add the chunked pineapple and simmer the mixture for about 15 minutes.
6. Remove from heat, float the strawberry slices on the top and serve warm or cold in mugs or glasses.

***Pristiños con Miel* (Christmas Fritters with Honey, Ecuador)**

(Adapted from FoodofSouthAmerica.com. Accessed December 6, 2013. <http://www.foodofsouthamerica.com/pristinios-miel-ecuador-dessert.htm>.)

3 cups flour	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm milk
$1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons cooking oil, slightly warm	2 teaspoons baking powder
	Pinch of salt
3 egg yolks	1 cup warm water
$1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces butter, softened	Oil enough for frying

1. In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly mix the first five ingredients; add warm water and baking powder, with a pinch of salt.
2. Knead until the dough is smooth and elastic. Set aside to rest for about 30 minutes.
3. Cut the dough into long strips (6–8 inches), make circles by sealing the ends of the strips together with damp fingers to hold the ends together when frying. At this point, decorative marks or cuts can be made.
4. Carefully place the *pristiños* into very hot oil, fry until golden brown on both sides, remove, and drain on paper towels.

Ingredients for Honey Syrup:

1 teaspoon vanilla extract	2 cups water
1 teaspoon cloves	Zest of 1 lemon
3 teaspoons ground cinnamon	1 cup honey

1. For the sauce, boil the 2 cups of water with the cinnamon, cloves, and zest for about 5 minutes.
2. Remove the whole cloves and add the honey to the liquid and cook over medium heat until reduced by half. When the syrup is reduced, add the vanilla and set aside to cool. When the syrup has cooled, pour the sauce over *pristinos*.

***Basboosa* (Semolina Cake with Floral Scented Syrup, Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan)**

(Adapted from whats4eats. Accessed November 29, 2013. <http://www.whats4eats.com/desserts/basboosa-recipe>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Ingredients for the Syrup:

1 cup water	Juice of 1 lemon
1 cup sugar	1 teaspoon rose water

1. Make the syrup by bringing the sugar, water, and juice of the lemon to a boil in a heavy-bottomed pan.
2. Boil until the sugar is dissolved.
3. Reduce the heat and continue to boil the syrup gently for about 5 minutes.
4. Remove from heat, stir in the rose water, and set aside to cool.

Ingredients for Cake:

1½ cups semolina	12 ounces unsalted butter, softened
1 cup flour	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking powder	½ cup plain yoghurt
¾ cup sugar	½ cup almonds to decorate

1. For the cake, sift together the semolina, flour, and baking powder in a bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugar. Blend in the vanilla.
3. Mix about ⅓ of the semolina mixture into the butter, add about half the yoghurt, and continue adding the flour and yoghurt. Beat until smooth.
4. Pour the batter into a greased 9 × 12-inch pan. Smooth the top as much as possible and decorate with almonds.
5. Bake for 35–40 minutes. When done, remove from the oven and cut into diamond-shaped pieces. Pour half of the cooled syrup over the hot cake.

6. After the syrup has soaked in, pour the rest of the syrup onto the cake. Set it aside until cooled.

***Horchata de Chufa* (Tigernut Cold Beverage, Egypt)**

(Adapted from Top Tour of Spain. Accessed December 11, 2013. <http://www.top-tour-of-spain.com/spanish-drink.html>.)

1 pound <i>chufas</i> (can be obtained through mail order, also called “tigernuts”)	2½ quarts water
2 cups sugar	1 cinnamon stick

1. If the *chufas* need cleaning, rub them between your palms under clean running water until the *chufas* and the water are clean. Then, soak the *chufas* in plenty of water at least 12 hours, until they are soft. Rinse them again, in clean water.
2. Put the *chufas* in a blender and grind them into a paste, adding water as necessary.
3. Add the remaining water and cinnamon to the paste.
4. Cool the *chufas* in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours. When the mixture has cooled, strain it through cheesecloth or a fine sieve until it is very smooth, and has no lumps.
5. Typically, this beverage is served very cold. It can also be served with ice or as a slush.

Rhubarb Crumble with Custard Sauce (England)

(Adapted from BBC Food Recipes. Accessed December 14, 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/rhubarbcrumble_11396.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

8 cups rhubarb, chopped	¼ cup brown sugar
1½ cups sugar, divided	¼ cup oats
2½ cups flour	8 ounces butter, cold

1. In a saucepan, combine rhubarb and half the sugar. Cover and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally for about 10 minutes until the rhubarb is tender.
2. Pour into a greased 13 × 9-inch baking dish.
3. In a bowl, combine flour, brown sugar, oats, and remaining sugar. Cut in butter until crumbly; sprinkle over rhubarb.
4. Bake for 30 minutes.

Ingredients for Custard Sauce:

6 egg yolks	1¼ teaspoons vanilla
½ cup sugar	extract
2 cups heavy whipping cream	

1. In a saucepan, whisk the egg yolks and sugar.
2. Stir cream into the egg yolk/sugar mixture.
3. Cook and stir the mixture over low heat about 15–20 minutes until a thermometer reads 160°F and mixture thickens.
4. Remove the mixture from the heat and stir in the vanilla.
5. Serve warm over rhubarb crumble.

Victoria Sponge (Light Jam-Layered Cake, England)

(Adapted from Smith, Delia, *Complete Cookery Course*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984.)

Traditionally, the best Victoria sponge begins with weighing the eggs, then adding equal weights of sugar, flour, and butter. For this recipe, assume that 3 eggs weigh 6 ounces.

Preheat oven to 325°F.

3 eggs	½ teaspoon vanilla extract
6 ounces butter	Fruit jam to spread between the
¾ cup sugar	layers
1⅓ cups self-rising flour	Whipped cream

1. Grease two 7-inch round cake pans or line with greased parchment paper.
2. Cream the butter and the sugar together in a bowl until light and fluffy.
3. Stir in the eggs, one at a time. Add the vanilla.
4. Gently fold in the flour. If necessary, add a little milk to the batter to reach a soft and smooth consistency.
5. Divide the mixture between the cake pans and gently smooth the surfaces with a spatula.
6. Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until golden on top and a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Remove from the oven and set the cake aside for 5 minutes, then remove from the pans and peel off the paper (if used).
7. Place the cake onto a wire rack to cool. When cooled, sandwich the layers together with jam or a combination of jam and whipped cream.

Black Cake (Fruit-Filled Rum Cake, English Caribbean)

(Adapted from Cools-Lartigue, Yolande, *The Art of Caribbean Cooking*, Vancouver: Koolart Publications, 1998.)

Rum-soaked fruits are the signature ingredients in this English Caribbean cake made during Christmas and to celebrate life's events. Purists claim the fruits must be dried fruits (raisins, currants, prunes, cherries, and citrus peel) that should be soaked in a dark rum, cane sugar, and cinnamon mixture for *at least* a year before the fruits are ready for the cake. Others claim that soaking the fruit for several weeks or months, or even just overnight, is sufficient.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

8 ounces unsalted butter, softened	4 cups rum-soaked fruits
1 cup demerara sugar (or turbindo sugar, if demerara is not available)	$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
6 eggs	2 teaspoons baking powder
1 tablespoon vanilla extract	2 cups flour

1. Place baking rack in the middle of the oven. Generously grease and flour bottom and sides of a 10-inch round cake pan. In addition, line the bottom of the pan with greased parchment paper.
2. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. In a separate bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, and cinnamon.
4. Whisk eggs in a large bowl until frothy. Add vanilla to the eggs and continue to whisk until the mixture becomes foamy.
5. Gently fold creamed butter, eggs, and sugar mixture together. The mixture may look grainy or curdled.
6. Add the rum-soaked fruits to the egg-butter-sugar mixture and continue folding.
7. Add the flour mixture gradually to the wet ingredients and continue folding, being careful not to overmix.
8. Place the batter in the prepared pan. Gently drop the pan onto the work surface three or four times to release any air.
9. Bake for about 90 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
10. Place hot cake on wire rack to cool for about 10 minutes, and then quickly invert the pan to remove the cake from the pan. Allow the cake to continue cooling on the wire rack.
11. Slice and serve the cake at room temperature.

Makes one 10-inch round cake.

***Busta* (Coconut Candy, Jamaica)**

(Adapted from Hanks, Trudy, et al., *Our Favorite Jamaican Recipes: Three Jamaican Daughters Remember Their Mothers' Cooking*, Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.)

2 cups fresh, diced coconut	4 cups raw brown sugar (turbinado or demerara)
1 cup fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped	½ cup water

1. Heat the coconuts in a 250°F oven for about 20 minutes. Crack them open and scoop out the coconut meat into bite-sized pieces. Dice finely.
2. In a large uncovered heavy cooking pot, mix the chopped ginger, coconut, and water. Bring the mixture to a rapid boil and reduce the heat to medium-low. Add the brown sugar.
3. Use a large spoon to continuously turn the mixture to prevent it from burning or sticking to the cooking pot. The idea is to cook the mixture until the sugar begins to caramelize. When sugar begins to thicken at the bottom of the cooking pot and it becomes very difficult to turn the mixture with the spoon, remove it from the heat.
4. Drop by spoonfuls onto oiled surface and let sit for about 15 minutes before serving.

***Ohrapiparit* (Barley Cookies, Finland)**

(From Ojakangas, Beatrice, *The Great Scandinavian Baking Book*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

1 egg	1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ cup sugar	1½ cups barley flour
4 ounces butter, melted	½ teaspoon baking soda

1. Line baking sheets with lightly greased parchment paper.
2. Blend the egg and sugar in a large bowl. Add the melted butter and cinnamon. Mix in the flour and baking soda until well blended. Make the mixture into a smooth ball, wrap it in plastic wrap, and chill until firm.
3. On a lightly, but thoroughly, floured surface, roll the chilled dough to about ½-inch thickness.
4. Cut the cookies into circles, and then cut each circle in half. Bake the cookies on prepared baking sheet for about 8 minutes, until lightly brown.
5. Allow the cookies to cool for a minute or two before moving them to a wire rack.

***Raparperikiisseli* (Rhubarb Soup, Finland)**

(Sometimes referred to as Rhubarb Pudding.)

(Adapted from Previdi, Taimi, *The Best of Finnish Cooking*, New York: Hippocrene Books, 1996.)

6 cups diced rhubarb	cornstarch and is available in most
1 cup sugar	Asian markets. You also can pul-
4 cups water	verize instant potatoes, in
4 tablespoons potato starch (which	a pinch.)
tolerates higher temperatures than	

1. Combine the sugar, rhubarb, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Simmer over low heat for about a half hour, until the rhubarb is tender and loses its shape.
2. Add the remaining water and bring to a boil.
3. Mix the potato starch thoroughly in a small amount of water; remove the rhubarb mixture from the heat and stir in potato starch. Put the pan back on the heat, bring the mixture to a boil, then remove from heat.
4. Pour the stewed rhubarb into a serving dish. Cover with plastic wrap or sprinkle with a little sugar to prevent a skin from forming. The soup is usually served at room temperature. It may be garnished with freshly whipped cream.

***Clafoutis* (Rustic Baked Fruit Dessert, France)**

(Adapted from Loomis, Susan Herrmann, *French Farm House Cookbook*, New York: Workman, 1996.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

For this recipe, you can use black cherries (the traditional fruit), chopped apples, or pears, as long as the weight is equivalent to 12 ounces.

12 ounces pitted, halved, fresh apricots (or black cherries, apples, or pears)	$\frac{1}{3}$ cup vanilla sugar (sugar that has had vanilla beans in it for days or weeks which has absorbed the essence of the beans)
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt	1 ounce unsalted butter, cut into 6–8 pieces
2 cups whole milk	
3 eggs	

1. Butter and flour 9½-inch round tart pan or baking dish.
2. Place the apricots (or other fruits), round side up, in the pan.
3. By hand, beat 1 cup milk into the flour and salt, stirring until the mixture is smooth. Mix in the eggs, one at a time. Beat in the sugar, remaining milk, and vanilla.
4. Pour the batter over the fruit. Dot the surface with the little pieces of butter.
5. Place on the middle rack in the oven, and bake until golden and puffy, usually about 25–30 minutes. Allow to cool before serving.

***Tarte Tatin* (Apple Tart, France)**

(Adapted from Editors of *Cook's Illustrated, The Best International Recipe*, Brookline, Massachusetts: America's Test Kitchen, 2007.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

For the Dough:

1½ cups flour	4 ounces unsalted butter, cut into
¼ teaspoon salt	small chunks and chilled
	4–6 tablespoons ice water

1. To make the dough, mix flour and salt in a food processor until well blended. Add butter to the flour mixture and mix until pulverized, 6–8 pulses with the processor.
2. Add ice water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and pulse 8–10 times, until the mixture begins to hold together.
3. Transfer the dough to a floured work surface, make a flat round with the dough, cover it, and allow it to rest for about 30 minutes.
4. Roll out the pastry to a 4 × 8-inch rectangle, and fold it into thirds. Continue rolling and folding about three times, allowing a 15-minute rest between each rolling and folding. After the final roll, set it aside to rest for 30 minutes.
5. After the dough has rested, line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll out the pastry to about an 11½-inch round. Transfer the pastry to baking sheet lined with parchment paper and chill for an hour.

For the Caramel and Apples:

10 Golden Delicious or Fuji apples, peeled, cored, and cut into quarters	weeks which has absorbed the essence of the beans)
1½ cups vanilla sugar (sugar that has had vanilla beans in it for days or	5 ounces unsalted butter, cut into thin slices

1. Spread the sugar evenly in a large (11 inch) cast iron skillet. Place the slices of butter evenly over the sugar, then artfully spiral on top of the butter, as close together as possible, all the apple quarters. Crowd as many apple quarters as possible into the pan, while keeping the spiral motif.
2. Place the skillet on medium-low heat and cook the apples uncovered in the butter/sugar mixture until the sugar turns golden brown. This may take an hour or more.
3. Watch the apples carefully; you may have to adjust the heat up or down. As the sugar and butter melt, and the apples surrender some of their juice, baste the apples with the juice and sugar-butter mixture. Ultimately, the sugar mixture, and even the apples, will become caramelized, although they might not look cooked on the top (this is normal).
4. When the juices are deep golden, and the apples are nearly cooked (still firm, but tender), carefully and quickly place the chilled round of pastry over the hot apples. Gently pat it over the apples and around the sides, being careful not to burn yourself. Trim away any excess pastry.
5. Place the skillet on a baking sheet in the middle of the oven. Bake until the top pastry is golden brown, about 30 minutes. (The juices might bubble over, which is why you placed the skillet on a baking sheet.)
6. Remove the skillet. Immediately place a 12-inch round serving platter over the top of the skillet. Quickly, and very carefully, flip the skillet over, so the platter is on the bottom, the skillet is on the top, and the juices stay on the serving plate (rather than on the floor or work surface). Lift the skillet off the apples, and put any apples that slipped out of their place back where they belong.
7. Serve hot *tarte tatin* with *crème fraiche*.

Serves 6–8 generous pieces.

***Beyen* (Fried Bananas, French Antilles)**

(Adapted from IslandFlav.com. Accessed December 13, 2013. <http://www.islandflave.com/recipes/65-haitian-recipes/286-fried-bananas-beyen>.)

3–4 very ripe bananas	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 teaspoons flour	1 tablespoon sugar
$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon baking soda
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg or allspice	Oil for frying (about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in the skillet)

1. Mash bananas with flour, sugar, vanilla, baking soda, nutmeg, and cinnamon in a medium-sized bowl.
2. In a large skillet, place a spoonfuls of batter in very hot oil and fry until golden brown on each side. Sprinkle with granulated sugar.
3. Enjoy while warm.

***Doukounou* (Cornmeal Pudding, Haiti)**

(Adapted from Ménager, Mona Cassion, *Fine Haitian Cuisine*, Coconut Creek, Florida: Educa Vision, 2005.)

Typically, the pudding itself is not sweet. The topping adds the sweetness.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1 cup cornmeal	coconut; nowadays it is available in
½ cup flour	cans)
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	3 cups milk
1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
(if available; otherwise, use ground	1 teaspoon lemon zest
nutmeg)	4 ounces butter
1½ teaspoons salt	1 cup sugar
2 cups coconut <i>milk</i> (traditionally,	1 cup raisins (may be soaked
this would have been from grated	in rum)

For the Topping:

1 cup coconut <i>milk</i>	½ teaspoon ground
¼ cup sugar	cinnamon

1. Combine the dry ingredients in large mixing bowl.
2. Pour coconut milk, milk, and vanilla into medium-sized saucepan on medium heat.
3. Add butter, sugar, and raisins to the saucepan and stir until the butter and sugar have dissolved and liquid is heated. Remove the liquid from heat.
4. Pour half of the liquid into mixing bowl with dry ingredients and stir. Add remaining liquid and continue stirring until the batter is smooth, without lumps.
5. Pour batter into a greased, deep (3 inches) 9-inch cake pan, place in preheated oven, and bake for about 15 minutes.
6. Combine topping ingredients and set aside.

7. After 15 minutes, the batter will be thicker; take the pan out of oven and stir to distribute the raisins. Pour topping over the batter and place the pan back into the oven for about an hour.
9. When removing the cake from the oven, the top will be sticky; it will be more like a pudding but the inside should be firm. Place the pan on a cooling rack; the pudding will get firmer as it cools.
10. Serve the pudding right from the pan; do not try to remove it from pan. The first piece removed is usually a little messy.

***Tourments d'amour* (“Torments of Love,” Special Coconut Jam-Filled Pastries, Terre-de-Haut, Les Saintes, Guadeloupe, The French Caribbean)**

(Adapted from *Une Plume dans la Cuisine*. May 15, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. [http://www.uneplumedanslacuisine.com/2011/05/tourments-damour/.](http://www.uneplumedanslacuisine.com/2011/05/tourments-damour/))

Preheat oven to 350°F.

For the Pastry:

About 9½ ounces short crust pastry (preferably homemade, with 3½ ounces butter, 1½ cups flour, a pinch of salt, and 3–4½ tablespoons cold water, mixed in a food processor)

For the Custard:

1 cup milk	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons flour	½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
¼ cup sugar (or more, according to taste)	Zest of 1 lime
1 egg	5 tablespoons of coconut jam (add more or less, according to taste)
2 tablespoons rum	

For the Genoese (Sponge):

1 cup flour	4 eggs
⅔ cup sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

To Assemble the *Tourments*:

1. Line 6–8 small tart molds with the short crust pastry, prick the bottom with a fork, and place in the refrigerator.

To Make the Custard:

2. Bring the milk to a boil in a small saucepan. Set aside.

3. Mix the egg and sugar in a medium-sized bowl, then add the flour to make a smooth and well-blended paste.
4. Add the hot milk to the mixture, while stirring. Pour the mixture into the saucepan and allow it to thicken over low heat.
5. When the mixture has thickened, and the custard has formed, remove from heat and add the rum, nutmeg, cinnamon, and zest. Set aside.
6. When the custard has cooled, stir in the coconut jam.

To Prepare the Sponge:

7. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating vigorously.
8. Add in the flour and mix.
9. Stir in vanilla.

Assembling the Cakes:

10. Remove the tart molds from the refrigerator.
11. Spread custard/coconut jam mixture on the tart crusts, filling each mold about $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
12. Carefully spoon the sponge cake dough over the top of the custard, and bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes. After 20 minutes, look at the cakes. If they start to burn on top, cover with a sheet of parchment and continue to cook for the remaining 10 minutes.
13. Serve the *Tourments* plain or sprinkled with coconut.

Serves 6–8.

***Churchkhela* (Grape and Walnut Candy, Georgia)**

(Adapted from Georgian Recipes. March 29, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://georgianrecipes.net/2013/03/29/chuechkhela-georgian-snickers/>.)

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| 50 walnut halves or whole hazelnuts | 1 cup sugar |
| 2 quarts white grape juice, fresh or commercial | $\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour |
| | Confectioners' sugar, for dusting |

1. Thread a needle with a 30-inch length of heavy-duty cotton thread or fine fishing line. With the flat side of the nuts facing up, thread 25 walnut halves onto the thread, and thread the remaining walnut halves flat side down.
2. Cut the thread from the needle and knot both ends. Slide half of the walnuts to one end of the thread, and half the nuts to the other end of the thread.

There should be at least 6 inches of thread in the middle. Pick up the thread from middle; you will have 2 separate strands of walnut halves hanging flat side up.

3. In a large skillet, combine the grape juice and sugar. Heat to just below a boil. Place flour in a bowl and very gradually stir the heated juice into the flour, whisking vigorously; there should be no lumps. When about half of the juice has been added to the flour, pour the flour-juice mixture back into the skillet and stir while bringing the mixture to a boil. Turn the heat down and simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the mixture has begun to thicken.
4. Meanwhile, place two broomsticks or dowels between two chairs. Place newspaper on the floor underneath to catch the drips.
5. Pick up the walnuts by the middle of the thread and slowly dip them into the juice mixture, using a spoon to help coat the nuts, if necessary. Slowly pull them up from the juice and carefully drape the thread over the prepared sticks so that the walnut strands hang down over the newspaper, but make sure they do not touch each other.
6. Allow the nuts to dry for 15–20 minutes, or until the coating is slightly tacky. Then dip the nuts again in the juice, which has been kept warm. Allow the nuts to dry again for about 20 minutes.
7. Repeat the dipping process, 8–10 times; the nuts should be thoroughly coated.
8. Allow to dry for 3 or 4 days, until the candy is hard. When completely dry (and some say the treat should age for several weeks), pull the strings out (you may need to cut the string with a knife in a few places).
9. Arrange the nuts in a dish, and dust with confectioners' sugar, and serve.

Gozinaki (Honey Walnut Candy, Georgia)

(Adapted from Wilson, Dede, *A Baker's Field Guide to Holiday Candy & Confections*, Boston: Harvard Common Press, 2005.)

These candies are delicious, chewy, and very sticky.

1 cup honey 2½ cups walnut halves, finely chopped
¼ cup granulated sugar

1. Prepare a large, clean working area on cutting board or wooden surface. Sprinkle the area with cold water.
2. Mix honey and sugar in a large saucepan. Over medium heat, stirring constantly, bring the mixture to 220°F. At 220°F, stir in nuts and continue to cook

until the mixture reaches 240°F, at which point it should become golden in color.

3. Put the hot mixture onto the prepared surface, and with the back of a spoon or a spatula dipped in cold water, flatten the mixture to about ½ inch.
4. When the mixture is cool, cut into diamond-shaped pieces with a sharp knife, again, dipped in water to prevent sticking.

***Lebkuchen* (Christmas Spice Cookies, Germany)**

(Contributed by Leonore Baeumler of Duluth, Minnesota.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 eggs	⅛ teaspoon powdered cardamom
1 cup sugar	¾ cup coarsely ground almonds
1 cup flour	¼ cup candied lemon peel
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon	½ teaspoon lemon zest
⅛ teaspoon ground cloves	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Beat eggs and mix in the sugar.
2. Blend flour, spices, almonds, and lemon peel into egg and sugar mixture.
3. Drop the dough by teaspoonfuls on well-greased cookie sheet.
4. Bake *Lebkuchen* for 15–20 minutes until the edges begin to brown.
5. When done, remove the cookies from cookie sheet and place on a wire rack to cool.
6. Cookies should sit for a few days “to mellow.”
7. Dust with confectioners' sugar before serving.

***Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte* (Black Forest Cake, Germany)**

(Contributed by Leonore Baeumler of Duluth, Minnesota.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

4 ounces butter	1 teaspoon baking powder
½ cup sugar	½ teaspoon salt
3 eggs	1 cup heavy whipping cream
½ cup almonds, finely chopped	2 tablespoons honey
1–6 ounce package semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips, finely chopped	½ cup <i>kirschwasser</i> or cherry brandy
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	2 (16 ounce) cans sour pitted cherries, drained
1 cup cake flour, sifted	Marachino cherries

1. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs to the mixture and beat thoroughly.
2. Add almonds, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the chopped chocolate, and vanilla to the mixture.
3. Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt together.
4. Add flour mixture to butter mixture.
5. Divide batter evenly between 3 greased and parchment paper-lined 8-inch layer cake pans.
6. Bake the batter about 20 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean.
7. Cool the cakes on wire rack for about 10 minutes, then remove them from pans. Remove paper from the cakes.
8. Whip cream until stiff, then whip in honey.
9. Place 1 layer of cake on serving plate, sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of the liquor, then spread with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the whipped cream. Cover with half of the sour cherries.
10. Put the second cake on top of the cherries, and gently press down. Repeat the filling process.
11. Place the third cake on top, press down slightly, sprinkle with remaining liquor and cover with remaining whipped cream.
12. Decorate the top and sides of the cakes with the remaining chopped chocolate pieces and maraschino cherries.
13. Chill the three-layered cake thoroughly before serving.

Makes one 8-inch cake with 3 layers.

Baklava with Mixed Nuts (Classic Sweet Nutty Layered Phyllo Pastry, Greece)

(Adapted from Hoffman, Susanna, *The Olive and the Caper*, New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2004.)

Phyllo tends to dry out quickly, so make sure you have everything in place before you take the *phyllo* from the refrigerator (do not thaw *phyllo* at room temperature, if frozen, as it gets too sticky). The utensils must be ready and the oven heated.

As you unroll the *phyllo*, one sheet at a time, quickly cover the remaining sheets with plastic wrap or a damp cloth to prevent the sheets from drying out and cracking. Use a soft brush to spread the melted butter on each sheet. Use big strokes and work quickly.

Preheat oven to 325°F.

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| 1 cup walnuts, finely chopped | almonds, hazelnuts, and |
| 1 cup almonds, finely | pistachios) |
| chopped (or a mixture of | 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon |

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar	1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
6 ounces unsalted butter, melted	One 1 × 2-inch strip of lemon rind
32 sheets commercial <i>phyllo</i> (1 pound)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup honey

For the Syrup:

1 cup water	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
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1. For the syrup, combine all ingredients, except the honey, in a 1½ quart saucepan.
2. Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Add the honey to the mixture and simmer for 5 more minutes.
4. Remove lemon peel and cool syrup to room temperature.
5. Mix the nuts and cinnamon together and set aside.
6. Coat the bottom and sides of a 9 × 13-inch baking pan with some of the melted butter.
7. Trim the *phyllo* sheets to fit the pan. Cover the sheets with plastic wrap or a damp cloth.
8. Quickly butter and layer 8 *phyllo* sheets on top of each other, in the bottom of the pan.
9. Spread half of the nut mixture evenly over the top layer.
10. Butter and layer 8 more sheets of *phyllo* on top of the nut layer. Spread half of the nut mixture on the top layer of *phyllo*, and repeat the process, ending with the fourth layer of 8 sheets of *phyllo*. (If you have fewer than 32 sheets in the package, adjust the number of sheets in each layer.)
11. Generously brush the remaining butter over the top and edges of the *phyllo*.
12. Cut the *baklava* into diamond-shaped pieces. Place the pan in the oven and bake the *baklava* for 20 minutes.
13. After 20 minutes, spread the remaining butter over the top of the *baklava* and bake until golden, and crispy, about 20–25 minutes.
14. Remove the pan from the oven, set it aside to cool for 5–10 minutes.
15. Pour the syrup into the cuts between the pieces and around the edges of the pan (avoid pouring the syrup over the top, which results in a soggy, rather than crisp, top). In Greece they usually put a whole clove in each diamond-shaped piece which serves both as decoration and as a tiny toothpick holding the *baklava* together.

16. Set the *baklava* aside to cool. *Baklava* can be kept covered, at room temperature, for up to 3 days.

Serves 12–16.

***Diples* (Honey Rolls, Greece)**

(From *The Recipe Club of Saint Paul's Greek Orthodox Cathedral, The Complete Book of Greek Cooking*, New York, Harper, 1990.)

3 egg yolks	2 cups honey
3 whole eggs	½ cup water
2 tablespoons orange juice (fresh, if available)	2 cups walnuts, finely chopped
2 teaspoons baking powder	Ground cinnamon
3 cups flour	Oil for frying (about 2 cups)

1. Beat the eggs and egg yolks together. Add the orange juice to the egg mixture.
2. Add the baking powder and flour to egg mixture and mix well.
3. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead until it is smooth, but slightly sticky. Keep kneading (at least 10 more minutes, maybe 15 or 20 minutes) until the dough forms blisters and bubbles when you slice it with a sharp knife.
4. Divide the dough into 4 portions; set aside 3 portions under a damp cloth.
5. Roll out the remaining portion as thinly as possible, ⅛ inch or less. Cut the dough into 4 × 6-inch pieces.
6. Fill a deep pan with 2 inches of oil. Heat oil until it is very hot. Drop the pieces carefully, one at a time, into the hot oil. With forks or chopsticks, turn the *diple* immediately, and roll up into a cylinder. Remove from the oil when *diple* becomes golden.
7. Set it aside on paper towels to cool. Continue until all the dough is used.

For the Syrup:

8. In a 1½-quart saucepan, boil the honey and water, and then simmer the liquid for 15 minutes.
9. After 15 minutes, skim off any froth on the syrup and turn heat to very low.
10. When *diples* are cool, dip them into the hot syrup. Place them on wire racks to drain. Sprinkle the *diples* with cinnamon and chopped nuts.

Makes about 24.

Hong Kong–Style French Toast (Hong Kong)

(From Huff Post Taste, *Hong Kong Style French Toast*. December 10, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/10/hong-kong-french-toast-iced-milk-tea_n_2271506.html.)

There are many ways to prepare this treat, but some say the best way is the Mido way, from the Mido Café in Hong Kong, because it is the most basic egg battered toast slathered in butter.

Slices of thick, white bread	Golden syrup (a British product made from sugarcane, not maple syrup), jam, peanut butter, or sweetened condensed milk
2 eggs (or about one egg <i>per</i> slice of bread)	
4 ounces butter (or oil, if you are health conscious, but that is not the Mido way)	

1. Remove the crust from the slices of bread.
2. Beat the two eggs and thoroughly coat the pieces of bread but be careful not to saturate the slices. Or, spread the jam or peanut butter on one slice of bread, the condensed milk on the other slice, and make a sandwich. Then coat the sandwich with the beaten egg and proceed.
3. Fry the slices of egg batter-soaked bread in generous amounts of butter on medium-high to high heat.
4. Fry until the slices are golden brown.
5. Add a large cube of butter, drizzle with condensed milk or golden syrup and serve.

Mango Pudding (Hong Kong)

(Adapted from Cooking with Alison, *Chinese Mango Pudding Recipe [Mango Bo Deen]*. September 26, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://cookingwithalison.com/2011/09/26/chinese-mango-pudding/>.)

There are many ways to make this—some use only mango juice, some use half-and-half instead of heavy whipping cream; some say refrigerate it uncovered, others say refrigerate it covered, but no matter how it is prepared, it is delicious and beautiful.

6 very ripe mangoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped	2 gelatin packets, softened in 3 table-spoons cold water
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice	1 quart heavy whipping cream
½ teaspoon salt	Evaporated milk for topping, chilled
1⅛ cups sugar	

1. Cook the mangoes, lemon juice, and salt over medium heat, gently stirring, for about 5 minutes, until the mangoes are very soft and mushy.
2. Add the sugar to the mango mixture and continue cooking and stirring. A few pieces of mango might still be visible; this is no problem. Be careful not to let the mixture burn, keep the heat at medium or lower. When the mixture becomes thick and syrupy, remove from heat.
3. Stir the softened gelatin into the mango mixture until it dissolves, then stir in the cream until it is well blended.
4. Place the mixture in a large mold or 8 individual dishes. Chill until it is set, about 3 hours.
5. Serve the mango pudding cold, traditionally with evaporated milk poured over it. (Some prefer whipped cream or *crème chantilly*, whipped cream with sweetened condensed milk and a pinch of salt.)

Makes about 8 servings.

***Injera* (Flat Bread, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Horn of Africa)**

(Adapted from Exploratorium, Science of Cooking. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/bread/recipe-injera.html>.)

1 cup teff flour (or up to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour, according to taste) $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 Peanut or vegetable oil
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups warm water

1. Put the teff flour in the bottom of a mixing bowl, and sift in all-purpose flour (if using).
2. Slowly add water to the flour, stirring to avoid lumps.
3. Put the batter aside for a day or more at room temperature (up to 3 days), in a covered bowl to allow it to ferment. In this time, your *injera* batter will start to bubble and acquire the slight tanginess for which it is known. (If you find that your *injera* batter does not ferment on its own, try adding a teaspoon of dry yeast.)
4. Pour off the liquid that will rise to top.
5. Stir the salt into the dough.
6. Heat a lightly oiled cast-iron skillet (or nonstick pan) over medium heat until a water drop dances on the surface. Make sure the surface of the pan is smooth; otherwise, your *injera* might fall apart when you try to remove it.
7. Coat the pan with a thin layer of batter (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup). *Injera* should be a little thicker than a crêpe, but not as thick as a traditional pancake. It will rise slightly and holes will form as it cooks. (If the batter is too thin, and no holes develop when the flatbread cooks, add more flour; if it is too thick, and the *injera* is more like a pancake, add water.)

8. Then cover the pan with a lid to steam the *injera* for a minute or so. Remove the lid and let it cook until the center is set and not wet (*i.e.*, dry to the touch), the underside is only lightly browned, and the edges start to turn up a little, 3–5 minutes depending on the size.
9. Remove the *injera* from heat and let it cool.

***Tsebhi Shiro* (Spicy Peanuts, Eritrea, Horn of Africa)**

(A traditional recipe adapted from Celtnet. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.celtnet.org.uk/recipes/miscellaneous/fetch-recipe.php?rid=misc-tsebhi-shiro>.)

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| 1 pound raw dry peanuts | 2 teaspoon mixed spices (your choice, to taste) |
| 4 ounces butter | Salt and black pepper (to taste) |
| 2 tablespoons tomato paste | |
| 2 small onions | |

1. Shell the peanuts, clean, and grind to a fine powder.
2. Add all the remaining ingredients to a saucepan with just slightly more than 2 cups water. Bring it to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes.
3. Add the peanuts and cook for another 20 minutes.

Tsebhi shiro is traditionally served with *injera*, a traditional classic Ethiopian flat bread. (See recipe above.)

***Almás Pite* (Sheet Cake Filled with Apples, Hungary)**

(Contributed by Gabriella Oláh, of Budapest, Hungary.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

For the Cake:

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| 4 ounces butter | ¾ cup confectioners' sugar |
| 1¾ cups flour | 3 egg yolks |
| Pinch of salt | 1 tablespoon sour cream |

For the Apple Filling:

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|--|----------------------------|
| 3 pounds baking apples, peeled, cored, and finely chopped or coarsely grated | ½ cup sugar |
| 2 tablespoons flour | 1 teaspoon vanilla extract |
| 2 ounces butter, melted | ⅓ cups raisins |
| ⅔ cup walnuts, finely chopped | 1 tablespoon lemon juice |

1. Mix butter and flour until the mixture forms crumbs. Add salt and confectioners' sugar to the flour mixture.
2. Put 2 egg yolks and sour cream in a well in the center of the flour mixture. Knead them together. Set the dough aside in a cool place to rest for an hour.
3. Divide the dough into two portions, one slightly larger than the other (the bottom portion must come up and over the sides of the pan).
4. Roll out each piece of dough, dusting with flour as necessary, to fit an 8 × 12-inch cake pan. Place the larger piece of dough in the cake pan.
5. For the filling, add flour, melted butter, ground walnuts, vanilla, sugar, raisins, and lemon juice to apples. Mix all the ingredients gently but thoroughly.
6. Place top crust over the apples, pinching the bottom and top crusts together with moist fingers.
7. Beat remaining egg yolk with a teaspoon of water and glaze the top crust. Prick the top crust every 3–4 inches to allow the steam to escape.
8. Bake *almás pite* for 45 minutes, set it aside to cool.

Makes 6 four-inch square servings.

Gerbeaud Szelet (Gerbeaud Slice, Hungary)

(Contributed by Gabriella Oláh of Budapest, Hungary.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

For the Dough:

½ cup milk	6 ounces butter, at room temperature
1⅛ teaspoons dry yeast	3 egg yolks
½ cup confectioners' sugar	Pinch of salt
1½ cups cake flour	

1. Warm ¼ cup milk to lukewarm; add the yeast, 1 tablespoon sugar, and 3 tablespoons flour to the milk. Set aside for about 10 minutes.
2. Add the remaining flour, milk, sugar, butter, egg yolks, and salt to the yeast mixture. Knead the flour mixture vigorously for a few minutes, then set aside to rest for about 15 minutes.
3. Divide the dough into three portions.
4. Stretch each portion of dough to fit a 2½ × 9 × 13-inch baking pan. Put one layer on the bottom, up the sides, and slightly over the edge.
5. Spread half the walnut-apricot filling on the dough (walnut-apricot filling recipe included below), then cover filling with the second layer of dough. Spread the remaining filling on the dough, and place third layer of dough on the top.

6. Bake for 40 minutes.
7. Cool and glaze the cake (glaze recipe included below). Do not slice the cake before the glaze has dried.

For the Walnut-Apricot Filling:

3 egg whites	1 cup walnuts, finely chopped
½ cup sugar	4 tablespoons thick apricot jam

8. Whip the egg whites and add sugar, a little at a time.
9. When the mixture becomes stiff, gently fold in walnuts and jam.

For the Chocolate Glaze:

¼ cup sugar	3 ounces sweet chocolate
¼ cup water	½ ounce butter
1 tablespoon powdered cocoa	

10. Cook the water, sugar, powdered cocoa, chocolate, and butter mixture over low heat, stirring constantly, for 8–10 minutes, until the mixture is thoroughly blended and melted.

Makes about 10 servings.

Vargabéles (Noodle Strudel Pie, Hungary)

(Contributed by Gabriella Oláh of Budapest, Hungary.)

This is a traditional recipe, made entirely from scratch. For convenience, it could be made with commercially made *phyllo* and pasta.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

2 cups flour	½ cup sour cream
4 ounces butter, melted	¼ cup golden raisins
Pinch of salt	½ vanilla bean, pulverized
1 egg	Vanilla sugar (sugar that has had vanilla beans in it for days or weeks which has absorbed the essence of the beans)
1¾ pounds cottage cheese	
5 eggs, separated	
1 cup sugar	

1. Prepare the crust by mixing ¾ cup flour, ¼ teaspoon of melted butter, pinch of salt, and ¼ cup water. (If the dough is too dry, add water, a tablespoon at a

time, until the dough becomes smooth and elastic.) Set the dough aside to rest for 30 minutes.

2. Stretch the dough to a very large, thin sheet, about 40 × 60 inches, working it from underneath, with the palms of your hands. Remove the thick edges. Allow it to rest for 15 minutes.
3. Sprinkle the dough with melted butter, and then fold it carefully. Continue folding and sprinkling butter on each layer, until the folded dough is about the size of baking pan (9 × 13-inch).
4. Generously butter the pan, and place the layered dough into it.
5. Prepare the noodle dough by mixing 1¼ cups flour, 1 egg, a pinch of salt, and 1 cup water. Knead the dough until it is smooth and elastic, and roll it out to about ⅛ inch thickness. Cut into ¼ inch strips.
6. Boil the noodles until tender, and rinse with cold water.
7. Sauté and toss the drained noodles in 2 tablespoons of butter for about 30 seconds.
8. Blend the cottage cheese until there are no lumps. Mix in 5 egg yolks, the sugar, sour cream, raisins, the remaining butter (if any), and the pulverized vanilla bean to the cottage cheese.
9. Add the sautéed noodles to the cottage cheese mixture.
10. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form, then fold them into the noodle mixture.
11. Pour the noodle filling over the top of the strudel dough. Bake for about 45 minutes.
12. When the strudel has cooled for about 15 minutes, sprinkle it with vanilla sugar.

***Skúffukaka* (Traditional Chocolate Sheet Cake, Iceland)**

(Adapted from Jo's Icelandic Recipes. September 2001. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.isholf.is/gullis/jo/Cakes_Pancakes.htm#skuffukaka.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

3 cups flour	5½ ounces butter, melted
1 cup white sugar	2 eggs
1 cup brown sugar	1½ cups milk
2 teaspoons baking powder	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 tablespoons dark cocoa, or more (to taste)	

For the Icing:

1 cup confectioners' sugar	A few tablespoons milk
2 tablespoons cocoa powder	or cream

1. Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Add the eggs, milk, and melted butter to the flour-sugar mixture and blend thoroughly.
3. Pour the batter into a greased 9 × 13-inch cake pan and bake for about 30 minutes.
4. When cake is done, set aside to cool.
5. When cake has cooled, mix the dark cocoa powder with the confectioners' sugar. Add milk, a tablespoon at a time, until the icing is smooth and glossy. Ice the cake.

***Skyr* Cake (Iceland)**

(Adapted from News of Iceland. February 2, 2013. Accessed December 9, 2013. <http://www.newsificeland.com/home/entertainment-leisure/food/item/671-icelandic-skyr-cake-recipe>.)

Skyr cake is very similar to cheesecake. *Skyr* is a very popular, dense, fresh skimmed milk cheese product but has more protein than many other milk products. It resembles a very thick yoghurt.

2 cups plain <i>skyr</i>	1½ ounces butter, softened
2 cups vanilla <i>skyr</i>	Blueberry jam (or preferred fruit jam)
2 tablespoons sugar	Fresh blueberries (or fruits of the season for garnish)
½ cup heavy whipping cream	
½ pack graham crackers, finely crushed	

1. Mix crushed graham crackers with softened butter. Pat the mixture into the bottom of an 8-inch springform pan.
2. In a mixing bowl, soften the *skyr* by stirring.
3. In a separate bowl, whip the cream with sugar, then fold into the *skyr*.
4. Pour the *skyr* mixture on top of the crushed graham crackers.
5. Refrigerate the cake until firm, about 2 hours; then spread blueberry jam, or the jam of your choice, on top of the cake.
6. Garnish *skyr* cake with fresh fruit and chill it for about another hour.

***Gulab Jamoons* (aka *Gulab Jamuns*; Spongy Milky Balls Soaked in Rose-Scented Sugar Syrup, India)**

(Contributed by Sasikala Rajesh of Pondicherry, South India.)

Gulab jamoons (or *gulab jamuns*), one of the most popular Indian desserts, are traditionally made with *khoya*, a dairy product that is difficult to find in the United

States (and not practical for most Americans to try to make at home). The following recipe is made with ingredients easily available in the United States, and produces light, spongy *gulab jamoons*.

½ cup powdered milk	¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
1 tablespoon flour	2 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon semolina	1½ cups sugar
¼ teaspoon baking soda	1½ cups water
1 tablespoon ghee	Rose essence (optional)
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice	3 drops
	Oil for frying

1. For the syrup, bring sugar and water to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer and continue simmering. Stir to dissolve sugar.
2. Heat the oil to medium (maximum). The oil must be the correct temperature. If oil is not hot enough, the *gulab jamoons* will tend to break and get too greasy. If the oil is too hot, they will cook on the outside, but not in the inside.
3. For the *gulab jamoons*, combine the dry ingredients, lemon juice, and ghee. With your fingers, massage the mixture until the ingredients are thoroughly blended and crumb like.
4. While you add the milk, keep pinching and rubbing the mixture until it becomes a wet, sticky, dough. (The secret to great soft, fluffy *gulab jamoons* is getting the right consistency in the dough.) Set aside for 10 minutes.
5. After 10 minutes, the semolina should have absorbed the moisture. Grease your hands and gently form small balls without any cracks. If you have cracks in the dough, sprinkle a little milk in it to make a smoother dough.
6. When you have the balls made up, gently place 4 or 5 of them in medium hot oil. Rotate them gently, until they are golden brown all over. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels.
7. Quickly and gently place the *gulab jamoons* in the hot syrup.
8. Continue cooking the *gulab jamoons* and putting them in the syrup until all the dough is used.
9. Serve *gulab jamoons* warm or at room temperature, after they have rested for 3–8 hours (or overnight) in order for the sweet syrup to get absorbed. The *gulab jamoons* can be stored in the syrup, in the refrigerator.

Makes 10–12 *gulab jamoons*.

Mango Lassi (Sweet Mango Yoghurt Drink, India)

(Adapted from Sperling, Veronica and McFadden, Christine (Eds.), *The Complete Book of Indian Cooking*, Bristol: Paragon, 1996.)

3 ripe, sweet mangoes, seeded and puréed in a blender	3 tablespoons honey
1½ cups plain yoghurt (nonfat yoghurt also can be used)	2 cups (1 tray) ice

1. Add the yoghurt, honey, and ice to the mango purée.
2. Pour into glasses and serve chilled.

Payasam (Sweet Rice Pudding, India)

(Adapted from Sperling, Veronica and McFadden, Christine (Eds.), *The Complete Book of Indian Cooking*, Bristol: Paragon, 1996.)

4 cups whole milk	¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
⅓–½ cup sugar (to taste)	2 threads saffron
¼ cup basmati rice	1 cinnamon stick

1. Bring the milk to a boil in a heavy-bottomed pan, stirring constantly. Add the sugar, spices, and the rice to the milk.
2. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until rice is cooked and the mixture has achieved a pudding-like consistency. Stir occasionally. (This may take an hour; the milk is reduced by about half.)
3. Serve the *payasam* warm or chilled.

Rasgullas (Traditional Sweet Paneer Balls Soaked in Syrup, Bengal, India)

(Adapted from Ramineni, Shubhra, and Kawana, Masano, *Entice with Spice: Easy Indian Recipes for Busy People*, North Clarendon, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2010.)

2 cups milk	1½ tablespoons lemon juice
1¾ cups water	A pinch of cardamom or a teaspoon of rose water
1 cup sugar	

1. Mix lemon juice in half cup of hot water and set aside.
2. Bring the milk to a boil in a heavy-bottomed pan over medium heat, stirring constantly.

3. When the milk comes to a boil, gradually add the lemon juice mixture. When all the milk has separated from the whey, drain the whey using a strainer lined with cheesecloth.
4. When most of the moisture has been strained from the *paneer* (whey), lift it securely in the cheesecloth and rinse under cold water, squeezing as much moisture out as possible, or put the *paneer* under a heavy weight, forcing the remaining moisture to drip out.
5. It is important that the proper amount of moisture has been removed from the *paneer*. To test, take a small piece of *paneer*, and massage it with your fingers. After about 20 seconds, you should be able to shape it into a firm ball.
6. Once the *paneer* has been drained, knead it on a dry, clean surface until it is smooth and pliable. (If the *paneer* is too crumbly, add water, but only $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon at a time.)
7. Divide the dough into 12 equal-sized smooth balls.

For the Syrup:

8. In a large pan, over medium-high heat, stir the sugar and water until the sugar has dissolved.
9. Reduce the heat to medium; add the *rasgullas* carefully, one at a time.
10. Cover with a lid and cook the *rasgullas* for 10–15 minutes, but check occasionally to keep from boiling over.
11. Remove the *rasgullas* from heat and cool completely.
12. Refrigerate the *rasgullas* in the cooled syrup and serve chilled.

Makes 12 *rasgullas*.

Wingko-Babad (Sweet Coconut and Sugar Cakes, Indonesia)

(Adapted from Indonesia Eats. November 20, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://indonesiaeats.com/wingko-babat-javanese-indonesian-coconut-sticky-rice-cake/>.)

Wingo-Babad recipes vary. What you get in the end, whether you add an egg or not, whether you fry it on the stovetop or bake it in the oven, is a pancake-type treat that looks like an English Muffin but has a heavenly taste of coconut.

2 cups sticky rice flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar	1 egg
4 cups coconut, grated	1 cup coconut <i>milk</i> (freshly made from pulp, or canned)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	

1. Mix rice flour with sugar, coconut, vanilla and salt. Thoroughly mix in the egg.
2. Gradually add the coconut milk to the flour mixture, while stirring constantly, until well blended and the sugar dissolves into the mixture.
3. Stir the dough until smooth. Place the dough on a greased griddle and fry like a pancake, about 7 minutes on each side or until done. (Others pour the dough into greased cupcake-like molds and bake in the oven at 350°F for about 15 minutes.)
4. *Wingko-babad* are usually served warm.

Makes about 8 generous portions.

***Gotab* (Almond Crescent Cookies, Iran)**

(Adapted from Recipe Caravan. Accessed December 12, 2013. http://recipecaravan.com/recipes/ghotab_sugar_coated_doughnut_holes_/.)

2 egg yolks	1½ cups almonds, peeled and finely ground,
½ cup yoghurt	⅔ cups sugar
½ cup cooking oil	1 teaspoon freshly ground cardamom
¼ cups flour	
1 teaspoon baking powder	

1. Thoroughly mix the egg yolks with baking powder, cooking oil, and yoghurt. Gradually mix in the flour until the dough is smooth and elastic. Set the dough aside to rest for 2 hours.
2. Mix the almonds with sugar and cardamom. Spread some flour on a work surface, and divide the dough into fist-sized balls. Flatten each ball slightly to less than ¼ inch in thickness.
3. Cut about 3-inch circles into the dough. Place the nut mixture in the center of each circle. Fold the circle in half, and press with damp fingers to seal the edges.
4. Fry the *gotab* in hot oil until golden. Quickly remove from oil and place on paper towels. Then, dip the *gotab* in sugar.

***Nane Shirini* (Persian Butter Cookies, Iran)**

(Adapted from Mazda, Maideh, *In a Persian Kitchen*, Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1987.)

Preheat oven to 325°F.

2 cups flour	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking powder	1 teaspoon almond extract
8 ounces butter	1 teaspoon lemon extract
1 cup sugar	2 teaspoons lemon zest
2 egg yolks	

1. In a large bowl combine flour and baking powder.
2. In another bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the egg yolks, extracts, and zest to the butter-sugar mixture.
3. Blend in flour mixture.
4. Roll the dough into walnut-sized balls and place on greased cookie sheet. Bake in preheated oven for about 15–20 minutes, until just beginning to brown.
5. Remove the cookies, cool them on the cookie sheet for a few minutes, then move them to a wire rack.

***Kleicha* (Date-Filled Cookies, Iraq)**

(Adapted from A Cookie for Every Country: Iraq. Accessed March 12, 2013. <http://globalcookies.blogspot.com/2007/10/iraq-kleicha.html>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

For the Dough:

3 cups flour	⅛ teaspoon anise seed
½ cup sugar	⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 ounces butter	1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ cup water	Pinch of salt
¼ teaspoon green cardamom powder	

For the Date Filling:

1 cup walnuts, finely chopped	Zest of 1 orange
1 cup Medjool dates, finely chopped	1 teaspoon ground cardamom
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon	½ ounce butter
¼ cup fresh orange juice	1 beaten egg, plus 1 teaspoon water, for wash

1. Sift the sugar, baking powder, seasonings, and flour in mixing bowl. Cut in the butter until the dough is fine and crumbly. Add water and mix until the dough is smooth and elastic.
2. Set the dough aside for ½ hour.
3. To make the filling, mix the dates with butter, zest, seasonings, and orange juice. Gently heat the mixture until the dates are soft, sticky, and pliable.

4. From the dough, create small balls. Flatten the balls to about 3-inch circles, put a spoonful of date mixture in the center, fold the dough over and seal with damp fingertips. Brush the dough with egg wash before baking.
5. Bake the *kleicha* for 15–20 minutes or until golden brown.
6. Remove from oven, cool on wire rack. Serve when cooled.

Makes about 30 cookies.

***Zalabia* (Fritters in Syrup, Iraq)**

(Adapted from Roden, Claudia, *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.)

5 cups sugar	1 teaspoon sugar
2 cups water	½ cup warm water
Juice of ½ lemon	3½ cups flour
1 tablespoon rose water or orange blossom water	½ teaspoon salt
2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	2½ cups warm water
	Oil for frying

1. Make the syrup by bringing the sugar, 2 cups water, and lemon juice to a boil. Stir to dissolve sugar. Add the orange blossom or rose water to the sugar mixture, heat for a minute longer, then remove from heat, cover and chill.
2. Combine the yeast, warm water, and teaspoon of sugar. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
3. Put the flour in a large bowl. Add the yeast mixture and salt. Mix together, then knead vigorously for about 10 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic. Cover with a warm, damp cloth; set aside to rise in a warm place for 1 hour. Knead the dough once more and let it rise again.
4. Make the fritters in batches. Place teaspoonfuls or tablespoonfuls (they can be small or large, but each batch should be about the same size) of dough into hot oil and fry until puffed up, crisp and golden, turning them frequently. Watch the heat; it is easy to get the fritters quickly brown on the outside, but not done on the inside. The fritters should have irregular, roundish shapes. If they flatten out, the oil needs more heat.
5. When golden all over, lift the fritters out with a slotted spoon, drain on paper towels, and dip in the cold syrup, or let them soak in the syrup for a longer time.
6. Traditionally, *zalabia* are served hot, but you can also serve them cold.

Summer Pudding (Ireland)

(Adapted from Walsh, Helen, *Irish Country Cooking*, New York: Crescent Books, 1993.)

1 loaf of white bread, unsliced, crusts removed ½ cup sugar

2 pounds raspberries, redcurrants, blackberries, or any combination of fresh, juicy, ripe fruit

1. Cut the bread into ½-inch slices. Cut the slices of bread into pieces the height of a medium-sized bowl, about 1 inch at the bottom, and wider at the top. Then, cut a round piece of bread for the bottom of the bowl. The bowl should be thoroughly and tightly lined with the bread, with as few “leaks” as possible.
2. Cook the fruit, adding sugar to taste. If necessary, add water to the fruit mixture, as some juice is necessary. While the fruit is hot, pour it into the bread-lined bowl. Place pieces of bread on top of the fruit.
3. Place a plate with a weight on top of the bowl and chill.
4. When the pudding is cold, turn out on a plate; be prepared for some juice to run onto the plate.
5. Serve the pudding with custard or cream.

Unyeasted *Barmbrack* (Currant and Raisin Bread, Ireland)

(Recipe contributed by Christabel Smyth Grant of Lake Nabagamon, Wisconsin.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

4 cups flour	2 teaspoons mixed spice (typical combinations include ground allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg, and/or cloves)
1 cup golden seedless raisins	
3 eggs, beaten	2 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup currants	2½ cups cold, black tea
1½ cups packed brown sugar	
½ cup mixed candied peel	

1. Soak the fruit, peel, and sugar in tea overnight.
2. The next day stir the tea well, add flour, spices, baking powder, and beaten eggs.
3. Grease and line the bottom of a cake pan, turn *barmbrack* mix into pan. Bake for 1½ hours.

4. When the *barmbrack* is baked, glaze the top with warmed honey and return it to the oven for 5 minutes.
5. Cool the *brack* on a wire rack and serve with butter.

Yeast Loaf (Currant and Raisin Bread, Ireland)

(Contributed by Christabel Smyth Grant of Lake Nabagamon, Wisconsin.)

A Halloween *brack* has a ring hidden in it and legend has it that the lucky recipient will be married within the year!

Preheat oven to 350°F.

4 cups flour	3 tablespoons hot water
½ teaspoon salt	½ cup currants
½ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	1 cup golden seedless raisins
2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	¼ cup mixed candied peel, chopped (fruit cake mix)
2 ounces butter	¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1⅛ cups lukewarm milk	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 egg, beaten	

1. Sift flour, salt, and spices together; blend the butter into the flour mixture.
2. Dissolve salt and sugar in the hot water; when lukewarm, mix in the yeast.
3. Add the lukewarm milk and beaten egg to the salt-sugar mixture.
4. Make a well in the dry mix, add the liquid and knead vigorously for 5 or more minutes, until the batter is stiff but elastic.
5. Mix in the dried fruit and peel.
6. Turn the mixture into a warm, greased bowl, cover with a cloth set aside to rise until doubled in size, for about one hour.
7. Divide the dough into two portions and place in two 7-inch greased bread pans.
8. Set aside to rise again for about 30 minutes, until the dough reaches the top of the pan.
9. Bake the dough for an hour or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the *barmbrack* comes out clean.
10. Glaze the *barmbrack* by melting 1 teaspoon sugar in 2 tablespoons hot water.
11. Cut *barmbrack* into thick slices and serve with butter.

***Challah* (Jewish Braided Sabbath Bread, Israel)**

(Adapted from Gur, Janna, *The Book of New Israeli Food: A Culinary Journey*, New York: Schocken Books, 2008.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	3–3½ cups flour
¾ cup warm water	2 beaten eggs
4 ounces butter or margarine	2 egg yolks
¼ cup sugar	Poppy seeds for garnish
1 teaspoon salt	

1. Dissolve the yeast in ¼ cup of warm water. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Mix remaining water, butter (or margarine), sugar, and salt in saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring until the butter (or margarine) is melted. When the sugar is dissolved, set aside to cool.
3. In a large mixing bowl, make a well in 3 cups of flour. Pour the yeast and butter mixtures and the beaten eggs into the well. Blend the mixtures.
4. Prepare a lightly floured work surface. Knead the dough until smooth and elastic. Place the dough in a warm place, covered with a towel or plastic wrap, until it has doubled in size.
5. When the dough has doubled in size, return it to the lightly floured work surface. Punch it down, and cut into 3 equal portions. Roll each portion into a log about 12 inches long.
6. Gently braid the three rolls. Pinch the ends of the rolls together with damp fingers and tuck under.
7. Place the loaf on a baking sheet and cover it lightly with a cloth. Set aside for 30–45 minutes.
8. Beat the egg yolks with a tablespoon of water, and brush the top of the braid with the yolk-water mixture.
9. Place the *challah* in preheated oven. After 20 minutes, remove the *challah* from the oven and brush again with remaining egg wash. Return the loaf to the oven and bake for another 15–20 minutes, until the *challah* is golden brown on top, and sounds hollow when tapped with your knuckles.
10. Remove from oven and set aside for 10 minutes. Then remove from baking sheet and place on a wire rack to continue cooling.

***Lekach* (Honey Cake, Israel)**

(Adapted from Leonard, Leah W., *Jewish Cookery*, New York: Crown, 1994.)

Preheat oven to 325°F.

3½ cups flour	2 tablespoons oil
1½ teaspoons baking powder	6 eggs
½ teaspoon baking soda	1 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 tablespoon orange zest
½ teaspoon ground allspice	¾ cup walnuts, pecans, or almonds, chopped
2 pinches salt	¾ cup raisins, soaked in coffee, brandy, or rum
1 cup honey	
¼ cup strong, cooled coffee, rum, or brandy	

1. In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, spices, and salt.
2. In another bowl, mix the honey, the liquid drained from the raisins, zest, and oil.
3. In a third bowl, beat the eggs until light, then beat in brown sugar until mixture is creamy.
4. Gently add the flour and honey mixtures. Blend thoroughly.
5. Gently fold the nuts and raisins into the batter.
6. Pour the batter into a greased and floured 9-inch round or 6 × 10-inch baking pan. Bake in preheated oven for 45–55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
7. When the cake is done, set it aside to cool.
8. Remove the cake from pan, cut into diamond-shaped or wedge-shaped pieces, and serve.

Gubana (Sweet Easter Bread, Friuli Region, Italy)

(Adapted from Woodall, Diana Baker, *Diana's Desserts*, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.dianasdesserts.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/recipes.recipeListing/filter/dianas/recipeID/272/Recipe.cfm>.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

1 cup warm milk	2 large eggs, plus one yolk (set aside extra egg white for final dough wash)
3¾ cups flour	
4½ teaspoons dry yeast (2 packages)	8 ounces unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon size slices
¼ cup warm water	
⅓ cup sugar	
½ teaspoon salt	

For the Filling:

1 cup raisins, chopped	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup hazelnuts, chopped
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup grappa brandy or Marsala wine	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup pine nuts
1 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped	Zest from 2 oranges
	$\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar

1. Pour warm milk into large bowl; stir in the yeast. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in 1 cup flour. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside for about an hour.
2. After an hour, mix the eggs, sugar, and water into yeast mixture until smooth. Knead in remaining flour and salt until the dough is smooth and elastic; add more flour to the dough, if necessary.
3. Place the dough in a buttered bowl or on a smooth, warm, floured, work surface. Put the butter pieces on top of the dough; cover the dough with plastic wrap and set aside to rest until doubled in size, 1–2 hours.
4. Mix raisins, nuts, sugar, and the orange zest. Moisten the nut mixture with grappa or Marsala (or both). Set aside.
5. After dough has doubled in size, on the well-floured work surface, knead the butter into the dough. Roll into a rectangle, about 12 × 18 inches. Spread the filling evenly over the dough rectangle, leaving a 1-inch border on each side.
6. Starting from a long side, roll up the dough like a jellyroll. Coil it into a deep (at least 3 inches), 8-inch round cake pan. Cover with plastic wrap or a warm, damp cloth, and let it rise for about 60–90 minutes, until not quite doubled in size (it will rise a bit in the oven).
7. Wash the dough top with remaining egg white mixed with a teaspoon of water. Bake 25 minutes; reduce heat to 325°F and continue baking until the bread is golden brown and tests done, about 25 minutes more (if *gubana* starts to darken, gently lay a piece of foil over it). Set it aside for 10 minutes and then move it to a wire rack to cool.
8. Cut into slices and serve.

Salame di Cioccolato (Chocolate Salami, Emilia-Romagna, Italy)

(Adapted from Passigli, Patrizia, and De' medici, Lorenza, *Italy The Beautiful Cookbook*, Los Angeles: Collins Publishers, 1988.)

½ cup raisins, soaked in water or orange liqueur	¼ cup almonds or pistachios, finely chopped
8 ounces semisweet or bittersweet chocolate (or 4 ounces each)	8 ounces <i>petit beurre</i> biscuits, or any sweet, plain, butter cookie, crushed
2 ounces unsalted butter	Zest of 1 orange
½ cup sugar	2 egg yolks

1. Put the raisins in a small bowl and cover with the orange liqueur or warm water. Set aside.
2. Break up the chocolate to smaller pieces, and place, with the butter, in the bowl of a double boiler. The water should simmer, and the bowl must not touch the water.
3. When the butter mixture melts, add the sugar, almonds, crushed cookies, raisins (drained, if soaked in water) and orange liqueur, and orange zest, and thoroughly blend. Remove from the heat and stir in egg yolks.
4. Set it aside to cool completely.
5. Manually mold the mixture into a salami shape. Roll it in plastic wrap or wax paper, seal the ends, and refrigerate it for several hours.
6. When ready to serve, unwrap, slice the “salami” into pieces, and arrange on a plate.

Zuccotto (Almond and Chocolate Cake, Tuscany, Italy)

(Adapted from Passigli, Patrizia, and De’medici, Lorenza, *Italy The Beautiful Cookbook*, Los Angeles: Collins Publishers, 1988.)

8 ounces semisweet chocolate	1 cup almonds, finely chopped
2 cups heavy whipping cream	
¾ cup confectioners’ sugar	6–8 ounces sponge cake, cut into strips, or several ladyfingers
1 cup hazelnuts, finely chopped	¼ cup maraschino liqueur

1. Divide the chocolate in half. Chop up one half. Melt the other half in a double boiler or in the microwave. Set aside to cool.
2. Whip the cream with the sugar. Fold half the cream into the cooled melted chocolate. Add the hazelnuts to this mixture.
3. Fold together the other half of the whipped cream, the almonds, and the chopped chocolate.
4. Brush the cake fingers with the maraschino liqueur. Line a 7-inch sloped-sided mold on the sides with the sponge or ladyfingers. Spread the almond, chopped

chocolate, and cream mixture in an even layer over the sponge or ladyfingers, then fill in the center with the hazelnut mixture. Smooth the cake's surface, cover it with plastic wrap or wax paper, and refrigerate for several hours.

5. Unmold the *zuccotto* onto a serving plate. For garnish, sift a bit of confectioners' sugar or cocoa powder (or both) on the cake.
6. Serve immediately.

Serves 6.

***Botamochi* and *Ohagi* (Sweet Rice Balls and Sweet Azuki Bean Paste, Japan)**

(Contributed by Takehito Kamata and Richiko Kamata, with assistance from Ruriko Kamata, from the Tuhoku Region of Japan.)

Botamochi and *ohagi* refer to the sweet coarse rice balls made with sticky rice covered by red azuki bean paste (with sugar); they come from the same cooking method and same ingredients. *Botamochi* are usually made during spring and early summer; the name comes from the spring peony flower *Botan*. *Ohagi* are made usually in autumn; its name comes from an autumn flower, the Japanese bush clover *Hagi*. People commonly eat *botamochi* or *ohagi* as sweet desserts during the *Higan* period of the Spring and Fall Equinoxes.

¼ cup short-grain white rice	Sugar (to taste)
¾ cup sticky rice	Pinch of salt
1 cup azuki beans	Dash of soy sauce
Water	

1. Rinse and rub both kinds of rice gently with water until water becomes clear. Then soak the rice in water overnight.
2. Wash and soak dried azuki beans in water overnight.
3. Drain and add the rice with fresh water to reach the 2-cup line of a large measuring pitcher.
4. Cook the rice in a rice cooker, or steam the rice. (See directions with the *Zunda Mochis* recipe on pages 462 to 463.) Once the rice is cooked, mash the rice with a pestle while it is hot until it becomes sticky. Cool it down briefly. Wet your hands with water and shape the rice into oval balls.
5. Drain and rinse the beans, then put the beans in a pot. Add enough water to cover them. Bring them to a boil and then drain the beans.
6. Put the beans in fresh water. Place in a pot and cook them over low heat for approximately 1½ hours, until the beans get soft. If beans are not covered by

water, add water occasionally. As the beans soften, mash them using the bottom of a ladle.

7. Simmer until the liquid is almost gone. Add sugar to the mashed beans, a tablespoon at a time, until sweetened to your liking. Then add a couple pinches of salt and a touch of soy sauce.
8. Simmer the mixture for another few minutes, and then allow the beans to cool. Spread the azuki bean paste evenly on a ball of rice.

Makes 2 servings.

***Oshiruko* (Sweet Azuki Bean Soup, Japan)**

(Contributed by Takehito Kamata and Richiko Kamata, with assistance from Ruriko Kamata, from the Tuhoku Region of Japan.)

Oshiruko refers to sweet azuki bean hot soup. The hot soup is usually mixed with sticky rice, chewy dumplings, *mochis*, or sweet boiled chestnuts. There are two soup types of *oshiruko*, and each comes from a different cooking method. One is the finely crushed smooth paste soup, and another is a mixture of the azuki bean paste and coarse crushed azuki beans. People are likely to enjoy *oshiruko* during winter, particular for celebrating the New Year period and outdoor gatherings.

1 cup sticky rice	Sugar (to taste)
1 cup azuki beans	Pinch of salt
Water	Touch of soy sauce

1. Rinse and rub rice gently with water until water becomes clear. Then soak the rice in water overnight.
2. Wash and soak dried *azuki* beans in water overnight.
3. Drain and add the rice with fresh water to reach the 2-cup line of a large measuring pitcher.
4. Cook the rice in a rice cooker, or steam the rice. (See directions with the *Zunda Mochis* recipe below.)
5. Once the rice is cooked, pound the rice with a pestle while it is hot so that the rice gets sticky. Cool it down briefly. Wet your hands with water and make sticky rice balls.
6. Drain and rinse the beans, then put the beans in a pot. Add enough water to cover them. Bring them to a boil and then drain the beans.
7. Put the beans in fresh water. Place in a pot and cook them over low heat for approximately 1½ hours, until the beans get soft. If beans are not covered by water, add water occasionally. Adjust the amount of water to make soup.

8. Add sugar to the soup, a tablespoon at a time, until sweetened to your liking. Then add a couple pinches of salt and a touch of soy sauce.
9. Simmer for another few minutes, then serve warm with sticky rice balls. If the *oshiruko* gets too thick, add water.

Zunda Mochis (Sweetened Edamame and Mochi Rice, Japan)

(Contributed by Takehito Kamata and Richiko Kamata, with assistance from Ruriko Kamata, from the Tohoku Region of Japan.)

Typically, nowadays, rice is cooked in a rice cooker. Takehito and Richiko advise that if you do not have a rice cooker, steaming mochi rice is the traditional way of cooking it, but it takes longer. To steam the rice, rinse it, put it in a bowl with plenty of water, and set it aside for several hours or overnight. When it is ready to be cooked, drain off the water, line the steamer, strainer, or colander with a clean piece of cheesecloth or a cotton or linen kitchen towel, and spread the rice on it evenly. Steam the rice for 40 minutes until the grains are cooked through.

Zunda mochi refers to the *mochis* with mashed edamame (green soybean) paste. The paste contains sugar, a pinch of salt, and water, and covers all *mocha*. People in the Tohoku region (northern part of Japan) are likely to have this tradition to enjoy together at times of celebrations and gatherings.

1 cup sticky rice	Sugar (to taste)
1 cup edamame	Pinch of salt
Water	

1. Rinse and rub rice gently with water until water becomes clear. Then soak the rice in water overnight.
2. Drain and add the rice with fresh water to reach the 2-cup line of a large measuring pitcher.
3. Cook the rice in a rice cooker, or steam the rice. (See directions above.) Once the rice is cooked, pound the rice with a pestle while it is hot so that the rice gets sticky. Cool it down briefly. Wet your hands with water and make sticky rice balls.
4. Bring water to a boil and put in a pinch of salt.
5. Boil edamame until they get soft. After a few minutes, remove them from the boiling water and let them cool.
6. Remove the edamame from the hulls, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water to the beans, and then mash the beans with mixer or blender. Slowly warm them in a pot until some of the water dissolves. Add sugar to the mashed beans, a tablespoon at a time,

until sweetened to your liking. Add a pinch of salt to improve the taste. Simmer the mixture for another 2 minutes.

- Put the sticky rice balls into the pot and stir to coat them evenly with the edamame.

Makes 2 servings.

“Jordan Almonds” (Fondant-Covered Whole Almonds, International)

(Adapted from Ketutar, Food.com. December 1, 2007. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.food.com/recipe/jordan-almonds-sugar-coated-almonds-269269>.)

Some suggest that Jordan almonds likely originated as honey-covered almonds in ancient Rome. Today commonly found at weddings in many parts of the world, often presented to guests as favors in odd numbers (symbolizing the indivisible bond of the couple), Jordan almonds also symbolize a wish for a life more sweet than bitter for the newlyweds. Five Jordan almonds presented to guests at weddings convey the wish for happiness, health, fertility, longevity, and wealth. Jordan almonds are not named after the country and are known by various names around the world.

6 cups sugar	Almonds, whole, blanched
2 cups water	and peeled
1 tablespoon liquid glucose or	
1 pinch cream of tartar	

For the Fondant:

- Put sugar and water into a large saucepan, set it over medium heat, and stir until the sugar is thoroughly dissolved.
- Wash down the entire inside of the pan with a small brush dipped in water to prevent crystallization on the sides.
- When the syrup first boils, add the glucose or the cream of tartar.
- Continue the boiling without stirring until it registers 240°F on a candy thermometer, or until, when tested in cold water, the syrup forms a soft ball.
- Remove the syrup from the heat at once, allow it to stand for 4 minutes, or until the bubbling has stopped; then pour syrup onto a large wet platter or marble slab, or into a wet basin. The syrup should not be deeper than 1½ inches.
- Set the syrup in a cool place, and when the mixture has cooled down so that you can comfortably put a finger in the middle, begin to work it with a wooden spoon or a hardwood paddle.

7. Turn the sugar backward and forward, leaving no part untouched, until the whole mass becomes white and opaque.
8. Knead it until smooth and free from lumps. Cure the fondant by placing a damp towel over it for at least 1 hour.
9. Remove the cloth, and knead the fondant as you would bread dough.
10. Keep the fondant in an airtight jar. If left exposed to the air, the fondant will get hard and dry. Small quantities can be taken out and flavored and then colored.
11. If you are coloring and flavoring the fondant, it is easier to do while the fondant is warm.

Covering the Almonds:

12. Warm the fondant in microwave, 10–15 seconds at a time, until lukewarm, for covering the almonds.
13. See that the almonds are totally dry after blanching and peeling.
14. Dip them one by one in the melted fondant. Pick the almond up with a fork, tap the fork against the edge of the pot, and wipe the underside of the excess coating.
15. Put the almonds on plastic wrap or wax paper to dry. After about 5 minutes, when the top has hardened, turn the almonds around so that the bottoms can dry.

***Knafeh/Kunafeh/Kanafeh* (Cheese Pastry in Sugar Syrup, Jordan/Arabian Peninsula/Israel/Egypt)**

(Adapted from KMS, Amman, Jordan, [Jordanpicture.blogspot.com](http://jordanpicture.blogspot.com). April 30, 2009. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://jordanpicture.blogspot.com/2009/04/kanafe-recipe.html>.)

Knafeh is an ancient Arab sweet treat first mentioned in the 10th century, most famously from the Palestinian city of Nablus on the West Bank of the Jordan River. Today it is one of the most popular sweet treats in the Mediterranean region and Arabia. The large popular orange-colored Jordanian version of *knafeh*, made into a half-inch thick circle about two feet in diameter, then baked in a flat pan, is eaten for breakfast but is primarily considered a dessert and a sweet treat for special occasions. (For the following version, use a 12-inch baking pan.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 (16 ounce) package <i>kataifi</i> (shredded <i>phyllo</i>) | 1 pound ricotta cheese |
| 12 ounces <i>samna</i> , melted (clarified butter; or substitute ghee, or butter) | 1 pound shredded full-fat mozerella |
| | ½ cup milk |

3 tablespoons semolina or farina Pistachios, ground, for garnish
 1 cup Mediterranean simple syrup, for (optional)
 serving (See recipe below.)

1. Grease a 12-inch round baking pan with 1 ounce of *samna*.
2. In a large bowl, crumble the *kataifi* (about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the package) with your hands and then add the remaining *samna* (melted) and mix completely. Put half of the mixture in the bottom of the greased pan and spread out as a crust, until it is about $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick.
3. Lightly brown the bottom of the *kataifi* by moving the pan over high heat, about 3 minutes. (Use tongs and move in a circular and even motion to make sure all parts brown evenly, if the baking pan is larger than the burner.)
4. In a large bowl combine the ricotta and mozzarella cheeses.
5. In a small saucepan heat the milk on medium for 1 minute, then add the semolina or farina and cook the mixture for 30 seconds.
6. Add the semolina/farina and milk mixture to the cheese mixture and combine well.
7. Pour combined mixture on top of the toasted *kataifi* crust and spread evenly.
8. Place the rest of the *kataifi* evenly on top of the cheese and milk mixture to form the upper crust, pressing the edges down and tuck them in to contain the cheese mixture that might otherwise escape from the sides.
9. Place pan in preheated oven and bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown.
10. When done, remove from oven and let stand.
11. Prepare the Mediterranean simple syrup. (See recipe below.)
12. Invert *knafeh* onto a plate, and pour the sugar water over the *knafeh* after it has cooled a bit, but while it is still warm.
13. Garnish with ground pistachios (optional), and serve warm.

Serves 8–10.

Mediterranean Aromatic Simple Syrup

(Adapted from The Gutsy Gourmet. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/simple-syrup.html>.)

2 cups sugar	1 tablespoon orange blossom
1 cup water	water
3 tablespoons honey	1 teaspoon orange food coloring
1 tablespoon rose water	(optional)

1. Combine sugar, water, and honey in a medium-sized saucepan and let it simmer over medium heat until syrupy, about 10 minutes, but do *not* let it come to a boil.
2. Add the rose water and orange blossom water and/or other light flavorings of choice, according to taste (such as juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon, $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, 1 star anise, and pinch of saffron threads). Be careful not to overwhelm the subtle flavors of the basic syrup. (optional)
3. If you are making Arabic *knafeh*, you can achieve traditional cosmetic results by adding 1 teaspoon of orange food coloring to the syrup after cooking, while the syrup is still hot (optional, for a *bright* orange color).
4. Simmer the syrup for another 2–3 minutes.
5. If adding optional flavorings, strain all flavoring pods and threads from the syrup, if necessary.
6. Remove the syrup from heat and let it cool completely before serving.
7. The syrup can be stored in an airtight jar in the refrigerator for up to 2 months.

Hotteok (Traditional Pancakes with Sweet Filling, Korea)

(Adapted from Zen Kim chi Korean Food Journal, Homemade Hotteok. Accessed December 15, 2013. <http://zenkimchi.com/FoodJournal/top-posts/homemade-hotteok/>.)

2 teaspoons yeast	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup rice flour
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm milk
4 tablespoons granulated sugar	2 tablespoons vegetable oil
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup lukewarm water	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
1 cup flour	$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. In a large mixing bowl, mix warm water, salt, yeast, and 2 tablespoons granulated sugar. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Combine the yeast mixture, flours, salt, oil, and milk. Blend the ingredients. Mixture will be sticky. Cover and set aside to rest for 30 minutes.
3. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface and gently knead until the dough is smooth and elastic, and a tiny bit sticky. Shape the dough into a ball, cover it with a cloth, set aside to rest for 2 hours.
4. In the meantime, for the filling, combine the remaining granulated sugar, the brown sugar, and the cinnamon in a small bowl and set aside.
5. Divide the dough into six portions. Roll out each piece into a 6-inch circle on a lightly floured work surface. Place a tablespoon of the filling in the center of each circle, pinch the sides of the circle together around the filling to seal.

6. Gently roll the sealed dough, with filling inside, into a thick pancake-like shape, keeping the dough nicely sealed.
7. Put some vegetable oil in a large skillet and heat to medium-high. When oil is hot, place as many *hotteoks* in the skillet as will fit and cook until golden brown. Turn once and then cook the second side until golden brown as well. Serve hot.

Makes 6 *hotteoks*.

***Yaksik* (Sweet Sticky Rice, Korea)**

(Adapted from Samuels, Debra, and Taekyun Chung, *The Korean Table: From Barbecue to Bibimbap 100 Easy-to-Prepare Recipes*, Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2008.)

5 cups sticky rice	10 jujubes (Korean red dates), pitted and cut into thirds
1 cup brown sugar	2 tablespoons pine nuts
1 (13 ounce) can chestnuts in syrup, drained	

For the Sweet Sauce:

6 tablespoons brown sugar	6 tablespoons warm water
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For the Seasoning Sauce:

3 tablespoons soy sauce	2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
4 tablespoons honey	1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/3 cup date jam/juice (leftover from cooking the dates)	1/3 cup sesame oil
	Steamer
	Cheesecloth

1. Wash the rice thoroughly and soak overnight.
2. In a large bowl in the microwave, add about one cup of water to the rice, and cook the rice until it is done and sticky, but not mushy. You might need a little more water, but this should not take long (10–15 minutes on high).
3. For the sweet sauce, put the brown sugar and half the water into a pot and bring to a boil. When the color begins to turn to darker brown, caramel color, lower the heat and quickly add the remaining warm water to the syrup. Stir constantly to prevent the syrup from burning. Remove from the heat and set aside.
4. Put the dates into a small saucepan and add enough water to cover. Boil until tender, then remove the dates from the boiled water, and continue boiling the remaining liquid until it is thick and sweet (this is the date jam/juice).

1. Mix the cornstarch and ground rice with ½ cup cold milk and beat well, making sure to break all lumps.
2. Bring 4 cups of milk to a boil in a large pan.
3. Add cornstarch and ground rice mixture to the milk, stirring vigorously.
4. Keep heat on low, stirring the mixture constantly, until you feel a light resistance. Continue to cook on low for 15–20 minutes or until the pudding thickens, stirring frequently to prevent burning on the bottom of the pan.
5. Add the sugar to the pudding mixture.
6. Stir orange blossom water and 1 tablespoon of rose water into the pudding and cook for a few minutes. Let the pudding cool a little and then place in serving bowl.
7. Chill the pudding in refrigerator with top covered with plastic wrap.
8. When the pudding is cold, prepare honey syrup in a small saucepan by bringing honey and ½ cup water to a boil. Stir the syrup well and add remaining ½ tablespoon of rose water.
9. Let the honey syrup cool and then pour it over the firm pudding.
10. Allow the pudding to sit a few minutes, then garnish with the almonds and pistachios.

Makes 6 servings.

***Znoud Al-Sit* (“Lady’s Upper Arms”; *Phyllo* Fingers filled with *Ashta* Cream, Lebanon)**

(Adapted from Tabbara, Ramzi. Middle East: Lebanon Food Atlas Project-*Znoud Al-Sit*. Spring 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.gwu.edu/~geog/ammappdfs/lebanon-znoudalsit.pdf>.)

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|--|--|
| 1 package <i>phyllo</i> | Lemon or orange blossom petals |
| 3 cups Arabic cream (<i>ashta</i>) (See recipe below.) | and minced pistachio to garnish (optional) |
| 4 cups Arabic syrup (See the recipe following the Arabic Cream <i>ashta</i> recipe below.) | Oil for frying (about 4 cups) |

For the Arabic Cream (*Ashta/Kashta*) to Be Used with *Znoud Al-Sit* and Other Regional Desserts

(After Original *Ashta* Recipe—Clotted Cream With Rose Water, from Esperance Sammour, The Lebanese Kitchen. July 11, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.mamaslebanesekitchen.com/desserts/ashta-recipe-clotted-cream-rose-water/>.)

3 cups whole milk	½ teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
3 cups half-and-half	Pinch of sugar (optional)
½ teaspoon rose water	
½ teaspoon orange blossom water	

1. In a saucepan, bring the milk and half-and-half to a boil on medium heat, stirring continuously. Add a pinch of sugar (optional).
2. Lower the heat and add the lemon juice to the milk.
3. As soon as the milk starts to clot, add the rose water and orange blossom water. Continue stirring.
4. Using a spoon with holes, or a strainer, start collecting the *ashta*/clotted cream from the surface and place it into a separate strainer. Continue the collecting process until milk in saucepan turns into a near clear color. You may need to add a few more drops of lemon juice to induce more clotting, but do not add too much.
5. When the collected *ashta* cools down to room temperature, you can use it to fill Arabic sweets, or you can serve it with fruit cocktails garnished with honey and walnuts.
6. Serve the *ashta* fresh at room temperature or serve cold.
7. *Ashta* requires refrigeration. It will last 2–3 days in the refrigerator.

For the Arabic Syrup:

2½ cups sugar	2 teaspoons lemon juice
1½ cups water	1 tablespoon rose water
	1 tablespoon orange blossom water

1. Prepare the syrup by combining the sugar and water in a saucepan. Bring it to a boil over high heat then reduce the heat and simmer for about 5–7 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and simmer for 2 minutes longer. Set aside to cool.
2. Add the rose water and orange blossom water.

Assembling the *Znoud Al-Sit*:

1. Defrost the frozen *phyllo* overnight in the refrigerator. Avoid defrosting at room temperature to prevent the sheets from sticking together. *Phyllo very quickly dries out when exposed to air.* Work quickly with one sheet at a time, keeping the other sheets and the pastries covered with plastic wrap while you work.
2. Take one sheet of the *phyllo* and cut off two long strips 4-inch wide. (These will be 18-inch long if you are using an 18 × 14-inch *phyllo* sheet. Remember to keep the remainder of the sheets moist while you are working.)

3. Place one long strip on top of the other on your work surface, aligned vertically from where you are working.
4. Cut off a 6-inch piece from the doubled (two-layer) longer strips, giving you two 6-inch pieces.
5. Take one of the 6-inch pieces and place it horizontally on top of the long doubled-up strips, at the bottom end (centered, left to right, forming a cross). The short strip should be lying crosswise on top of the longer strips, hanging over the edges of the longer strips about an inch on each side.
6. Put two teaspoons of Arabic cream (*ashta*; see recipe on pages 469 to 470) on the top shorter *phyllo* piece, in the center where the pastry strips meet.
7. Fold the right and left sides of the 6-inch piece of *phyllo* over the *ashta* (to avoid the *ashta* coming out while frying) and then roll the longer strips over the folded one, up the long strips (thus enclosing the *ashta* in a 4-inch finger-like roll). Roll it one and one-half or two turns.
8. Cut the rolled-up pastry off of the longer strips; seal the seam of the 4-inch finger-like roll with a little milk, and set aside with seam side down on a tray or dish, *covered to keep them moist*.
9. Prepare all the pastry the same way, each time remembering to keep the remainder of the sheets and pastries moist with plastic wrap or a damp towel.
10. When you have prepared all of the pastry, fry them in small batches in the oil until they turn a golden color. Do not overcrowd pastries in the oil.
11. When done, take them out of the oil and place briefly on paper towels to drain off excess oil.
12. Drench each pastry in the previously prepared cold Arabic syrup (see recipe on previous page) for a few minutes.
13. Decorate them by putting a dollop of *ashta* and minced pistachios on top. (optional)
14. Serve *znoud al-sit* at room temperature or cold.

Yield varies, generally about 20.

Apam Balik (“Malaysian Turnover Peanut Pancake”; ***Chin Loong Pau*** in Chinese)

(Adapted from Citrus and Candy. September 24, 2009. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.citrusandcandy.com/2009/09/malaysian-favourites-apam-balik.html>.)

Versions of *min jiang kueh* vary in all locations. This recipe is for a thin version.

1⅓ cups flour	½ teaspoon salt
⅔ cup rice flour	⅔ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)
3 tablespoons cornstarch	2 eggs
2 teaspoons baking powder	1 cup water
½ teaspoon baking soda	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Filling:

1⅓ cups unsalted, roasted peanuts	4 ounces butter, melted
½ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	

For the Filling:

1. In a food processor, pulse the nuts and sugar until they are finely chopped (be careful not to grind into a powder).

For the Pancake:

2. Mix the dry ingredients together in a large bowl.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the eggs, water, and vanilla together. Make a well in the flour and pour the egg mixture into the well. Whisk until smooth.
4. Cover the mixture with plastic wrap and chill for 3 hours or overnight.
5. Heat some oil or butter in a well-seasoned crêpe pan or a small nonstick pan on medium-low heat (or use the traditional *apam balik* pan if you have one).
6. Pour about ⅓ cup of batter into the pan, and spread out as thin as possible. Swirl the pan so that the batter covers the entire surface and coats the edge. When the bubbles have formed, sprinkle the peanut filling on the entire wet surface, then, drizzle the melted butter over one half.
7. Cook until the bottom of the pancake is golden brown, and the top portion becomes firm.
8. With a spatula, quickly fold the pancake in half, flipping one side of the pancake over the other, remove it from the pan to cool on a plate or wire rack.
9. Cut the pancake in half or into small wedges and serve hot and fresh.

Pandanus Coconut Cake with Palm Sugar Syrup (Malaysia)

(Adapted from Rajah, Carol Selva, *Malaysian Cooking: A Master Chef Reveals Her Best Recipes*, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2009.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

½ cup coconut cream (available in specialty food shops)	8 ounces butter, room temperature
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½ cup granulated sugar	1–2 tablespoons pandan juice (made from pandan leaves or purchased at specialty food shops. If unavailable, substitute 1 table- spoon vanilla extract, but you will not have the rich green color).
1½ cups shaved palm sugar (or dark brown sugar)	
5 eggs	
2 cups self-rising flour	
¾ cup coconut, freshly grated and lightly toasted	1¼ cups water

1. Cream the butter, granulated sugar, and ½ cup shaved palm sugar.
2. Add the eggs to the mixture, one at a time.
3. Gently fold in the flour, the coconut cream, and the toasted coconut.
4. Put the batter into a 10-inch round cake pan. Bake it in the middle of the oven for about 40 minutes.
5. For the syrup, combine 1 cup shaved palm sugar and the water in a microwaveable dish. Microwave the syrup for 1 minute on high and then stir. Return it to the microwave, repeating the process until the sugar is dissolved.
6. When the cake done, set it aside to cool for 10 minutes. Turn it onto a wire rack. When cooled, put the cake on a serving plate. Puncture the cake with a fork, and drizzle the syrup over the cake.

Sago Gula Melaka (Sago Pudding with Palm Sugar, Malaysia)

(Adapted from Raghavan, Susheela, *Flavors of Malaysia: A Journey through Time, Tastes, and Tradition*, New York: Hippocrene Books, 2010.)

½ cup sago or tapioca pearls	2–3 pandan leaves, tied into a loose knot (if available)
5 cups water	½ cup thick coconut <i>milk</i> (for garnish)
½ cup <i>gula melaka</i> (palm sugar), grated (or substitute dark brown sugar)	

1. In a medium pot, bring the water to a boil and add sago or tapioca pearls. Let the pearls boil for about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and cover for 10 minutes to let the sago soak (stop when they become more or less translucent).
2. Strain the pearls by running under cold water, stir to cool and to separate the cooked pearls. Set them aside in the strainer to continue draining the water. When sufficiently drained, put the pearls in a bowl and chill them for at least two hours.

3. While the pearls are chilling, combine the sugar, pandan leaves (if using), and about 6 tablespoons of water in a small heavy-bottomed pan. Cook the sugar mixture over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Remove the leaves and let cool.
4. Serve the chilled sago (or tapioca) pearls in individual dishes with the rich sweet palm sugar syrup, liberally drizzled with coconut milk.

Makes 3–4 servings.

***Figolli* (“Figures”/“Shapes” Almond-Flavored Cookies, Malta)**

(Adapted from Maltese Traditional Recipes, Maltese History & Heritage. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/brief-history-of-food-in-malta/maltese-traditional-recipes/#Figolli>.)

Maltese bake the customary colorfully and skillfully frosted *figolli* during Holy Week, for the children to eat on Easter morning. Most often baked in shapes of animals and of things in nature—although they can be almost anything—*figolli* are cherished childhood treats, appearing most often with a chocolate egg in the middle.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

For the Pastry:

1½ cups castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	Zest of 1 lemon
6½ cups flour, sifted	4 egg yolks, beaten
14 ounces butter	Honey and pistachios or additional almonds

For the Almond Paste:

2⅔ cups castor (“superfine”) or icing sugar	Zest of 1 lemon
2–3 egg whites	A few drops orange flower water
	21 ounces almonds, ground

To Finish:

Glacé icing	Small Easter egg
Royal icing	

1. To make the pastry mix the flour with the sugar then blend in butter until the mixture looks like fine crumbs.
2. Add the yolks and the lemon zest to the flour mixture and mix in a tablespoon of water at a time to get a workable pastry dough. Set the mixture in the refrigerator to chill.

3. For the almond paste, add the lemon zest and orange flower water to the almonds; mix in the egg whites.
4. Roll out the pastry mix and cut out desired shapes. When doing this, cut two shapes for each *figolla* as they will be sandwiched with the almond paste.
5. Lay the first shape on a greased and floured baking sheet and spread it with the almond paste made previously, leaving a small margin.
6. Put the second shape on the previous and press the edges together. It helps to wet the edges with a pastry brush to ensure binding.
7. Bake in preheated oven at a temperature of 400°F for 5 minutes and then at 350°F for about 20 minutes, until pale golden.
8. Set *figolli* aside to cool.
9. When cooled, coat with the glacé icing, then decorate with some royal icing in another color, but do not overdo it and make them look gaudy.
10. While the icing is soft push a foil-wrapped candy egg into the pastry. If you are making human shapes, it is traditional to put the egg in the middle of the man's or woman's stomach.
11. Finish the decoration with some ground almonds.
12. Since ground almonds are quite expensive, some substitutes, such as tiny sugar-coated eggs, can be used, although these are not as traditional.

***Qaghaq tal-Ghasel* (“Honey Rings,” Malta)**

(Adapted from *The Times of Malta*. December 1, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20101201/news/qaghaq-ta-l-ghasel-honey-treacle-rings.338801#.UqQCCrQsx28>.)

This is a *honeyless* sweet light pastry “honey ring” that dates back to the 15th century, and although traditionally eaten after Midnight Mass on Christmas, it is enjoyed throughout the year.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

For the Pastry:

3¼ cups flour	4 ounces unsalted butter
¾ cup semolina	1 tablespoon sugar
1 egg yolk	Water or orange juice for binding

For the Filling:

1¼ cups treacle	1 tablespoon candied fruit, chopped
¾ cup sugar	Zest of an orange or tangerine

Zest of 1 lemon	Pinch of ground cloves
1 tablespoon high-quality cocoa powder	2 tablespoons jam (orange marmalade, or your preference, optional)
1 tablespoon anise seed liqueur	2 cups water
¼ cup semolina (more or less, for thickening)	

Making the Pastry:

1. Sift the flour into a bowl with the semolina.
2. Rub in the unsalted butter and pour in the egg yolk and sugar to the flour mixture.
3. Mix and knead the mixture well, until it becomes a soft, smooth dough.
4. If necessary add some water or orange juice, a tablespoon at a time.

Making the Filling:

5. Mix all the ingredients, except the semolina, in a saucepan.
6. Bring it to a boil slowly.
7. Remove the saucepan from the heat and gradually stir in the semolina, a tablespoon at a time, to the mixture. Return to the heat and stir continuously over a moderate heat, adding more semolina, if necessary, until the mixture bubbles and thickens.
8. Let the mixture cool before continuing.

Making the Honey Rings:

9. Roll out the pastry to about ¼ inch thickness.
10. Cut the pastry into long strips (approximately 3 × 8 inches).
11. Take some of the filling and place it down the middle of the pastry's rectangular pieces, roll into cigar-like shapes and seal long edges. Then form the pastry into a circle by bringing the ends together to form a ring.
12. Cut short slits into the pastry at about 1½-inch intervals.
13. Place the honey rings on a greased and floured baking sheet, sprinkled with semolina, and let them rest for 1–2 hours.
14. Bake in preheated oven until the pastries are lightly golden (this usually takes about 20–25 minutes). While baking, some of the filling will come out of these slits and transform the rings into attractive black and white rings.
15. Remove the honey rings from the oven and allow them to cool a little. Serve warm.

Makes 10–12 rings.

Flan Casero (Caramel Custard, Mexico)

(Contributed by Martha Elena Félix Brasdefer of Puebla, Mexico.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

5 eggs	1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk	1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 (12 ounce) can evaporated milk	4 ounces cream cheese
	½ cup raw sugar

1. Mix the eggs, condensed milk, evaporated milk, vanilla, cornstarch, and cream cheese in a blender.
2. Melt the sugar in a heavy-bottomed skillet over low heat, stirring until the syrup darkens and takes on a light brown caramel tone. Set aside to harden.
3. Pour the blended mixture into the pan with caramelized sugar.
4. Cover the pan with its lid; if the pan does not have a lid, cover with aluminum foil. Place the pan in a pan of water in the oven (*baño maría*) and bake for 1 hour.
5. When *flan* is set properly (when it does not jiggle in the middle), remove it from the bath and allow it to cool to room temperature.
6. Place the *flan* in the refrigerator for 2 or 3 hours.
7. When you take the *flan* out of the refrigerator, carefully turn out onto a platter. The caramelized sugar will have turned to syrup.
8. The *flan* is ready to be enjoyed.

Makes 10 servings.

Panqué Casero Integral (Carrot Pound Cake, Mexico)

(Contributed by Martha Elena Félix Brasdefer of Puebla, Mexico.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1 cup brown sugar	1 zested orange and its juice
1 cup oil	½ cup shredded coconut
4 eggs	1 cup grated carrot
1 cup milk	½ cup walnuts, chopped
2 cups whole wheat flour	Ground bread, sufficient to line a circular baking mold
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	Butter, for greasing mold
1 tablespoon baking powder	

Muscovado, for sprinkling (unrefined brown sugar with a high molasses content; substitute old-fashioned dark brown or regular dark brown sugar if you have no muscovado)

1. Beat the brown sugar, oil, eggs, and milk in a mixer for 3 minutes.
2. Mix together in a bowl with the whole wheat flour, cinnamon, and baking powder. Stir until all ingredients are thoroughly mixed.
3. Add the orange zest and orange juice, shredded coconut, and grated carrot to the mixture, continue mixing until all ingredients are well blended.
4. Liberally grease the bottom and inner walls of a circular baking pan with butter; coat the inside of the pan with breadcrumbs.
5. Pour the cake batter into the pan.
6. Cover the prepared mixture with the chopped nuts and sprinkle with muscovado to taste.
7. Place the pan in preheated oven for about 30 minutes, and do not open the oven every now and then because air can make it “*bajarlo*.” To see if the cake is ready, insert a knife; when it comes out dry, it is done.
8. Allow the cake to cool and enjoy!

Xocolātl (Traditional Mexican Chocolate Beverage, Mexico)

(Recipe contributed by international award-winning Master Chocolatier and Pastry Chef Oscar Ortega of Atelier Ortega, Jackson, Wyoming, as featured in *Mexican Chocolate: A Short History & Recipe*. Accessed January 28, 2013. <http://thelatininkitchen.com/article/mexican-chocolate-short-history-recipe>.)

This cinnamon-flavored chocolate drink traces its history to the Maya and Aztecs. Made from cocoa, cinnamon, and chiles, Mexican hot chocolate is a sweet and spicy drink perfect for a cold winter’s day, and no one today does it better than Chef Ortega, the first international Mexican Chocolate Master, born in Mexico City. Atelier Ortega in 2011 was named one of America’s Top Ten Pastry Chefs by *Dessert Professional Magazine*.

For the Mexican Chocolate Mix:

35 ounces cocoa nibs, roasted	2.1 teaspoons maltodextrin
8¾ ounces cocoa butter	1 teaspoon cardamom
6¼ ounces granulated sugar	⅔ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
17½ ounces cocoa powder	⅓ teaspoon pink peppercorn

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| ½ teaspoon anise | 1 teaspoon dried chipotle chile |
| 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon | 1 teaspoon dried guajillo chile |
| ⅔ teaspoon dried ancho chile | ½ teaspoon dried morita chile |

To Make the Mexican Chocolate Mix:

1. In a food processor, grind the cocoa nibs with the cocoa butter until it forms a moist paste.
2. Combine sugar, spices, and chiles in a bowl.
3. Grind all the spices and chiles.
4. Combine the paste and sugar mix with your hands and blend all ingredients together until you get a granulated paste. Form chocolate blocks of 2.8 ounces each.
5. Let Mexican chocolate blocks dry for 24 hours in a cold, dry place.

To Make Mexican Hot Chocolate:

6. Use 1 block of Atelier Ortega Mexican chocolate mix *per* 1 cup of hot milk.
7. First, heat the milk and when it starts to boil add the block of chocolate.
8. Then, froth with a *molinillo* (Mexican wooden whisk) or hand blender. (Aztecs and Maya enjoyed their chocolate well frothed, pouring it from one vessel to another to obtain a good foam. *Molinillo* chocolate frothers are available online.)
9. Serve.

Prince Albert Millefeuille Pastry with Strawberries (Layered Puff Pastry with Custard Cream and Strawberries, Monaco)

(Adapted from Celtnet. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.celtnet.org.uk/recipes/miscellaneous/fetch-recipe.php?rid=misc-prince-albert-millefeuille-pastry-strawberries>.)

A traditional baked puff pastry coated with icing, layered with custard and strawberries, and topped with whole strawberries, and which is named after the current ruler of Monaco.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

- 1½ pounds strawberries
- 2 pounds puff pastry

For the Pastry Cream:

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| 2 cups milk | 4 egg yolks |
| ½ cup sugar | 1 vanilla bean |

3½ tablespoons cornstarch
2 ounces butter

⅔ cup heavy whipping
cream

For the White Icing:

1 cup milk
¼ cup flour

4 ounces butter
1 cup sugar

½ cup vegetable shortening

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

To Make the White Icing:

1. In a small saucepan, combine milk and flour.
2. Cook the milk mixture over medium-high heat until it comes to a boil. Set aside to cool.
3. When milk mixture is cool, add butter, shortening, sugar, and vanilla.
4. Beat the milk mixture with an electric mixer for 10–12 minutes, scraping the bottom of the bowl occasionally.
5. Refrigerate the icing for about 30 minutes before using.

To Make the Pastry Cream:

7. Slice the vanilla bean lengthwise and add to a saucepan along with the milk and 1½ tablespoon sugar. Bring to a boil over medium heat.
8. Combine the egg yolks and the remaining sugar in a medium bowl and whisk until the mixture is pale and creamy.
9. Whisk the cornstarch into the egg mixture.
10. Take the milk off the stove, remove the vanilla bean, and add the egg mixture, whisking constantly.
11. Return the mixture to a low heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes then pour into a mixing bowl and add the butter one small cube at a time. When all the butter has been incorporated set the custard aside to cool, but return occasionally to give it a stir so that it cools and thickens evenly.

To Assemble the *Millefeuille*:

12. Remove stems from berries and slice, leaving some intact for the final presentation.
13. Take the puff pastry and roll out 3 sheets, separately. Layer with plastic wrap to keep moist then set aside to cool in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.
14. Remove pastry sheets from refrigerator and place on parchment paper on separate baking sheets. Transfer to preheated 350°F oven and bake for 35 minutes. When golden and risen, remove from the oven and set some table knives on the pastry, to temper the rising. Set aside to cool.

15. When cooled spread icing on the smoothest side of each pastry sheet and transfer to preheated 425°F oven and bake for about 4 minutes, or until lightly caramelized.
16. Again, allow the pastry to cool.
17. Whip the cream, fold into the custard mix.
18. Assemble the cake. In this step, you will lay a sheet of cooled pastry, followed by a layer of cream mixture on top of the cooled pastry and followed by a layer of hulled strawberries on top of the cream mixture; repeat that process three times, for a total of 9 layers, ending with whole strawberries on top.
19. Cut the pastry into small slices to serve.

Boortsog (Deep-Fried Butter Cookies, Mongolia)

(Adapted from All Mongolian Recipes: The Food of the Nomads. Accessed December 2013. <http://www.mongolfood.info/en/recipes/boortsog.html>.)

The ingredients in this recipe can be varied, according to your tastes, as long as the dough is smooth and elastic after it rests.

8 cups flour	Oil for frying (In Mongolia, mutton
4–8 ounces butter	fat is traditionally used for deep
2 cups warm water	frying, but nowadays more cooks
½–1 cup sugar (to taste)	use vegetable oil.)
Pinch of salt	

1. Dissolve the salt and sugar in warm water.
2. Put the flour on a large work surface.
3. Make a well in the center of the flour, pour in the water mixture, and work in the butter.
4. Knead until a smooth, dense, dough forms.
5. Let the dough rest for half an hour, and then knead again, until it is again, very dense, with no air bubbles.
6. Roll the dough to about ½-inch thick. Cut into any shape you like—strips, circles, triangles, rectangles, or squares—or tie the strips into knots, but no bigger than about 2 × 4 inches.
7. Deep fry the dough strips in fat or oil until they are golden. Remove them from heat and drain the excess oil.
8. *Boortsog* may be drizzled with honey or sprinkled with sugar and dipped in tea.

***Barfi* (Fudge-Like Sweet and Dessert, Nepal)**

(Contributed by Puja Kafle of Duluth, Minnesota.)

16 ounces ricotta cheese	½ tablespoon almonds, finely chopped
10 ounces condensed milk	½ ounce butter
¼ teaspoon cardamom powder	10–12 threads saffron
½ tablespoon pistachios, finely chopped	

1. In a microwave-safe square or rectangular dish, thoroughly mix the ricotta cheese, butter, and the condensed milk.
2. Mash down all the lumps with a whisk.
3. Cook the mixture in the microwave for 10 minutes, checking every 2–3 minutes by removing the bowl from the microwave and mix well, paying attention to the edges of the bowl.
4. Return the mixture to the microwave for 10 more minutes, uncovered. Continue to check and stir every 2–3 minutes.
5. Remove the mixture from microwave and stir until thoroughly blended.
6. Add in the cardamom and half the saffron to the mixture and mix well again. Transfer mixture into a greased square pan.
7. Press down and flatten the mixture.
8. Sprinkle the chopped pistachios, almonds, and remaining saffron on top and gently press them into the mixture.
9. Cover and allow *barfi* to set until firm, either in the refrigerator for an hour or on the counter-top for a few hours.
10. Cut the *barfi* into desired shape and serve.

***Halwa* (Thick Pudding-Like Dessert with Nuts and Raisins, Nepal)**

(Contributed by Neeru Shrestha of Kathmandu, Nepal.)

1 cup flour	2 cups water
½ cup sugar (more or less, according to taste)	Halved cashews and raisins, to your liking
4 ounces ghee (clarified butter; or substitute butter)	

1. Heat the ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan until it melts. Turn the heat to medium.
2. Stir-fry the cashews and raisins in the ghee until the cashews are golden brown. Remove from pan and set aside.

3. Add the flour to the remaining ghee and keep stirring it well until it is golden brown. Make sure to keep the flour lump free by stirring it properly with a whisk.
4. After the flour turns golden brown, add sugar and water simultaneously to the flour, and mix it well.
5. After the ingredients are all mixed to a thick consistency, add the cashews and raisins.
6. The *halwa* is now ready to be served hot in individual dishes.

***Appeltaart/Appelgebak* (Lattice-Top Real Dutch Apple Pie, Netherlands)**

(A traditional recipe adapted from Holten, Nicole, *The Dutch Table*. January 25, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.thedutchtable.com/2010/01/appeltaart-dutch-apple-pie.html>.)

“Dutch Apple Pie” in the Netherlands (*vlaai* or *appeltaart* or *appelgebak*) looks like an American apple pie—or rather the American lattice-top apple pie looks like a *limburgse vlaai* or *appeltaar*. Recipes for the Dutch apple pie go back to the 16th century.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

For the Dough:

2 cups flour	2 tablespoons ice water
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar	2 egg yolks, divided
6 ounces butter, cold	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

For the Filling:

6 small baking apples, peeled and cored	2 slices of white bread, cubed
1 tablespoon lemon juice	1 tablespoon <i>speculaas</i> spices (See “Ratio of <i>Speculaas</i> Spices for the Mix” with the <i>Speculaas</i> “Spiced Shortcrust Cookies,” Netherlands recipe from pages 485 to 486)
1 cup golden raisins, soaked in warm apple juice (or rum, if you prefer)	
2 tablespoons cream of wheat	
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar	

1. Mix the flour with the sugar and cut in the butter until the flour turns into small pea-size pellets.
2. Add 1 tablespoon of ice water, one egg yolk, and the salt, and quickly knead the dough into a cohesive whole. Add more ice water if the dough is too dry.
3. Pat the dough into an oval, cover it with plastic wrap, and refrigerate.

4. For the filling, quarter the apples and slice them. Toss them with the lemon juice, raisins, *speculaas* spices, cream of wheat, and sugar. Set aside.
5. Cut the crust off the bread and cut into small cubes.
6. Butter and lightly flour a 9-inch springform pan.
7. Take the dough out of the refrigerator and set aside $\frac{1}{4}$ of the dough for the top latticing. Cut off another $\frac{1}{4}$ of the dough and roll flat to fit the base of the pan. Roll out the remaining dough to form the sides and line the springform pan. Do not crimp the dough.
8. Put the bread cubes into the bottom of the pie. These absorb any excess liquid.
9. Pack the apple mix tightly into the pie. It is OK to push it down so as to fit in more of the mix. Squeeze off any excess juice and set aside to add with the glaze.
10. Create the lattice effect with the remaining pastry, reserving about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the remaining dough for the circumference. Roll the rest out and cut into 8 or more strips. Interweave 4 or more strips crossing from left to right with 4 or more strips crossing from top to bottom. Press lightly where the strips connect with the pie dough.
11. Roll the last piece of dough to form a rope the length of the springform's circumference. Place the rope all around the pie, covering the lattice strip ends, and press down to flatten rope.
12. Brush all the visible dough with the egg yolk mixed with the reserve juice (if any).
13. Bake the pie in preheated oven for approximately 60 minutes or until the apples are tender and the crust is golden brown.
14. Allow the pie to cool in pan before serving.
15. In the Netherlands, *appeltaart/appelgebak* is normally served cold with whipped cream.

***Bossche Bollen* (“Den Bosch Chocolate Balls,” ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands)**

(A traditional recipe adapted from Holten, Nicole, *The Dutch Table*. March 15, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.thedutchtable.com/2010/03/bossche-bollen-chocolate-puffs.html>.)

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup water	
1 ounce butter	1 tablespoon water
1 egg, beaten	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy whipping cream
Pinch of salt	2 tablespoons sugar

1. Heat the water and the butter in a saucepan over medium heat.
2. Bring to a boil, then remove from stove.
3. Add the flour and stir until ingredients come together in a ball.
4. Add a pinch of salt, stir in the egg, and continue stirring until the dough has absorbed all the egg. It will be thick and sticky.
5. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and divide the dough into two or four “clumps” (according to your preference) and place them on the parchment.
6. Bake the dough for about 20–25 minutes, or until puffy and golden.
7. Cool on a rack.

For the Filling:

8. In the meantime, beat the cream and the sugar until stiff.
9. Fill a pastry bag fitted with a small tip with the whipped cream. Insert the tip through the bottom of the *bol*, and fill with whipped cream.
10. Heat the chocolate chips and the tablespoon of water in a small pan, stirring until the chocolate has melted. Let it cool for about 10 minutes, then carefully take the cream-filled *bossche bol* and dip it, head first, into the chocolate. Or, alternately just set the *bollen* on a rack and slowly pour the chocolate over the top, one spoonful at a time.
11. Cool the *bossche bollen* in the refrigerator for about 20 minutes or until the chocolate is solid and everything has had a chance to firm up.
12. *Bossche bollen* are a messy delight traditionally served with fork and knife and a handful of napkins.

Serves 4.

***Speculaas* (Spiced Shorterust Cookies, Netherlands)**

(Contributed by Angela, Kees, Stephan, and Richard Batenburg of Rotterdam, Holland.)

These are a delicate, flaky, buttery version of a Dutch classic.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

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| 2½ cups flour | 12 ounces butter |
| ½ cup sugar | 3 tablespoons <i>speculaas</i> spice mix |
| 1½ teaspoons baking powder | (more or less, according to taste) |

Ratio of *Speculaas* Spices for the Mix:

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 7½ teaspoons ground cinnamon | ½ teaspoon ground white pepper |
| 1 teaspoon ground cloves | ½ teaspoon ginger powder |
| 1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg | ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom |

1. Refrigerate butter for one-half hour.
2. Thoroughly mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and spices in a bowl.
3. Add the butter to the flour mixture and knead until it forms a crumbly ball.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and roll out the dough to a thickness of a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
5. Using a cookie cutter, cut out shapes in the dough and place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
6. Bake the *speculaas* for about 20–30 minutes on the middle of the oven.
7. Remove the cookies from the oven and let them sit about 5 minutes before moving to a rack for cooling.
8. Place *speculaas* on rack to cool.

Makes about 40 *speculaas*.

Afghan Biscuits (Chocolate and Cornflake Cookies, New Zealand)

(Adapted from *Edmonds Cookery Book*, Auckland: Bluebird Foods, 1992.)

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

8 ounces butter, at room temperature	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups cornflakes
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	1 cup confectioners’ sugar
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour	3 tablespoons water
6 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder	Flaked almonds or half walnuts for garnish (optional)

1. Cream butter and castor sugar until light and fluffy.
2. Thoroughly blend the flour and half the unsweetened cocoa powder with the butter-sugar mixture. Gently fold in cornflakes; they may break into smaller pieces, but they should not be totally crushed.
3. Shape the dough into walnut-sized balls and flatten slightly. Place them about 2 inches apart on greased baking sheet.
4. Bake the cookies in the oven for 10–15 minutes. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack.
5. For the icing, combine the confectioners’ sugar, remaining unsweetened cocoa powder and water in a bowl. Mix well to achieve a creamy consistency.

- Spoon a little icing on each cookie and then decorate with flaked almonds or a half walnut.

Makes about 20 cookies.

Anzac Biscuits (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Biscuits, Australia/New Zealand)

(Adapted from *Edmonds Cookery Book*, Auckland: Bluebird Foods, 1992.)

The term “ANZAC” (the abbreviation for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) is protected by Australian and New Zealand laws, with a general exemption granted for Anzac Biscuits—*provided* that they remain true to the original recipe *and* that they *not* be referred to as “cookies.”

Preheat oven to 350°F.

4 ounces butter	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup old-fashioned rolled oats
1 tablespoon golden syrup (a British product made from sugarcane, not maple syrup)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar	1 teaspoon baking soda
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut	1 tablespoon hot water

- Mix the butter and syrup together over low heat in a large saucepan.
- Mix the sugar, coconut, oats, and flour into the syrup.
- Dissolve the soda in the hot water and thoroughly stir it into the mixture.
- Place rounded spoonfuls on a greased baking sheet and bake in preheated oven for 15 minutes.

Makes about 3 dozen cookies.

Apple and Feijoa Cake (New Zealand)

(Contributed by Claire Schmidt of Day’s Bay, Wellington, New Zealand.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups peeled and sliced feijoas	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups peeled and sliced apples	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
1 cup oats	2 tablespoons mixed spice
	4 ounces butter

1. Place the apples in the bottom of a buttered 8 × 10-inch baking dish. Place the feijoas on top of the apples. Set aside.
2. Put the oats, flour, sugar and spice into mixing bowl. Partially melt the butter, then add to dry ingredients and mix until crumbly.
3. Pour topping onto apples and feijoas and bake in preheated oven for 45 minutes.

Serves 4–6.

***Asida* (Arabic Boiled Flour Pudding, Libya, North Africa— The Maghreb Region)**

(Adapted from Libyan Food. October 23, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://libyanfood.blogspot.com/2011/10/asida.html>.)

In Libya, *asida* is among the most popular sweets, usually prepared for special occasions like *Mawlid* and *Eid*, or ceremonies like the ones surrounding the birth of child. *Asida* is a famous sweet from medieval Muslim Andalusia, which spread throughout the Maghrib, referred to in 10th-century texts, with recipes dating back to the 13th century.

1 ounce butter	2½ cups flour
1 teaspoon salt	4¼ cups boiling water

Serve with:

Honey or date syrup	3 ounces butter (or substitute <i>samn</i> or ghee)
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1. Fill a deep pot with just slightly more than 2 cups hot water. Add butter and salt to the water. Leave on medium heat until the water starts to boil.
2. Sift the flour, then pour it into the pan all at once and remove from heat.
3. Immediately start to stir the flour into the buttery water. (You may need someone to hold the pan, or stabilize it in a corner.) Press the dough against the side of the pot with a wooden spoon to remove lumps. Once the dough is smooth, form it into one piece.
4. Put the pot back on the heat and add just slightly more than 2 cups of boiling water to the dough.
5. Form some hollows in the dough. Cook the dough uncovered on low heat until the water is absorbed. Midway during this process, turn the lump upside down. The dough's cooking takes about 20 minutes. If water remains after 20 minutes, drain it from the pot.
6. Remove the dough from heat. Immediately begin kneading (you may again need help to stabilize the pot), using a wooden spoon to smooth the *asida*. If

you have a machine that will knead bread dough, place the *asida* in the machine. Knead or stir until smooth.

7. Melt about 3 ounces of butter or ghee.
8. Brush a wide plate with butter or ghee.
9. Place the *asida* in the center and begin folding in the edges to form a smooth dome. Once the edges are folded in, roll the *asida* to even out any cracks. Turn upside down and use a buttered ladle to form a hollow in the *asida*.
10. Pour the melted butter around the *asida*.
11. Pour honey or date syrup in the hollow.
12. Serve the *asida* immediately. *Asida* is traditionally eaten with fingers instead of forks.

Serves 4.

***Bouzat Haleeb* (Arabic Ice Cream, North Africa—The Maghreb Region)**

(Adapted from Chris Bliss, *Bouzat Haleeb*-Arabic Ice Cream. October 6, 2007. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://sugarhead.tman.ca/2007/10/06/bouzat-haleeb-arabic-ice-cream/>.)

Bouzat haleeb is traditionally served at *Iftar*, during the month of Ramadan.

4 cups milk, full cream	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground <i>mistika</i> (gum arabic)
$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups sugar	
3 tablespoons cornstarch or <i>sahlab</i> (a flour made from the tubers of orchids)	1 teaspoon rose water

1. In a medium saucepan, scald the milk. Remove from heat and cool slightly.
2. In a small bowl, dissolve cornstarch (or *sahlab*) with a small amount of cold water. Whisk into the milk, blending completely.
3. Return the mixture to heat, stirring constantly until it boils.
4. Blend sugar into the mixture, continuing to stir. When the milk thickens, stir in ground *mistika* and rose water. Set aside, preferably in your refrigerator, until it is completely cool.
5. Transfer the mixture to the ice-cream maker.
6. Follow manufacturer's instructions to freeze.
7. Once the ice cream has frozen to the consistency of soft-serve, pour it into an airtight freezer container and freeze for at least 4 hours, or overnight, before serving.

***Briwat Bi Loz* (“Bride’s Fingers,” Almond Pastries in Honey Syrup, Morocco, North Africa—The Maghreb Region)**

(A classic treat adapted from Roden, Claudia, *Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey and Lebanon*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005; and Roden, Claudia, Leite’s Culinaría, April 24, 2006. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://leitesculinaria.com/3470/recipes-almond-pastries-in-honey-syrup.html>.)

Preheat oven to 300°F.

⅔ cup honey	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)
½ cup cold water	2 tablespoons orange blossom water
2 cups ground almonds (or pistachios, or walnuts, plus more for sprinkling, if desired)	14 sheets <i>phyllo</i>
½–⅔ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	3 ounces unsalted butter, melted

1. Make the syrup by bringing the honey and water to a boil in a small saucepan. Simmer for 1 minute. Remove the syrup from the heat and let the syrup cool. Pour the syrup into a shallow dish.
2. Meanwhile, in a bowl, mix the 2 cups of ground almonds (or other nuts) with the sugar, cinnamon (optional), and orange blossom water.
3. Open the package of *phyllo* only when you are ready to assemble the pastries. (If frozen, defrost in the refrigerator to keep the sheets from sticking together.) Place 1 sheet *phyllo* on the work surface and keep the remaining *phyllo* covered with a damp towel to prevent it from drying out. Place 2–2½ tablespoons of nut filling in a line ¾ inch from one of the short ends of the *phyllo* rectangle. Extend the filling to within ¾ inch of both of the long sides. Roll the sheet up loosely into a fat cigar shape by first turning the ends in about ⅓ of the way along, to encase the filling for a turn or two, then continue to roll with the ends opened. Repeat the same procedure with the remaining *phyllo* sheets and filling. Keep the rolled pastries in a pile and, as you stack them, lightly brush the top pastries with melted butter so they do not dry out.
4. Place the *phyllo* pastries on a baking sheet and lightly brush the top of each with melted butter, and bake for 30 minutes, or until lightly golden and crisp.
5. While the pastries are still warm, very quickly place each pastry in the syrup and turn it to coat. Arrange the pastries in a single layer on a serving plate. Let cool.
6. Serve the pastries with the remaining syrup poured over them and, if desired, sprinkled the pastries with additional ground nuts.

***Gharaiba Bil Laoz* (Crescent Cookies, Libya, North Africa—The Maghreb Region)**

(Adapted from Celtnet Recipes. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.celtnet.org.uk/recipes/miscellaneous/fetch-recipe.php?rid=misc-gharaiba-bil-laoz.>)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

1 cup granulated sugar	8 ounces <i>samn</i> (clarified butter; or substitute ghee, or butter)
4 cups flour	
1 cup almonds, finely ground	¼ cup cold water to bind
	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Melt the *samn*. Set aside to cool.
2. Combine the sugar, flour, and ground almonds in a bowl.
3. Add the melted *samn* to the flour mixture and thoroughly mix.
4. Add just enough cold water, 1 tablespoon at a time, to bring the mixture together as a firm dough. Turn onto a work surface lightly dusted with confectioner's sugar (instead of flour), and roll the dough into ropes about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. Cut the dough into 2½ or 3 inch lengths, and shape into crescents. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet.
5. Place cookies in preheated oven and bake for about 12–13 minutes or until golden brown.
6. Remove the cookies from the oven, dust the cookies with a little confectioners' sugar, and transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. If desired, sprinkle a little more confectioners' sugar on top of the cookies before serving.

***Makroudh Lâassel* (Almond-Filled Honeyed Semolina Cookies, Algeria, North Africa— The Maghreb Region)**

(This *Eid al-Fitr* recipe is adapted from Héni, The Teal Tadjine. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://thetealtadjine.blogspot.com/2013/08/makrouth-laassel-algerian-almond-filled.html>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

3 cups medium grained semolina	¼ cup flour
4 ounces butter, melted (or substitute <i>samn</i> or ghee)	Pinch of salt
½ cup oil	½ cup warm water
	1 tablespoon orange blossom water

For the Filling:

2 cups ground almonds	1 generous tablespoon of vanilla extract
1 cup sugar	
1 generous pinch of ground cinnamon	Splash of almond extract (optional)
	Frying oil

For Dipping:

Honey (about 2 cups)	Sesame seeds, for garnish (optional)
3 tablespoons orange blossom water	

1. Mix the semolina, salt, and butter in a large bowl. (Algerians usually use ghee.) Rub the grains of semolina between your fingers, so that all the grains are well coated with the butter mixture.
2. Cover with a kitchen towel and set aside. Let it rest for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight. The dough should be like wet oily sand in the morning.
3. Meanwhile, mix the ingredients for the filling.
4. Shape filling mixture into long logs. Chill while dough is resting.
5. The next morning, or after it has rested, slowly add in the orange blossom water and water to the semolina mixture, until you have obtained a soft smooth dough. Do not overwork the dough; mix it just enough to have a smooth and flexible dough that easily forms into 2 balls.
6. Flatten the 2 semolinadough balls into 2 logs. Then flattened the logs to form 2 long rectangles.
7. Form a cavity lengthwise in the flattened dough rectangles and place the filling in the cavity.
8. Close the cavity by folding the dough over the filling. Press the edges together tightly while shaping the dough around the filling. Gently roll the logs on your work surface to smooth them out. (Cut the logs in half if it is easier for you.)
9. Cut the dough roll diagonally into equal-sized diamond-shaped pieces.
10. Now reshape the cut ends for a nice uniform look.
11. Repeat the steps until you have used all the dough.
12. Set the *makrout* aside to rest.
13. Heat up a saucepan with oil, about three fingers deep.
14. In another pan, heat the honey syrup.
15. Carefully test the oil with a small piece of the dough. When the oil is hot enough, carefully fry the *makrout* in small batches until golden.

16. When the *markout* are golden but not yet brown, remove them from the oil and allow the excess oil to drain on paper towels.
17. Dip the *makrout* in the honey for a minute or two, allowing the pastry to soak up the honey. Drain the *makrout*. Then resoak in the honey and drain again.
18. Garnish the *makrout* with sesame seeds (optional).
19. *Makrout* is best fresh. It will stay fresh and solid for about 3–5 days. After that it will still be edible but will become crumbly.
20. For a nice presentation, place each *makrout* in a cupcake paper. It also helps absorb the excess honey.
21. *Makrout* is best eaten with hot North African–style mint green tea.

Makes about 50 *makrout*.

***Seffa* (Sweet Couscous, Algeria, North Africa—The Maghreb Region)**

(Adapted from Algeria, Food in Every Country. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Algeria-to-France/Algeria.html>.)

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons couscous	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ tablespoons honey (or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar)
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup warm water	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup fresh dates	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup prunes, chopped and pitted	Rose petals, to decorate (optional)
3 ounces butter, melted	

1. Place the couscous in a bowl and cover with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup warm water, set aside for 15 minutes.
2. Halve each date lengthwise, remove the seed and cut into 4 pieces.
3. Roughly chop the prunes.
4. Fluff up the grains of couscous with a fork, then place in a cheesecloth-lined sieve and steam over simmering water for 15 minutes until hot.
5. Transfer the couscous to a bowl and fluff up again with a fork.
6. Add the melted butter, honey (or sugar), dates, and prunes to the couscous.
7. Pile the couscous into a cone shape in a serving dish.
8. Mix the cinnamon and nutmeg together and sprinkle over the couscous.
9. Serve the couscous decorated with rose petals, if desired.

Makes 4 servings.

***Tmar Bi Loz* (Dates Stuffed with Almond or Pistachio Paste, Morocco, North Africa—The Maghreb Region)**

(A classic treat adapted from Roden, Claudia, *Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey and Lebanon*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005.)

2 cups ground almonds or pistachios	1 pound dates (use slightly moist dates)
½ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	1 cup honey
2–3 tablespoons rose water or orange blossom water	

1. Mix the ground almonds or pistachios with the sugar, and add just enough rose or orange blossom water to bind them into a firm paste.
2. Make a slit on one side of each date with a pointed knife and pull out the pit.
3. Take a small lump of almond or pistachio paste, pull the date open wide, press the paste in the opening, making sure to fill the date, and close the date over it only slightly so that the filling inside is visible.
4. Place the dates on a serving tray and drizzle them with honey.

***Yo-Yos* (Honey Rings, Tunisia, North Africa—The Maghreb Region)**

(Adapted from Essem, Tunisia.com. August 29, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.tunisia.com/tunisia-articles/tunisian-doughnuts-yo-yos-tunisian-honey-rings.141/>.)

1 tablespoon dried yeast	8 teaspoons vegetable oil, plus extra, to deep-fry
4 teaspoons white sugar	2 cups flour, sifted
¼ cup orange juice	Pinch of salt
1 orange, zested	

Honey Syrup:

8 teaspoons lemon juice	1 cup honey
½ cup white sugar	2½ teaspoons orange blossom water (optional)

1. Place yeast, sugar, and ½ cup lukewarm water in a bowl and stir. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Add orange juice, zest, and 8 teaspoons oil to yeast mixture, and stir to combine.

3. Place flour and a pinch of salt in a large bowl and make a well in the center. Pour yeast mixture into the well and stir until combined.
4. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for 5 minutes or until smooth and elastic. (Alternatively, use an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook.)
5. Place dough in a greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Set it aside in a warm draft-free place for about an hour, or until the dough doubles in volume.
6. Meanwhile, to make honey syrup, place lemon juice, sugar, and 1 cup water in a pan over medium heat and stir until sugar dissolves. Increase heat to high and bring the syrup to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer.
7. Add honey and orange blossom water (if using), then reduce the heat to low-medium and cook the mixture for 35 minutes or until the consistency of runny honey; watch the syrup to make sure that it does not boil over. Transfer the syrup to a large bowl and cool.
8. Fill a large pan one-third full with oil and heat over medium heat to 350°F (or until a cube of bread turns golden in 15 seconds). Working in batches, tear off a piece of dough about the size of a plum and flatten slightly with your hand. Tear a hole in the middle and stretch dough to make a 5- to 7-inch ring.
9. Carefully drop the rings into oil, turning halfway, for 4 minutes or until crisp, golden, and cooked through.
10. Remove the *yo-yos* with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.
11. Using a skewer, pierce *yo-yo* on both sides, then soak in honey syrup for 4 minutes each side.
12. Serve immediately.

Apple, Blackberry, and Marmalade Crumble (Northern Ireland)

(Adapted from Connery, Clare, *Irish Cooking*, London: Hamlyn, 1996.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

1 pound Bramley apples, peeled, cored, and sliced (or any other firm, cooking apple)	2 tablespoons marmalade
1 tablespoon lemon juice	1 cup blackberries
½ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar, or to taste)	2 ounces butter
¼ cup water	⅔ cup flour (or ⅓ cup flour and ⅓ cup uncooked oatmeal)
	¼ cup demarara sugar (or any available raw sugar)

1. Cook the apples with the lemon juice, castor sugar, and water for about 5 minutes, until the apples begin to soften.
2. Stir the marmalade and the blackberries into the apple mixture.
3. Pour mixture into a pie dish.
4. Mix the butter and flour (or flour and oats) together until crumbly. Add the sugar to the butter-flour mixture. Sprinkle over the fruit mixture and pat down gently.
5. Bake for about 20 minutes, until the crumble topping becomes a toasty golden color.

Carrageen Moss *Blancmange* (Northern Ireland)

(Adapted from Connery, Clare, *Irish Cooking*, London: Hamlyn, 1996.)

1 ounce dried carrageen moss (available in specialty food shops)	Zest of 1 lemon
3 cups whole milk	1 egg, separated
	¼ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)

1. Slowly bring the moss, lemon zest, and milk to a boil in a saucepan. Simmer on very low heat for about 20 minutes, until the carrageen swells and exudes jelly.
2. Vigorously beat the egg yolk and sugar together.
3. Add egg yolk mixture to the milk mixture and blend thoroughly.
4. Rub the mixture through a sieve into a clean saucepan.
5. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce the heat, while stirring with a wooden spoon. When the mixture coats the spoon, set aside to cool.
6. Whisk the egg white until stiff, and gently fold into cooled pudding mixture. Pour into a mold dampened with water, or serve in individual dishes.
7. Refrigerate the pudding until chilled. Turn the pudding out of the mold, serve with lightly cooked fruit, fresh berries, or drizzle with honey.

Lemon Soufflé (Norway)

(Recipe of Theodora Christiansen Sivertson, brought from Egersund, Norway, in 1892, contributed by Nancy and Stuart Sivertson of Duluth, Minnesota.)

“This recipe is one my Grandma Te’dora made for her tourist lunches on Isle Royale [Michigan] in the 1930s. She served this dessert after a meal of planked fish from her wood stove in hot summer.”—Stuart Sivertson

1 cup sugar	2 eggs, separated
½ ounce butter	Juice and zest from 1 lemon
2 tablespoons flour	1 cup milk

1. Cream sugar and butter, then add flour, lemon, and milk to the sugar-butter mixture.
2. Beat egg yolks, then add to the batter.
3. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
4. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Put mixture in casserole dish.
5. Place a pan of water in heated oven, place soufflé dish in water bath.
6. Bake the soufflé for 45–60 minutes.

Sandkaker/Sandbakkell (Almond Butter-molded Cookies, Norway)

(Contributed by Roxanne Simonds of Lester Prairie, Minnesota.)

“This is a family recipe my grandmother brought with her from Norway in the early 1900s. Her recipe as written called for ALL lard for the shortening. Nowadays, we use a mix of shortening and butter.”

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1 cup vegetable shortening	1 egg lightly beaten
4 ounces butter	1 teaspoon almond extract
1 cup granulated sugar	3½ cups flour

1. Cream shortening and butter with sugar.
2. Add extract and egg to the butter mixture. Mix well.
3. Add flour a little at a time. Depending on the flour, it might not take all 3½ cups. The dough should be very stiff. If it is too crumbly, add a bit of water, a teaspoon at a time until it is workable.
4. Press into ungreased *sandbakkell* molds or another type of tart mold. Be sure the dough in the tin is not too thick. Start in the bottom and press up the sides, so if you have too much in the tin, just work it off at the top and add it back into the bowl for the next *sanbakkell*.
5. Put filled tins on a cookie sheet to bake.
6. Bake the *sandbakkell* for 12–15 minutes in preheated oven. Bake until they get just golden on the top edges; do *not* overbake.
7. Cool the cookies for about 2 minutes. Turn tins over and tap bottoms to release the cookies. The cookies must still be quite warm for them to release well. Cool them completely on wire rack.
8. Store the *sandbakkell* in airtight tins. These cookies keep very well if stored properly, several weeks at least.

Snø Pudding with Custard Sauce (Snow Pudding, Norway)

(Recipe of Theodora Christiansen Sivertson, brought from Egersund, Norway, in 1892, contributed by Nancy and Stuart Sivertson of Duluth, Minnesota. Theodora Christiansen, whose family ran a restaurant in Egersund, emigrated to America in 1892 to marry Severin “Sam” Sivertson who began commercial fishing on Isle Royale, Michigan, in the 1890s.)

For the Pudding:

1¼ tablespoons gelatin	1½ tablespoons lemon juice
¼ cup water	3 egg whites beaten (save yolks for custard sauce)
1 cup boiling water	1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup sugar	

1. Put 1¼ tablespoons of gelatin in ¼ cup water and let stand 15 minutes; then add boiling water, lemon juice, and sugar to the gelatin mix.
2. Fold the egg whites into gelatin mix to set.
3. Serve with custard sauce (See recipe above).

Custard Sauce for *Snø Pudding*:

(Contributed by Roxanne Simonds of Lester Prairie, Minnesota.)

3 egg yolks	Pinch of salt
¼ cup sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla
1½ cups scalded milk	

1. Mix the egg yolks, cornstarch, and sugar together.
2. Gradually stir in milk, ensuring there are no lumps. Place in a double boiler, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens and coats the spoon. This is not a heavy sauce; it is intended to be very light.
3. Stir in vanilla. Set aside to cool. Serve over snow pudding (See recipe above).

Keke fa'i (Banana Cake, Samoa)

(Adapted from Somoa Food.com. February 21, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.samoafood.com/2012/02/keke-fai-banana-cake.html>.)

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

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| 1½ cups flour | 3 mashed, overripe (skin has blackened), bananas |
| 1 teaspoon baking powder | 1 teaspoon baking soda |
| ½ teaspoon salt | ¼ cup hot milk |
| 4 ounces butter, room temperature | 1 cup heavy whipping cream |
| ¾ cup sugar | 1 teaspoon vanilla extract |
| 2 eggs | 1 tablespoon sugar |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract | |

1. Mix the flour, baking powder, and salt together. Set aside.
2. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla. Stir the mixture thoroughly.
3. Add the baking soda to the milk.
4. Gently fold the banana and butter mixtures together, alternating with the milk mixture. When well blended, continue to fold the dry, sifted, ingredients into the banana and butter mixtures.
5. When all the ingredients are moist, pour the batter into a deep 8-inch round cake pan.
6. Bake the cake for 45 minutes or until the cake tests done.
7. Allow the cake to cool in the pan on a wire rack for about 15 minutes. Remove from pan. When it is completely cooled, slice cake in half horizontally.
8. Whip cream. Blend in 1 teaspoon vanilla and 1 tablespoon sugar. Spread whipped cream between the layers.

***Po'e* (Baked Fruit Pudding, Tahiti)**

(Adapted from whats4eats, *Po'e*, Tahitian Fruit Pudding. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.whats4eats.com/desserts/poe-recipe/>.)

Po'e was originally cooked in banana leaves in the fire pits of Tahitian barbecues. Nowadays, it is more frequently baked in the oven. The traditional recipe uses only banana purée.

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| 4–5 large, ripe, bananas, mashed and puréed | ½–¾ cup brown sugar (to taste) |
| Any other ripe, mashed, tropical fruit to bring the quantity of puréed fruit to 4 cups | Seeds from 1 vanilla bean, or 1 tablespoon vanilla extract |
| 1 cup arrowroot or cornstarch | 1 (14 ounce) can coconut cream (available at specialty food shops) |

1. Add the vanilla to the puréed fruit.
2. Mix together the brown sugar and cornstarch. Add this mixture to the bananas and process thoroughly, so that the mixture is smooth, with no lumps. Add sugar to the mixture to taste.
3. Generously butter a 2-quart baking dish and pour in the purée.
4. Bake the purée for 30–40 minutes or until the pudding is firm to the touch.
5. Remove the pudding from oven and set aside to cool. When cool, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.
6. Cut the pudding into bite-sized pieces or individual serving-sized pieces and place into a large serving bowl or in individual bowls. Top the pudding with coconut cream, and a sprinkling of brown sugar, and serve.

***Talautu* (Traditional Coconut Pineapple Sweet, Papua New Guinea)**

(Adapted from Vegan Recipes from Oceania. Accessed December 3, 2013. <http://www.ivu.org/recipes/ausnz/talautu.html>.)

5 young, green coconuts	1 lemon
1 pineapple	Sugar (to taste)

1. Crack the coconuts and save the juice in a large bowl. This requires some practice, as does using a strong heavy serrated knife to cut through the top third of the coconut (green coconuts are fairly thin skinned). Be careful not to let the juice spill out. Use a spoon to scrape out the translucent flesh.
2. Scrape the translucent flesh of 3 coconuts into the bowl of juice.
3. Peel, core, and cut pineapple in half lengthwise. Cut pineapple into chunks. You can dice the chunks or mash them.
4. Mix the coconut flesh and pineapple together. Add lemon juice and sugar (to taste) to the coconut and pineapple mixture.
5. Mix thoroughly and serve in individual dishes or coconut shells.

***Halva* (Sweet Carrot Pudding, Pakistan)**

(Adapted from Safina Khan, PakiRecipes.com. April 9, 2004. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.pakirecipes.com/recipe/Carrot-Halwa>.)

1½ pounds grated carrots	4 ounces ghee (clarified butter; or substitute butter)
3 cups milk	⅓ cup sugar
1 cinnamon stick	¼ unsalted pistachios, finely chopped

½ cup almonds, finely chopped
½ cup raisins

Seeds from 6–8 cardamom pods,
crushed
Heavy cream

1. Put the grated carrots, milk, and cinnamon stick into a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a boil.
2. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook the carrot mixture, uncovered, for 30–40 minutes, until it becomes thick and there is no liquid remaining.
3. Heat the ghee in another heavy-bottomed skillet, add the carrot mixture to the ghee and stir-fry over medium heat for about 5 minutes, until the carrots become shiny.
4. Add the sugar, nuts, raisins, and crushed cardamom. Mix the carrots well, and continue stirring for about 4 minutes.
5. Serve the *halva* warm or cold with heavy cream or yoghurt, garnished with a sprinkling of chopped pistachios.

Makes 6 servings.

***Masala Chai* (Spiced Tea, Pakistan)**

(Adapted from Jaffrey, Madhur, *At Home with Madhur Jaffrey: Simple, Delectable Dishes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.)

2 cups water

1 cup milk

1½ inches cinnamon stick

8 teaspoons sugar (or to taste)

9 cardamom pods

4 teaspoons plain, good quality, loose,
black tea

9 whole cloves

1. Put the water in a saucepan. Add the spices to the water and bring to a boil.
2. Cover and turn the heat to low, and simmer for 8–12 minutes.
3. Add the milk and sugar to the water and bring to a simmer again.
4. Put the tea leaves in the pot, cover, and turn off the heat. After 2–3 minutes, strain the tea into 2 or 3 cups (depending on size) and serve immediately.

***Frejol Colado* (Black Bean Pudding, Peru)**

(This traditional Afro-Peruvian uniquely Peruvian dessert, first prepared over 400 years ago, is adapted from Pisco Trail, Nico Vera, which was based on Teresa Izquierdo's recipe from the *Larousse de los Postres Peruanes* [Grupo De Supermercados Wong, 2010]. August 16, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. [http://www.piscotrail.com/2011/08/16/recipes/frejol-colado-peruvian-black-bean-pudding/.](http://www.piscotrail.com/2011/08/16/recipes/frejol-colado-peruvian-black-bean-pudding/))

Celebrity Chef Marcus Samuelsson notes that this *manjar*-like sweet delicacy is unlike anything you have ever tasted.

2 (15-ounce) cans unsalted black beans	1 teaspoon anise seeds
½ cup sugar	2 teaspoons sesame seeds
¼ teaspoon ground cloves	1½ cups milk

1. Toast the sesame seeds on a skillet over low heat and set aside.
2. Use a mortar and pestle to grind the cloves, anise seeds, and 1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds, set aside.
3. Pour the beans into a bowl and drain excess liquid.
4. Place a scoop of the beans in a fine mesh strainer over an empty bowl, and use a fork to mash the beans and make a purée that passes through the strainer into the bowl beneath.
5. Discard the skins of the beans that remain in the strainer, and repeat step 4 with the rest of the beans.
6. Pour the purée into a small pot, add the sugar to the purée and cook over a medium heat until the purée thickens; stir frequently for approximately 20 minutes. Be careful not to let the purée burn.
7. Add the ground cloves, anise seeds, and sesame seeds to the purée and mix well.
8. Add ¼ cup of milk and stir until purée thickens and begins to boil. Use a spatula to scrape the paste from the side of the pot when mixing with the milk.
9. Repeat step 8 with remaining milk, ¼ cup at a time. Simmer for about 1 hour or until pudding has thickened to desired consistency or a thick paste. Stir frequently. Adjust heat to maintain a simmer while stirring, being careful not to let the purée burn.
10. Pour the pudding into a serving dish and garnish with remaining toasted sesame. Allow to cool, and serve.

Makes 8 small servings.

***Suspiro de Limeña* (“Sigh of a Lima Woman,” Caramel Meringue Parfait-Like Dessert, Peru)**

(A classical Peruvian dessert adapted from *Perú mucho gusto*, Lima Perú: Prom Perú y por la Comisión de Promoción del Perú para la Exportación y el Turismo, Biblioteca Nacional del Perú No 2009–14980, 2009.)

2 cups evaporated milk	1½ cups sugar
2 cups condensed milk	1 cup port wine
10 egg yolks	5 egg whites beaten into stiff peaks
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)	1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
Pinch of salt (optional)	

1. Heat the two types of milk over a medium low heat, stirring until reduced and thickened. When you can see the bottom of the pan while stirring, remove from heat and set aside.
2. Carefully pour the beaten egg yolks into the milk; stir vigorously until they are well mixed. Stir in a teaspoon of vanilla and pinch of salt to taste (optional). Set aside to cool slightly.
3. Place the milk mixture in pudding dishes while still warm.
4. Prepare a thick syrup with the sugar and port wine. Bring port wine, sugar, and a pinch of salt to boil in a saucepan. When the temperature reaches 248°F, after about 4 minutes, remove the slightly thickened syrup from the heat. The sugar syrup should make thin threads when dripped from a spoon.
5. Beat egg whites in a very clean bowl until they reach stiff peaks.
6. Slowly pour the syrup into the beaten egg whites, stirring continually. The result should be a firm meringue.
7. Decorate the pudding dishes with the meringue and sprinkle with the ground cinnamon.

Serves 6.

Turrón de Doña Pepa (Anise and Honey Nougat, Lima, Peru)

(Adapted from *Perú mucho gusto*, Lima Perú: Prom Perú y por la Comisión de Promoción del Perú para la Exportación y el Turismo, Biblioteca Nacional del Perú No 2009–14980, 2009; and *Turrón de Doña Pepa*, Nicholas Gill. *New World Review*. October 20, 2010. Accessed April 7, 2014. <http://newworldreview.com/2010/10/turron-de-dona-pepa/>.)

A classical dessert which is part of the identity of Lima, Peru, traditionally prepared in October for the *Señor de los Milagros* (“Lord of Miracles”) holiday.

Preheat oven to 350°F

4½ cups flour	3 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt	2 teaspoons baking powder
4 ounces butter	5 egg yolks

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| 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, roasted and ground | 2 fig leaves (available at specialty food stores) |
| 2 tablespoons anise seeds | Rind of $\frac{1}{4}$ orange |
| 6 tablespoons anise tea (Place 1 teaspoon of dried anise leaf or 3 teaspoons of fresh, crushed anise leaf, into one cup of boiling water. Allow to steep for a few minutes.) | 1 cinnamon stick |
| 2 apples | 5 cloves |
| 2 quinces | 2 cups brown sugar |
| | 1 ball <i>chancaca</i> (raw, unrefined, cane sugar with a high molasses content; 1 tablespoon molasses and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups brown sugar can be substituted) |
| | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup candy sprinkles and/or small candies of different sizes and colors |

1. Sift the flour, salt, and baking powder onto a work surface. Make a well in the center of the flour and add the butter, sugar, egg yolks, sesame seeds, and anise.
2. Mix, adding the anise tea to the flour mixture to obtain a smooth dough. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and chill for 1 hour.
3. On a floured work surface, roll the chilled dough into about a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick 8-inch square.
4. Form the dough into sticks by cutting rolled dough lengthwise into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wide strips. Arrange the strips on a greased and floured baking sheet.
5. Bake the strips in preheated oven until golden, about 20–25 minutes, then remove and allow them to cool.
6. Cut the apples and quinces, with rind, into quarters and put in a pan with the fig leaves, orange rind, cinnamon, and cloves. Cover the mixture with water, bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer for about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and strain.
7. Add the sugar and the *chancaca* in pieces (or molasses and brown sugar) to the strained liquid and bring to a boil, cooking until mixture reaches 240°F. Syrup will form a thin thread when dropped from a spoon. Set aside.
8. To make the *turrón*, assemble the cookies in an 8-inch square baking pan lined with two layers of wax or parchment paper (leave extra paper hanging over all four edges of the pan). Cover the bottom of the pan (lined with the paper) with cookie strips laid side-by-side. Crumble one cookie strip and use the crumbs to fill in any holes between the strips.
9. Add a second layer of cookie strips on top of the first layer, crosswise to the first. Fill in any holes with crumbs. Repeat until all the strips are used, stopping with a complete top layer.

10. Carefully pour hot syrup slowly over the cookies, letting it soak into all parts. Decorate the top generously with the candies or sprinkles. Let *turrón* rest for several hours, until completely cool.
11. Lift paper to remove *turrón* from the pan. Slice *turrón* into desired pieces.
12. *Turrón* can be stored for several weeks in an airtight container.

Serves 8.

Halo-Halo (Shaved-Ice Milk and Mixed Fruit Dessert, Philippines)

(Adapted from Noriega, Violeta A., *Philippine Recipes Made Easy*, Kirkland, Washington: PaperWorks, 2000.)

1 ripe large banana	2 cups cooked sweet yams or purple yams, cut into 1-inch cubes
2 ripe mangoes	2 cup shaved ice
1 cup sweetened, flavored, set gelatin	2 cups milk
1 cup canned ripe jackfruit	4 scoops of any flavor ice cream
½ cup sweet corn	½ cup peanuts, chopped
1 cup young shredded coconut (if fresh is not available, canned)	

1. Peel the mangoes and slice the meat into ½-inch cubes. Discard the seeds.
2. Prepare 4 large, tall glasses. Divide each ingredient into 4 equal parts.
3. In each glass, place ¼ of each ingredient, adding layer by layer starting with corn, then adding the cooked sweet yams, jackfruit, bananas, coconut, and gelatin.
4. Top with ½ cup shaved ice.
5. Pour ¼ cup milk over shaved ice and top with a scoop of ice cream.
6. Sprinkle peanuts over the top.

Puto (Steamed Rice Cakes, Philippines)

(Adapted from Noriega, Violeta A., *Philippine Recipes Made Easy*, Kirkland, Washington: PaperWorks, 2000.)

2 ounces butter, room temperature	4 egg whites
1 cup rice flour	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking powder	½ cup shredded soft cheese (Cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, or Swiss) or coconut, freshly grated
6 tablespoons sugar	
¾ cup milk or coconut <i>milk</i>	

1. Sift flour and baking powder together in a mixing bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, cream the butter and 4 tablespoons sugar.
3. Alternating additions, combine the flour mixture and the milk with the butter.
4. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. When peaks start to form, sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoonfuls of sugar into the egg whites. Continue beating until stiff peaks form.
5. Fold the egg whites into the flour-milk mixture.
6. Fold in optional flavoring (e.g., pandan, vanilla).
7. Fill *puto* molds (or individual muffin molds) with the mixture, about $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Sprinkle with the shredded cheese or coconut.
8. Fill a wok or a large pan (that will hold a bamboo steamer basket) with a few inches of water. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat. Place the molds into steamer and cover.
9. Steam the *puto* for about 20 minutes.
10. Remove the *puto* from heat when firm. Cool before removing from the molds.
11. Serve the *puto* with remaining freshly grated coconut.

***Babka* (Yeast-Raised Easter Bread, Poland)**

(Adapted from Wydawnictwo, Andrzej Frukacz, *Polish Cooking*, Warsaw: Galeria Polskiej Ksiazki, 2000.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 cups flour	3 tablespoons citron, dried fruit, or candied fruit (optional)
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar	1 egg (for wash)
2 ounces butter	Butter and breadcrumbs
5 egg yolks	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectioners' sugar
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup lukewarm milk	1 teaspoon lemon juice
$2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	2 teaspoons water
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	
3 tablespoons raisins	

1. Combine the yeast with 1 teaspoon sugar and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm milk. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, add the salt to the flour, then stir in the yeast mixture and remaining milk. Set aside to rest for 10 minutes.
3. Vigorously mix the egg yolks, sugar, melted butter, and fruit, citron, and/or raisins into the flour mixture.

4. When all the ingredients are mixed, set aside in a warm place for about an hour.
5. Scoop the dough into a tall, hollow-centered 10-inch cake mold, generously greased and dusted with bread crumbs. The dough should come about half-way up the sides of the form.
6. Cover with a damp towel, and when the dough has nearly reached the top of the form, brush the top with the beaten egg mixed with a teaspoon of milk or water. Bake 40–45 minutes, or until golden brown and done. Remove the *babka* from oven to cool.
7. When cool, remove the *babka* from mold. Mix the confectioners' sugar, lemon juice, and water, and drizzle over the *babka*.

Makes one 10-inch cake.

***Piernik* (Christmas Gingerbread, Poland)**

(Adapted from *Piernik*. Polish Christmas gingerbread. December 14, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://mycookingart.blogspot.com/2010/12/piernik-polish-christmas-gingerbread.html>.)

In the 19th century and earlier, while the poor people in Poland ate honey cake, the privileged class enjoyed gingerbread. Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), for example, was especially partial to the famed gingerbread (*piernik Toruński*) of the northern city of Toruń, a traditional legendary gingerbread that has been produced there since the Middle Ages. Nowadays, both honey cake and gingerbread are popular holiday treats, and *piernik Toruński*, remains an icon of Poland's national cuisine, praised in literature, poetry, and other fine arts. Toruń, also home of Nicolaus Copernicus, hosts the Gingerbread Museum (*Muzeum Piernika*) and a popular Gingerbread Festival (*Święto to Piernika*) each year in June.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

½ cup honey	1 teaspoon baking soda
¼ cup light muscavado sugar	2 cups flour
2 ounces butter, cold	2 tablespoons <i>pierniki</i> spice mix
2 eggs, beaten lightly	

Ratio of *Pierniki* Spices for the Mix:

2 tablespoons ground cinnamon	⅓ tablespoon ground cloves
1 tablespoon ground cardamom	½ tablespoon ground anise seed
1 tablespoon ground black pepper	½ tablespoon ground coriander
1 tablespoon freshly grated nutmeg	½ tablespoon ground allspice
1 tablespoon powdered ginger	½ tablespoon ground fennel

1. Place the butter, honey, muscavado sugar, and 1 tablespoon of spices in a medium pan. Heat over a low heat until the butter has melted and the sugar is dissolved. Set aside to cool.
2. Mix the beaten eggs with the cooled mixture.
3. Sift the flour, baking soda, and one tablespoon of spices into a large mixing bowl.
4. Add the liquid ingredients to the flour mixture and beat until mixture is smooth (mixture should be thick).
5. Pour the mixture into prepared pan (a 9-inch bunt pan or a bread pan).
6. Bake in preheated oven for 1 hour, until firm to the touch.
7. Remove from the oven, cool in the pan. When cool, remove the cake from the pan.
8. The cake is ready to eat after baking, but it is better to wrap it with foil and place it in an airtight container for up to 2–3 days to allow the flavor to mature.
9. Spread the cake with chocolate or other icing, if you wish.

Tort Miodu (Honey Cake, Poland)

(Adapted from Polish Honey Cake. Big Oven. February 26, 2008. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.bigoven.com/recipe/165031/polish-honey-cake>.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

For the Topping:

3½ ounces unsalted butter	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting
½ cup buckwheat honey (or a flavorful dark wildflower honey)	1 cup heavy whipping cream (optional)
⅛ teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	1 tablespoon sugar, for whipped cream (optional)
½ cup almonds, slivered or sliced	

For the Cake:

1¾ cups unbleached flour, plus extra for preparing pan	4 ounces unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus extra for preparing pan
1 tablespoon baking powder	5 tablespoons cane sugar
½ teaspoon salt	¼ cup buckwheat honey (or a flavorful dark wildflower honey)

2 large eggs, at room
temperature

½ cup whole milk, at room
temperature

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Line the bottom of a 9-inch springform or cake pan with generously buttered parchment paper. Dust paper with flour, knocking off excess. Set aside.

For the Topping:

2. Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Add honey and salt and stir until blended, then bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 2 minutes. Remove the mixture from heat and stir in the vanilla and almonds. Set aside to cool.

For the Cake:

3. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.
4. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar together until fluffy. Gradually drizzle the honey into the butter-sugar mixture, continuing to beat, until light and fluffy.
5. Add the eggs to the mixture, one at a time, beating after each addition. Stir in vanilla.
6. Add small amounts of the flour mixture alternately with the milk, beginning and ending with the dry ingredients, mixing until just blended after each addition, and scraping down the sides of the bowl with a spatula.
7. Turn the batter into the prepared pan, distributing evenly, and smooth the top. Pour the batter and spread the topping mixture evenly over the cake.
8. Place the pan on a cookie sheet and bake in the middle of preheated oven for about 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. The cake should spring back when gently touched in the center.
9. When the cake is done, let it cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10–15 minutes, then turn it out onto a wire rack to finish cooling completely.
10. Whip cream. Blend in 1 teaspoon vanilla and 1 tablespoon sugar. (optional)
11. Cut the cake into wedges and serve. It is excellent as is, or dust with confectioners' sugar, or serve with sweetened whipped cream.

Makes one 9-inch cake or about 8–10 servings.

***Barrigas de Freiras* (“Nuns’ Tummies,” a Sweet Egg Pudding, Portugal)**

(From Webb, Lois Sinaiko, *Multicultural Cookbook of Life-Cycle Celebrations*, Westport, CT: Oryx Press/Greenwood, 2000.)

1 cup sugar	8 egg yolks, beaten
¾ cup water	Ground cinnamon, for garnish
1 ounce unsalted butter	Slivered almonds, for garnish
4 cups fresh white bread crumbs, best made from French or Italian bread	

1. Pour water into medium heavy-based saucepan, add sugar, and stir until the sugar is dissolved.
2. Bring the mixture to boil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently.
3. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook until mixture thickens to syrup and reaches softball stage or registers 234°F–236°F on candy thermometer.
4. Remove the syrup from heat and stir in butter until it is melted.
5. Add breadcrumbs to the syrup and stir well to mix.
6. Return syrup mixture to low heat and stir in egg yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition.
7. Continue cooking over low heat, stirring constantly until the syrup thickens, 5–10 minutes. Do not increase heat.
8. Transfer to a serving dish and sprinkle with ground cinnamon and toasted almonds.
9. Serve this dessert in small portions because it is extremely sweet. Enjoy with a cup of tea or coffee at the end of a meal.

Serves 4.

***Bolo de Mel à Moda de Sagres* (Sagres Honey Cake, Portugal)**

(A traditional dessert adapted from *Algarve Regional Cooking, Bolo de Mel à Moda de Sagres/Honey Cake, Sagres Style*, Algarve Tourist Association, Faro, Algarve, 2008. Accessed April 2, 2014. http://pt.meravista.com/sites/default/files/basic_page_pdf/algarve_traditional_cooking_2008.pdf.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

2 cups sugar	1 cup honey
2½ cups flour	2½ teaspoons baking powder
8 eggs, separated	Butter for greasing pan
⅔ cup olive oil	Flour for dusting pan

1. Beat egg yolks and sugar in a mixing bowl, until well blended.
2. Put the olive oil and the honey in a saucepan, heat on very low heat, just to warm the mixture. Stir well.
3. Let mixture cool, then combine the oil-honey mixture with the sugar and egg yolk mixture.
4. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form.
5. Fold the flour, the baking powder and the stiffly beaten egg whites into the oil-honey mixture, mixing well.
6. Put the mixture in a rectangular or round cake pan (or springform pan) greased with butter and dusted with flour.
7. Bake the mixture in preheated oven for about 40–45 minutes.
8. When done, remove from oven and set aside to cool.
9. Cut it into squares if you have used a rectangular cake pan, or slices if it is in a round pan.
10. Decorate as you like.

Churros Portuguese Style (aka *Farturas*; Sugar Crullers, Portugal)

(Adapted from Global Recipes Project. February 28, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://globalrecipeproject.blogspot.com/2011/02/portugal.html>.)

1 cup water	1 cup flour
4 ounces butter	4 eggs
Zest of ½ lemon	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar, divided	Oil for frying

1. Pour 3–5 inches of cooking oil into a deep pan. Heat the oil so that it is hot (350°F) but not smoking.
2. Mix the cinnamon and the ½ cup of sugar together on a large plate. Set aside.
3. In a one-quart saucepan, combine the water, butter, citrus zest, and 2 tablespoons sugar. Cover and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
4. When the water is boiling, pour the flour into the boiling liquid and stir rapidly and constantly, until the batter is pulling away from the sides of the pot, forming a smooth ball of dough. Remove the pan from the heat.
5. Allow the dough to cool slightly for about one minute while still in the pan.
6. Beat in the eggs one at a time, stirring after each addition until the egg is incorporated and the mixture is smooth.
7. Spoon the dough into a pastry bag fitted with a large ($\frac{3}{8}$ inch) metal star tip.

8. Squeeze strips of dough about 4 inches in length into hot oil (or squeeze dough in an “S” shape, or your desired shape of sticks or coils). Fry until golden, for a total of 5–10 minutes.
9. Remove *churros* from the oil and drain on paper towels.
10. Immediately roll them in the cinnamon-sugar mixture.
11. Repeat with the remaining dough. (For crisp *churros*, make sure that the oil stays really hot, and fry only a few at a time. Overcrowding the pan lowers the temperature of the oil and results in soggy *churros*.)
12. Serve the *churros* hot or warm.

***Clătite Romanesti* (Crêpes, Romania)**

(Adapted from Klepper, Nicolae, *Taste of Romania: Its Cookery and Glimpses of Its History, Folklore, Art, Literature, and Poetry*, New York, Hippocrene Books, 1997.)

2 eggs	½ ounce butter, melted
1 cup milk	Sugar, for sprinkling
1 cup flour	Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting (optional)
Pinch of salt	
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	Fruit or chocolate syrup, for drizzling (optional)
1 teaspoon fresh lemon or orange zest	

1. In a large mixing bowl beat eggs, then add milk and vanilla.
2. Add the flour, zest, melted butter, and salt to the liquid mixture, stirring until well blended. The batter should be smooth and thin.
3. Place a high a heavy, seasoned, griddle/skillet on medium-high heat. Add a small amount of oil for frying.
4. Pour about 3 tablespoons batter into the pan to coat the bottom (you may find it helps to “swirl” the pan in a quick, circular motion). After about 30 seconds, when the bottom begins to brown, quickly flip the *clătite* over. Cook for about 30 seconds on the second side. Do not overcook! They should be light and delicate.
5. Sprinkle the *clătite* with sugar and roll into logs. Serve the *clătite* warm, dusted with confectioners’ sugar, or drizzled with fruit syrup (available in speciality shops), or chocolate, or however you choose.

Serves 2–4.

***Papanași* (Sweet Cheese Fritters, Romania)**

(Adapted from Klepper, Nicolae, *Taste of Romania: Its Cookery and Glimpses of Its History, Folklore, Art, Literature, and Poetry*, New York, Hippocrene Books, 1997.)

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|--|---------------------------------|
| ¾ pound soft cheese (farmer’s, ricotta,
or cottage) | 1 teaspoon lemon or orange zest |
| ½ cup flour | 1 teaspoon baking soda |
| 2 eggs | 1 cup sour cream |
| ½ teaspoon salt | ½ cup jam of your taste |
| ¼ cup sugar | Oil for frying |

1. In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly combine the cheese, flour, eggs, salt, sugar, zest, and baking soda. Set the dough aside to rest for 15 minutes.
2. When the dough has rested, with well-buttered or well-floured hands, take enough dough to make a 2-inch diameter ball. Flatten slightly, and with your finger, put a hole through the center to create a small cavity (this is not like cutting out a donut hole). When all the dough has been made into balls, it is time to begin the frying.
3. Heat enough oil to “float” the fritters to a medium-high temperature. Gently place the fritters in the hot oil, and fry them until they are light golden brown. Turn, and fry the other side. Each side will probably fry for 3–4 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon to paper towel for a minute or two.
4. Serve the fritters hot, sprinkled with sugar, and a dollop of sour cream and jam on top.

Serves 4.

***Salam de Biscuiti* (“Salami Cookies,” Romania)**

(Adapted from Rolek, Barbara. Romanian Salami Cookie Recipe—*Salam de Biscuiti*. About.com. Accessed June 9, 2013. <http://easteuropeanfood.about.com/od/Romanian-Desserts/r/Romanian-Salami-Cookie-Recipe-Salam-De-Biscuiti.htm>.)

Biscuit salami cookies became a holiday tradition during the Communist years, when stores had few goods for shoppers to choose from. The shops sold cheap, bland, tasteless biscuits and Turkish delight candy, the inexpensive main ingredients for this uncooked cookie, which is rolled into a “log” that resembles salami. The dough is a mixture of cocoa powder, butter, rum, crumbled biscuits, and any other ingredients that might enhance the flavors, from coconut or lemon zest to chopped Turkish delight. Enjoy this “sweet salami” with your Christmas cup of Turkish coffee!

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| 4 tablespoons milk | 14 ounces butter cookies or vanilla wafers, broken into very coarse crumbs |
| 7 ounces Turkish delight, chopped | |
| 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa | |

1½ cups walnuts, finely chopped	2 eggs, separated
2 teaspoons rum extract or 2 tablespoons dark rum	7 ounces pitted sour cherries, drained and coarsely chopped
5⅓ ounces butter, softened	14-ounce package very fine dried coconut
6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar	

1. In a large saucepan, heat milk with Turkish delight until candy starts to melt and reduce in size. Remove from the heat.
2. To the saucepan, add ½ of the cocoa, ½ of the biscuits, ½ of the walnuts, and ½ of the rum. Mix thoroughly and set aside.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the softened butter with 5 tablespoons confectioners' sugar and 2 egg yolks. Add this to the ingredients in the saucepan and mix thoroughly.
4. Add in the rest of the rum, cocoa, biscuits, walnuts, and the coarsely chopped sour cherries. Whip the egg whites until they form stiff peaks and blend into the mixture.
5. Sprinkle remaining 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar and shredded coconut on a large piece of plastic wrap. Put the dough in the middle and roll it up in the plastic wrap, forming it into the shape of a salami. Wrap tightly and refrigerate 6 to 7 hours
6. Remove plastic wrap and cut into ½-inch slices when ready to serve.

***Blini* (Crêpe-Like Pancakes, Russia)**

(Adapted from von Bremzen, Anya, and Welchman, John, *Please to the Table: The Russian Cookbook*, New York: Workman Publishing, 1990.)

4¼ cups milk	2 tablespoons vegetable oil (for recipe)
5 teaspoons sugar	1½ ounces unsalted butter
1 tablespoon dry yeast	4 eggs, separated
3 cups flour (traditionally buckwheat flour)	Oil for frying
1 teaspoon salt	

1. Scald 3 cups milk on the stovetop or in a microwave. Transfer the milk to a large bowl, cool to lukewarm.
2. Add 1 teaspoon of sugar and the yeast to the lukewarm milk. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.

3. Whisk 2 cups of flour into the milk, until there are no lumps.
4. Place the batter in a warm place until double in size.
5. Beat in the remaining flour, salt, 2 tablespoons oil, butter and the remaining sugar.
6. Set the entire mixture aside to rest for about 1 hour.
7. Beat the egg yolks until lemon colored.
8. In a separate bowl beat the egg whites until soft peaks form.
9. In a saucepan, bring the remaining 1¼ cups milk to the boiling point. Quickly and vigorously beat the hot milk and the egg yolks into the batter, being careful not to cook the egg yolks. Then gently fold in the egg whites.
10. Set batter aside for a final rise in a warm place for about 45 minutes.
11. Very lightly, with a pastry brush or paper towel, oil the bottom of a crêpe pan or well-seasoned 7-inch skillet.
12. Quickly pour in enough batter, after swirling it around, to cover the bottom of the pan. The *blin* should be very thin. Fry the *blin* for about 1 minute, until the bottom is golden. Quickly flip, and fry for several seconds, about half a minute.
13. After you have cooked the first *blin*, it is customary to taste it, and add more liquid, more flour, more salt, or more sugar. But always brush a light coat of oil in the pan for the next *blin*.
14. Continue the process for each *blin*. When the *blin* is cooked, move it to a covered serving dish, to keep in a warm oven until ready to serve.
15. Spread your favorite jam, sugar, or cinnamon-sugar, chocolate sauce, sweetened condensed milk, or fresh berries and sour cream in the center of the *blini*. Fold 3 times to make a wedge shape, or roll the *blin* up.

***Kulich* (Easter Coffee Cake, Russia)**

(Adapted from von Bremzen, Anya, and Welchman, John, *Please to the Table: The Russian Cookbook*, New York: Workman Publishing, 1990.)

Preheat oven to 325°F.

½ cup milk	⅓ cup lukewarm
1½ tablespoons honey	water
2 tablespoons vegetable oil	6 egg yolks
4½ cups sifted flour	1 cup sugar
¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

¼ teaspoon cardamom	6 ounces butter, melted, cooled to lukewarm
A few threads of saffron	
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	½ cup golden raisins
2 tablespoons orange liqueur (optional)	½ cup almonds, finely chopped
2 tablespoons brandy (optional)	½ teaspoon almond extract
Zest and juice from 1 orange	2 egg whites
1½ large vanilla beans, split lengthwise	

1. Scald the milk in a medium-sized, heavy-bottomed pan. When at the boiling point, add the saffron threads, honey, and oil. Stir. Set aside to cool to lukewarm.
2. Add the yeast to ½ cup warm water. Add 1 teaspoon sugar to the yeast. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
3. When the yeast is foamy, slowly add the ½ cup flour, blending thoroughly. Set aside and cool to lukewarm.

Create the Sponge:

4. Add the milk mixture to the yeast mixture. Cover with clean cloth, set aside until double in size, about an hour.
5. In another mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar until light yellow in color.
6. Blend the spices, liqueur and brandy (if using; if not using, add 2 tablespoons milk), orange zest and juice, and vanilla and almond extracts.
7. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla beans into the egg mixture. Add the butter, raisins, and almonds.
8. Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form, then gently fold into the egg mixture. Thoroughly blend the remaining flour into the sponge to make the dough.
9. In a large, greased mixing bowl, set the dough aside in a warm place until doubled in size.
10. Cut two strips of parchment, 2 × 26 inches. Butter a clean, 2 pound coffee can and the strips of parchment. Crisscross the strips of parchment across the bottom of the coffee can, and up and over the sides (to facilitate removing the *kulich* after it is baked).
11. Punch the dough down, and put in the prepared coffee can. Set it aside to rise until the dough is about ½ inch from the top of the coffee can.

12. Bake the *kulich* for about an hour, maybe longer. A cake tester should come out clean.
13. Set the *kulich* aside to cool for about 15 minutes. Using the parchment, gently lift *kulich* from pan and set on wire rack to cool.

Makes 1 cake.

***Pryaniki* (Gingerbread, Russia)**

(Adapted from Kurppa, Petrus, Russian *pryaniki*: Tula gingerbread. November 18, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://turkugingerbread.blogspot.com/2011/11/russian-pryaniki-tula-gingerbread.html>.)

There are many kinds of gingerbreads that are baked throughout Russia, but the most famous ones come from the town of Tula, about 115 miles south of Moscow. Tula gingerbread, first mentioned in 1685, is showcased in the Tula Gingerbread Museum. It is the treat identified by journalist Viktor Kuzmin as the number-one Russian sweet. Gingerbread spice mixes vary; this version is spicier than others.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

2 cups flour	½ teaspoon cardamom (or to taste)
½ cup sugar	½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (or to taste)
¼ cup honey	Pinch of ground cloves (or to taste)
1 egg	8 tablespoons jam
½ ounce butter	Egg for sticking gingerbread layers together, and for glazing (optional)
3 tablespoons water	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting (optional)
½ teaspoon baking soda	
½ teaspoon ginger (or to taste)	
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon (or to taste)	

1. Add the honey, sugar, spices, and water to a large saucepan and melt them over a gentle heat. Increase the heat and bring the syrup to a boil, stirring well. Take the syrup off the heat and add the butter and baking soda. Add just enough flour to the butter to make a firm dough, stirring with a wooden spoon, then set aside to cool.
2. When the dough has cooled a bit, add the egg and knead the dough well.
3. Roll the dough out on smooth surface to about ⅓ inch in thickness. (The dough might be little sticky; dusting the surfaces with confectioner's sugar or flour might be necessary.)

4. With cookie cutters, cut the dough into desired shapes or drop by rounded teaspoons onto greased or parchment lined baking sheets. Brush with egg wash (optional).
5. Bake in preheated oven for 10–12 minutes, attending to them carefully so as to remove them from the oven as soon as they begin to brown.
6. Remove the gingerbread to wire racks to cool completely.

A more current style of *pyraniki* includes cutting identical shapes, placing a teaspoon (or more) of jam on the bottom piece, and placing the second shape on the top, crimping the edges to seal.

Clottie Dumpling (Sweet Pudding Steamed in a Cloth, Scotland)

(Contributed by John Matheson, of Munloch, Scotland, and Christabel Smyth Grant of Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin, from the *Scottish Women's Rural Institutes Cookery Book*, Edinburgh, Lomond Books, 2002.)

Clottie comes from *cloot*, the old Scot word for cloth. It simply means that this pudding was traditionally made in a cloth, although a pudding mold could also be used.

2 cups flour	1 teaspoon ginger
½ cup dried currants	1 teaspoon baking powder
½ cup sultanas	Pinch of salt
4 ounces suet, finely chopped	1 tablespoon golden syrup (a British product made from sugarcane, not maple syrup)
½ cup oatmeal	¼ cup milk
⅓ white sugar	1 tablespoon flour for the <i>cloot</i> (cloth)
2 eggs, lightly beaten	
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	

1. Rub the suet into the 2 cups of flour. Add the dry ingredients and the fruit to the flour mixture. Mix well.
2. Add the syrup and the eggs to the flour mixture.
3. Stir all together, adding enough milk to form a firm batter.
4. Plunge a 20-inch square linen or cotton cloth (the *cloot*) into boiling water. Remove it carefully, wring out excess water, spread it on a work surface, and sprinkle the 1 tablespoon of flour around the center.
5. Place the pudding mixture on the flour in the middle of the cloth, then tie the cloth securely with string, leaving as much space as possible for the pudding to expand.
6. Put an inverted plate or saucer in the bottom of a large pan. Set the dumpling on it, cover it with boiling water, and cook for 2½–3 hours over low heat.

- When done, turn the dumpling out onto a serving place. Serve with hot jam and cream.

Make 4–6 servings.

Cranachan (Oatmeal, Raspberry, Whisky, and Honey Dessert, Scotland)

(Contributed by Christabel Smyth Grant of Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin.)

1¼ cups fresh double cream or heavy whipping cream	2 tablespoons malt whisky (or to taste; some recipes call for Drambuie)
½ cup pinhead oatmeal	Raspberry coulis (See #4 in instructions below)
Hazelnuts (optional)	Raspberries for garnish
Honey or brown sugar (to taste)	

- Toast the oatmeal and a few chopped hazelnuts until they are lightly browned, turning often and being careful not to burn; set aside to cool.
- Whip the cream and add oatmeal, hazelnuts, sugar/honey, and whisky.
- Place a little raspberry coulis in the bottom of a glass, add the oat, nut, cream mixture, with a little raspberry, if desired, halfway through. Top off with raspberry coulis and a few fresh raspberries.
- To make raspberry coulis: boil raspberries with a little castor sugar (“superfine” sugar) until liquid, then strain; do not use a blender as the pips can be bitter if crushed. Thicken, if desired, with a little arrowroot.

Dundee Cake (Rich Cherry-Less Fruit Cake, Scotland)

(Contributed by Ben Pawson of Edinburgh, Scotland, who shared his mother’s recipe, along with Sue Pawson’s words of wisdom. “Some recipes are a lot richer than this, more like a Christmas Cake which isn’t what you want for an everyday cake. I sometimes make it to use up any leftover dried fruit I might have after making the Christmas cake, usually about the February after Christmas.”)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

5 ounces butter, room temperature	3 tablespoons currants
½ cup light muscovado sugar	3 tablespoons raisins
3 eggs	2 tablespoons glacé cherries
1¾ cups flour	2 tablespoons ground almonds
1 teaspoon baking powder	Zest of 1 lemon
⅓ cup sultanas	⅓ cup whole almonds halved

1. Butter and line an 8-inch springform pan with parchment paper.
2. Put the butter, sugar, eggs, flour, and baking powder into a bowl and beat for 2 minutes, until well mixed.
3. Stir in the fruit, lemon zest, and ground almonds.
4. Put the mixture into the pan.
5. Gently arrange the almond halves in circles onto the cake. Start on the outside and work inwards. Do not press them down or they might sink into the cake.
6. Bake the cake for 1½ hours. It needs to be golden brown, firm to the touch and a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake should come out clean. If it browns too quickly put some parchment paper or aluminum foil over the top until done.
7. When done, remove cake from oven and cool for a few minutes in the pan, then remove cake from pan and set on a wire rack to cool completely.
8. Store the cake in an airtight container. Dundee cake is best if left for a few days before eating.

Shortbread (Crumbly Buttery Sugar Cookies, Scotland)

(Contributed by Christabel Smyth Grant of Lake Nabagamon, Wisconsin.)

Christabel commented, “My mother had a number of Scottish first cousins—on both sides of her family—and baked lots of their items. The shortbread recipe is unusual in that I’ve never met anyone else who used rice flour, and I expect she got the recipe from her aunt(s). Using a very fine flour like rice flour gives it a very different texture; I call it the ‘secret ingredient.’”

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 cups unbleached flour	6 ounces butter (the real thing!)
⅓ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	2 teaspoons rice flour

1. In a mixing bowl blend sugar and butter slightly, and then work in most of the flour and rice flour gradually by hand.
2. Remove the dough from mixing bowl to a board and work in remaining flour mix, kneading well with the “heels” of your hands.
3. Pat or roll out the dough to required thickness and cut into shapes (a small juice glass works well for this). Place shortbread pieces on a cookie sheet. At this point, some bakers prick the shortbread with a fork.
4. Bake the shortbread for 15 minutes or until lightly brown. Sprinkle the shortbread with castor sugar while hot. Set aside to cool.

Tablet (Semi-Hard Fudge-Like Sugar Confection, Scotland)

(Family recipe contributed by Maggi Macleod of Dornach, Scotland.)

2 pounds castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
4 ounces unsalted butter	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup whole milk	

1. In a pan with a very heavy bottom, very slowly, and on low heat, combine the sugar, whole milk, condensed milk and butter. The sugar *must* melt *very* slowly until no grittiness remains and the mixture must not boil before the sugar is completely melted. Keep stirring until it comes to a boil. Keep the mixture boiling, and keep stirring; boil for at least 15 minutes, until the mixture turns to a beautiful caramel color or until it reaches the softball stage (240°F) on a candy thermometer.
2. At this time, add vanilla to the mixture.
3. Beat the mixture until it is very thick.
4. Next, pour it into a 12 x 15 inch buttered pan and let it cool.
5. Finally, cut the cooled mixture into 1-inch square tablets.
6. Sits down with a cup of tea and enjoy a piece of tablet.

Honeydew Sago (Cold Tapioca-Like Sago Palm Pudding, Malaysia/Singapore)

(Adapted from House of Annie. August 29, 2009. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.houseofannie.com/honeydew-sago-dessert-recipe/>. A “soupy” dessert, served cold.)

½ honeydew melon (save the other half for enjoying it plain)	1 cup coconut <i>milk</i> (shake the can before measuring out the one cup; otherwise, you will have really thick coconut milk only)
1 cup sago (or pearl tapioca)	
½–1 cup sugar (depending on the sweetness of your honeydew)	½ teaspoon salt
½ cup water	

1. Make a simple syrup by mixing water and sugar into a small saucepan and boiling until sugar dissolves. Cool the syrup.
2. Boil 7 cups or more of water in a large pot. When water comes to a boil, add sago to water and cook on medium-high heat. Stir occasionally. When the sago is done cooking, it looks translucent, about 8–10 minutes. (Caution: Do not

overcook the sago as it can become a sticky mess. Better to have a few pearls that have not turned translucent than to have a glop of melting sago.)

3. While sago is cooking, cut $\frac{1}{4}$ of the honeydew melon into chunks and process in a blender until smooth.
4. Cut the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of the melon into small $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes (or use a melon baller).
5. As soon as the sago is done, pour it into a fine-mesh colander and rinse with cold water.
6. Put the melon cubes and the melon juice together in a large bowl.
7. Add the coconut milk to the melon mixture.
8. Add the cooled sago to the melon mixture.
9. Pour in the sugar syrup little by little, to adjust the sweetness of the dessert.
10. Add a pinch of salt.
11. Gently stir all together and chill.
12. Serve the honeydew sago in individual custard cups or small dessert dishes.

Kuih Lapis (Colorful Steamed Layer Cake, Singapore/Malaysia)

(Adapted from Singapore Local Favorites. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.singaporelocalfavourites.com/2011/05/how-to-make-kuih-lapis-steamed-layer.html>.)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cups rice flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pandan paste
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup plus one tablespoon cornstarch	A few drops yellow and red food coloring (For this <i>kuih</i> , you can use any color and as many layers as you like)
$\frac{3}{2}$ cups coconut <i>milk</i>	
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt	

For the Syrup:

$\frac{1}{4}$ cups castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	1 cup water
	3 pandan leaves

1. For the syrup, mix the sugar, water and pandan leaves in a saucepan. Bring to a boil until the sugar dissolves completely. Set aside to cool.
2. In a large mixing bowl, mix together the rice flour, cornstarch and salt. Add coconut milk to the flour mixture, mix well. Add the syrup and stir vigorously to ensure the batter is free from lumps. If necessary, pour mixture through a sieve.
3. Divide the batter into 3 equal portions. In one, add in the pandan paste (for the green layer), in one add the yellow food coloring, and in one the red food coloring. Divide each batter color into 3 equal portions (this will ensure you will get 9 layers of *kuih*).

4. Grease a parchment lined 8-inch pan; place in a steamer and heat up for 4–5 minutes.
5. Steam the batter layer by layer. Pour the first layer of batter on the heated pan. Cover and steam over medium heat for 2–3 minutes or until set. Pour the second layer of batter on top of the first. Steam for 2–3 minutes.
6. Follow the same procedure for the next two colors and steam for 2–3 minutes each.
7. Repeat the steps, alternating the color until all the batter is used.
8. After the final layer is set, steam over the boiling water until the cake is cooked through, about 25 minutes.
9. Allow the cake to cool completely before removing from pan. Cut into squares to serve.

Verkadalai Urundai (Sweet Peanut Balls, Singapore/India)

(Adapted from Home Style Veg Food. November 14, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.homestylevegfood.com/2013/11/verkadalai-urundai-karthigai-deepam.html>.)

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| 1 generous pound roasted <i>skinned</i>
peanuts | Rice flour, to coat the hands |
| 2 cups jaggery | Ghee (clarified butter; or butter), to
grease the hands |
| ¼ cup water | |

1. If the roasted peanuts have skin, you need to remove the skin; once done, set the peanuts aside.
2. Pour the jaggery into a heavy-bottomed *kadai* (a wok-like cooking pot) or a heavy saucepan and add the water; keep stirring until it dissolves completely.
3. Filter the jaggery water to take the impurities from the jaggery.
4. Wash the *kadai* or cooking pan well, then return it to the heat and add the filtered jaggery water.
5. Bring jaggery water to a boil, heating it until it reaches the hard ball consistency. (To check, take a cup of water and pour a bit of the jaggery syrup into the water; it should not dissolve; also, you should be able to make a ball shape with your fingers—the consistency you need. The jaggery syrup consistency is very important, so the peanut balls will hold their shape.)
6. Remove the jaggery from the heat; add the roasted peanuts and mix well.
7. Grease your palms with ghee (or butter) then coat them with the rice flour.
8. Now you can easily make the ball-shaped treats.

9. Allow them to cool completely and store them in an airtight container.
10. The sweet peanut balls can be stored and used for up to a week, if they last that long.

Makes about 30 medium-sized balls.

Dukátové Buchtičky (Ducat Cakes in Vanilla Cream, Slovakia)

(Adapted from Břízová, Joza, *The Czechoslovak Cookbook*, New York: Crown, 1965.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1¾ cups flour	1 egg
⅔ cup slightly warm milk	4 tablespoons oil
2¼ teaspoons dry yeast (1 package)	Pinch of salt
4 teaspoons sugar	½ ounce butter, melted

For the Vanilla Cream:

1 cup whole milk or cream	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
¼ cup sugar	4 egg yolks, well beaten

1. Mix the yeast in the warm milk, and add the sugar. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Place the flour on a work surface. Make a well in the center, and add the egg, the yeast mixture, the oil, and the salt. Knead the mixture until smooth and elastic.
3. Cover the dough, set aside in a warm place, and let rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour.
4. Lightly grease a large cast-iron frying pan, glass baking pan, or casserole dish.
5. On a floured surface, roll out the dough to ½ inch thick. Cut out small circles using a glass, or a cookie cutter dipped in flour.
6. Place the little buns side by side in the prepared dish. Cover and let rise for another 30 minutes.
7. Brush melted butter on top of the dough. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden.
8. For the vanilla cream, mix ¾ cup milk (or cream) with the sugar and vanilla.
9. Bring the milk mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, add the remaining milk and egg yolks and blend thoroughly.
10. Return milk mixture to the heat in the top of a double boiler or in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Beat the mixture constantly until it thickens; do not boil.

11. Set aside for 15 minutes.
12. Pour the vanilla cream over warm *ducat* cakes.

***Vianočka* (Traditional Christmas Bread, Slovakia)**

(Adapted from Břízová, Joza, *The Czechoslovak Cookbook*, New York: Crown, 1965.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

1½ tablespoons dry yeast	4 egg yolks
1 tablespoon sugar	Zest of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons flour	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1¼ cups warm milk	½ cup raisins
4½ cups flour	½ cup slivered almonds
¾ cup sugar	½ cup citron
1 teaspoon salt	1 beaten egg (for wash)
5½ ounces butter, melted	Sliced almonds, for garnish

1. Combine yeast, ¼ cup milk, sugar, and flour in a small bowl. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, add the yeast mixture to the remaining ingredients (except for egg and almonds for garnish); mix well.
3. Put the dough on a floured work surface, and knead until smooth and elastic.
4. Return the dough to the greased bowl; cover with a cloth, and set aside to rise in a warm place.
5. When the dough has doubled in size, punch down, and divide dough into three large pieces (for large braid) and five smaller pieces (for smaller braid and twist).
6. Roll all the pieces into ropes, about 12–15 inches long. Loosely braid the three large ropes, pinch the ends of the ropes together and tuck them under. Place them in greased baking pan.
7. Braid 3 smaller ropes; pinch the ends of the ropes together and rest them on top of the larger braid.
8. Twist the last two ropes, and tuck the ends of the ropes under larger braid.
9. Cover with a cloth and let rise in a warm place for about an hour.
10. Brush the ropes with egg and sprinkle with almonds.
11. Bake for about 15 minutes in preheated oven, then reduce heat to 350°F for 30–45 minutes, until golden brown.
12. Sprinkle with sugar while hot.

***Bánh Tai Yên* (Bird's Nest Cake, Vietnam)**

(Adapted from Helen Le, Bird's Nest Cake—*Banh Tai Yen*, Danang Cuisine. October 22, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://danangcuisine.com/recipes/recipe-birds-nest-cake-banh-tai-yen/>.)

This cake has crispy edges while its middle is soft like steamed rice sponge cakes (*bánh bò hấp*).

1½ cups rice flour	¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup tapioca flour	¼ teaspoon baking soda
1 cup coconut <i>milk</i>	½ teaspoon vanilla extract
½ cup water	(optional)
4–6 tablespoons sugar	

1. Combine the coconut milk, water, sugar, and salt in a saucepan, on low heat, stirring well until the sugar is completely dissolved.
2. In a large bowl, mix together the tapioca flour and rice flour. Make a well in the center and pour in the coconut milk mixture. Stir well to dissolve the flours completely.
3. Add baking soda and vanilla (if any) to the batter. Mix well and let the batter rest for 3–5 hours.
4. Fill a wok with at least 2 inches of vegetable oil. Heat the oil to 360°F. To test the oil temperature, place a wooden chopstick in the center of the wok. If bubbles appear steadily around the chopstick, the oil is hot enough. Another way to test is to put a drop of the batter into the hot oil; if it turns brown within 60 seconds, it is ready.
5. To fry the cakes, give the batter a good stir and scoop one ladleful, then lower it to just barely above the oil level and quickly pour the batter into the center of the wok. The cake will float to the surface within a few seconds. When the edges turn golden brown, flip it over with chopsticks or tongs, and fry for a few more seconds.
6. Remove the cake from the oil and let it rest briefly on a rack to drip off the excess oil; then place it on paper towels. Fry only one cake at a time.

***Khao Niew Ma Muang* (Sticky Rice and Mango, Laos)**

(Adapted from Recipes of Asia, Laos Dessert Recipes. September 8, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.asian-recipe.com/laos/laos-dessert-recipes.html>.)

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| 1¼ cups raw sticky rice (use Thai sticky rice if possible) | ¼ cup palm sugar (or substitute brown sugar) |
| 2 (13.5 ounce) cans coconut <i>milk</i> , one for mixing with rice and one for the topping (do not shake the coconut milk can before opening. Spoon out only the thick part that is usually on top.) | ⅛ teaspoon salt for the topping |
| | ½ teaspoon salt for mixing with rice |
| | 6 medium mangoes, peeled and sliced |

1. Wash and rinse the sticky rice until the water runs clear.
2. Soak the rice overnight in water. Drain the next morning. Steam the rice in a rice cooker, or on the stovetop. Do not open the rice until fully steamed (about 20–25 minutes). (For directions for steaming rice see the *Zunda Mochis* recipe from Japan from pages 462 to 463.)
3. Heat, on low, ¾ cup of coconut milk in a small saucepan. Add sugar and ½ teaspoon salt to the coconut milk and cook until the sugar is dissolved.
4. Remove from heat and pour the coconut milk onto hot rice. Stir to mix well, cover, and set aside to stand for about 20 minutes. Gently fold, then rest again for 20 minutes.
5. Heat the rest of coconut milk and add salt. This makes the topping sauce.
6. To serve, place sliced mangoes on one side of a serving dish. Spoon some sticky rice on the other side. Top the rice with 1–2 teaspoons of coconut sauce and serve.

Makes about 6 servings.

***Mote Lone Yay Paw* (“Round Snack Float on the Water” Rice Balls, Myanmar)**

(Adapted from GREATMYANMAR. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.photos.greatmyanmar.com/index.php/2011/03/myanmar-new-year-thingyan-water-festival-food-mont-mote-lone-ye-paw/>.)

Mote Lone Yay Paws are traditional Burmese (Myanmar) sweet treats commonly served in celebration of a baby’s first tooth, and at the Thingyan Water Festival to mark the (usually) mid-April lunar New Year, a major Buddhist festival.

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| 2 cups sticky rice flour | Palm sugar (jaggery), cut into ¼-inch cubes (about 50) |
| ¾ cup standard rice flour | Coconut, freshly grated, for sprinkling |
| ½ teaspoon salt | 6 cups water |
| ¾ cup cold water | |

1. In a bowl, mix the sticky rice flour, standard rice flour, salt, and cold water until you have smooth rice dough. Moisten your hands and scoop into the dough to make small rice balls.
2. Use your thumb to make cavity in the center of the rice ball. Put a small cube of palm sugar in the cavity. Then roll the ball around to close the cavity.
3. Boil 6 cups of water in a saucepan. Drop the balls in the water and cook for 10–12 minutes. The balls are properly cooked when they float.
4. Remove the balls and sprinkle with grated coconut.

Makes about 50 balls.

***Nome Shek Chiene* (Banana Fritters, Cambodia)**

(Contributed by Ching Ing and Sothira Te, Eden Prairie, Minnesota.)

8 firm baby bananas, cut in half the long way	in Asian grocery stores), or rice flour
2 tablespoons sesame seeds	2 eggs
2½ tablespoons palm sugar	3 tablespoons of coconut <i>milk</i>
⅓ cup <i>ambok</i> (flattened young, toasted rice, which can be purchased	½ teaspoon of salt
	Parchment baking paper

1. Heat oil in a saucepan on high heat.
2. Mix the *ambok*, sesame seeds, sugar, and salt in a medium-sized bowl.
3. Add the eggs and coconut milk gradually, and mix them thoroughly. The mixture should have the consistency of thick pancake batter, thick enough to coat the bananas.
4. Peel the bananas and put them between two squares of parchment paper; flatten slightly with a plate without making them into purée.
5. Dip bananas in *ambok* batter and fry in oil, turning often. When they are brown and crispy, reduce heat to medium. Remove the *amboks* from oil and drain.
6. Serve hot.

***Sang Khja Lapov* (Pumpkin Custard, Cambodia)**

(Adapted from Wanderlust. May 13, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.wanderlust.co.uk/magazine/blogs/food—drink/cambodian-desserts-recipes?page=all>.)

This dessert is often used for special events and is best prepared the day before and stored in the refrigerator overnight.

1 small pumpkin (about 1 pound)	2¾ ounces coconut cream (available in specialty food shops)
5 egg yolks	Pinch of salt
¼ cup palm sugar (or white sugar)	

1. Wash and peel the pumpkin. With a sharp knife, cut a small hole into the top of the pumpkin, creating a small “lid.” Remove the seeds and strings from inside the pumpkin.
2. In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolks with sugar and salt.
3. Add the coconut cream to the mixture.
4. Pour the egg/coconut cream mixture into the pumpkin shell until it almost reaches the top. Place the “lid” on the pumpkin.
5. Steam the pumpkin in a steamer for 35–45 minutes, until it becomes soft. The custard inside is set when it does not jiggle when it is shaken and when a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. The custard should not be fluid and should be firm enough to stand on its own (cooking time will vary depending on the size of the pumpkin and the steaming pot).
6. Cool the pumpkin.
7. To serve, slice through the skin and cut the pumpkin into wedges, taking care not to dislodge the custard inside the shell.
8. Serve cold.

Note: Instead of pumpkin, any winter gourd such as butternut squash or acorn squash works just as well.

Serves 4–6.

Koeksisters (South African-style Plaited Donuts, South Africa)

(Adapted from *Capetown Magazine*. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.capetownmagazine.com/recipes/traditional-koeksisters-recipe/106_22_18670.)

“Derived from the Dutch word for ‘cookie’ (*koekje*), a good *koeksister* is crunchy and sticky on the outside, and moist and syrupy in the inside.”

For the Syrup:

2¼ cups water	1 teaspoon ground ginger
4 cups sugar	1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
Pinch of salt	1 cinnamon stick
1 tablespoon cream of tartar	

For the Dough:

2½ cups self-rising flour	¼ cup sugar
1⅓ cups corn starch	¾ cup milk
Pinch of salt	¼ cup cream
2 ounces unsalted butter, cut into cubes	2 eggs
2 tablespoons baking powder	Oil for frying

For the Syrup (prepare the syrup the day before for best results):

1. In a pan, heat the water.
2. Add the sugar, salt, cream of tartar, ginger, lemon juice and cinnamon stick to the water. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Set the syrup aside to cool.
4. Transfer to the refrigerator. Chill for several hours, preferably overnight. The syrup must be ice cold when ready to use.

For the Dough:

1. Blend the dry ingredients in a mixing bowl.
2. Thoroughly mix the milk, butter, eggs, and cream into the dry ingredients.
3. Knead the dough with your hand for a couple of minutes.
4. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap, and store in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
5. Roll out the dough to about ¼ inch thickness. Cut into thin strips 1 inch wide, and then cut those into short strips about 3 inches long.
6. Cut each of these strips into three strands (for braiding), but not all the way to the top—leave the three strands connected at the top of the strip.
7. Braid the three strands of each strip: fold the outer strands over into the middle, repeating until you reach the end of the strip, then pinch the three strands together at the end of the strip.

To Fry:

1. Heat up a pan with about 1½ inches of oil for deep frying.
2. Place the bowl of syrup in a larger bowl of ice to keep it very cold.
3. Deep fry the *koeksisters*, only a few at a time, so that the oil stays hot.
4. When golden, using a slotted spoon remove the *koeksisters* and quickly drain off as much oil as you can, then dip in the cold syrup for a few seconds. It is

important to keep the syrup very cold and the *koeksisters* hot so the syrup does not penetrate the pastry.

5. Transfer the *koeksisters* to a cooling rack.
6. Cool completely before eating.

***Malvapoeding* (Sweet Malva Pudding, South Africa)**

(Adapted from *Capetown Magazine*, Hope family recipes. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.capetownmagazine.com/recipes/sweet-south-african-malva-pudding/106_22_17726.)

Considered by some as South Africa's favorite dessert, it was brought to South Africa when the Dutch East India Company established Cape Town in the 1600s, but South Africans have made it their own with the addition of apricot jam.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

18 ounces butter	1 tablespoon white vinegar
2 cups sugar	1 tablespoon baking soda
4 large eggs	1 teaspoon salt
8 cups self-rising flour sifted	3½ ounces smooth
4¼ cups milk	apricot jam

1. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
2. Add eggs. Beat well. Add flour and milk alternatively.
3. Mix vinegar, baking soda, salt, and jam into the flour mixture, keeping as fluffy as possible.
4. Put the dough into a greased 10- to 11-inch baking pan, and bake for 60–75 minutes.
5. Serve the pudding warm with cream, custard, or ice cream.

***Melktert* (Milk Tart, South Africa)**

(Adapted from Aletta van der Walt. March 19, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.chewandchatter.com/2012/03/19/suid-afrikaanse-melktert-south-african-milk-tart-south-african-milk-pie/>.)

Said by Ms. Van der Walt to be South Africa's No. 1 dessert.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Ingredients for Pie Crust:

4 ounces butter	2 cups self-rising flour
½ cup sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 egg	Pinch of salt

Ingredients for Filling:

4 cups milk, plus ½ cup for the egg yolks	3 tablespoons flour
1 ounce butter	3 tablespoons cornstarch
3 eggs (separate two of the eggs)	Pinch of salt
1 cup sugar	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
	Ground cinnamon (to taste)

To Make Crust:

1. Grease two 9-inch pie pans.
2. Mix butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Add 1 egg to the mixture.
4. Add flour, salt, and vanilla and mix thoroughly.
5. Divide the dough into 2 balls. Press each ball onto a prepared pie pan. The crust will be very thin. Use fingers to make a pattern at the edge of the dish, or use a knife to cut a straight edge at the rim of the dish.
6. Bake the crust for 10–12 minutes until the edge becomes golden brown.

To Make Filling:

1. Start the filling while the crust is baking. Heat 4 cups milk and butter in a saucepan.
2. Beat 1 egg and the 2 other egg yolks with the ½ cup milk.
3. Add the flour, cornstarch, and salt. Blend until smooth.
4. Slowly add some of the hot milk to the egg mixture.
5. Slowly add the egg mixture to the rest of the boiling milk, stirring constantly to prevent lumps. Lower the temperature to prevent the milk mixture from burning.
6. Beat the remaining 2 egg whites until almost stiff. Fold the egg whites and vanilla into the boiling mixture. Remove from stove.
7. Pour the mixture evenly into the two crusts. Sprinkle with cinnamon, and let cool.
8. Serve with hot coffee or tea.

Serves 8–12.

***Soetkoekies* (“Sweet Cookies,” South Africa)**

(Adapted from *Ouma Babsie’s Soetkoekies*, Marietjie Swart. October 18, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://recipesspassedon.blogspot.com/2011/10/ouma-babsies-soetkoekies.html>.)

This is a very traditional and well-loved South-African cookie. *Soetkoekies* taste much like Dutch *speculaas*, their famous “windmill cookies,” but without the white pepper and cardamom, and with the addition of sweet red wine. The traditional Afrikaans “sweet cookies” are chewy rather than crispy ones made in molds.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 cups flour	4 ounces butter (traditional recipes call for half pork lard and half butter)
¼ teaspoon ground cloves	1 egg
¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg	¾ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon ground ginger	¼ cup sherry, port, or sweet wine (or replace with 2 tablespoons brandy and 2 tablespoons milk)
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	Egg white for glazing
Pinch of salt	
Zest of an orange or mandarin	
¾ cup sugar	

1. Dissolve baking soda in sweet wine.
2. Combine the dry ingredients.
3. Add the butter and cut into the flour mixture.
4. Add the beaten egg and baking soda mixture to the dry ingredients, and mix the dough together until firm.
5. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out to just slightly less than ¼-inch thick.
6. Cut the dough into forms with a cookie cutter.
7. Arrange them about 1-inch apart on a buttered cookie sheet.
8. Brush each cookie gently with the egg white.
9. Bake the cookies for 15 minutes, until they are golden brown.
10. Remove the cookies to a rack to cool completely.

***Tameletjie* (Brown Sugar Candy, South Africa)**

(Adapted from Food Lovers Recipes, *Lekkergoed En Fudge*, by Selma Alberts. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://foodloversrecipes.weebly.com/lekkergoed—fudge—sweets—fudge.html>.)

A sticky toffee-like brown sugar candy brought to the Cape by the French Huguenots in the 17th century, *tameletjie* is one of the oldest confections in South Africa.

2½ cups brown sugar	Pine nut kernels (used traditionally),
1 cup water	or almonds, walnuts, or desiccated
4½ ounces butter	coconut
½ teaspoon vanilla extract	

1. Dissolve the sugar in water over a low heat and add the butter.
2. Boil the mixture steadily without stirring for a few minutes, until it starts frothing.
3. Add the vanilla. Add the chopped pine nut kernels (or almonds, walnuts, or coconut).
4. Pour into a shallow well-greased baking dish (about 8-inch square) and mark off squares with a wet knife.
5. Set aside to cool.
6. Turn pan over to release *tameletjie*, and break into squares.
7. Store in an airtight container.

***Almendrados* (Granadan Almond Macaroons, from 15th Century or Earlier, Spain)**

(Adapted from a traditional Spanish recipe. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.thelatinkitchen.com/recipe/almendrados>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 cups blanched almonds, finely ground	¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup confectioners' sugar (add more for optional dusting)	4 egg whites (at room temperature)
1 teaspoon lemon or orange zest	1 teaspoon almond or vanilla extract
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional; plus more for dusting)	24–30 whole blanched almonds for decoration

1. Place finely ground almonds in a large bowl, and stir in the ¾ cup sugar, citrus zest, and ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon.
2. In another large bowl, combine the cream of tartar and egg whites. With a wire whisk or electric hand mixer, beat the mixture until soft peaks are formed. Add the almond or vanilla extract and continue to beat until the peaks are stiff but not dry.
3. Carefully fold the beaten egg whites into the almond mixture.

4. Drop heaping teaspoonfuls of the mixture onto a lightly greased cookie sheet (or baking sheet lined with parchment paper) to form 1½-inch mounds, spaced 1 inch apart.
5. Gently press an almond into the center of each dough ball.
6. Bake the cookies for 10–12 minutes, or until *lightly* brown but still remaining soft.
7. Remove from cookie sheet and cool completely on wire racks.
8. Dust with additional confectioners' sugar and ground cinnamon, if desired.

Makes 24–30 cookies.

***Crema Catalana* (Catalan Custard, Spain)**

(From Harris, Vicky, and Newton, John, *The Food of Spain—A Journey for Food Lovers*, London: Bay Books, 2008.)

4 cups milk	8 egg yolks
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise	½ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)
1 cinnamon stick	⅓ cup cornstarch
Peel of 1 lemon, cut into strips	¼ cup soft brown sugar
2 strips orange peel	

1. Put the milk, scraped vanilla bean, cinnamon stick, and lemon and orange in a saucepan and bring them to a boil. Simmer the mixture for 5 minutes, then strain and set aside.
2. Whisk the egg yolks with the sugar in a bowl for 5 minutes, or until pale and creamy.
3. Add the cornstarch to the egg mixture and blend.
4. Slowly add the warm milk mixture to the egg mixture, while you whisk continuously.
5. Return the mixture to the saucepan and cook over low-medium heat, stirring constantly, for 5–10 minutes, or until the mixture is thick and creamy. Do not allow it to boil as it will curdle.
6. Pour into six 6-ounce ramekins and refrigerate for 6 hours, or overnight.
7. When ready to serve, sprinkle the top of the custard evenly with brown sugar and put under the broiler for 1–3 minutes, or until it caramelizes, or use a small torch to heat the sugar until it caramelizes.

Serves 6.

***Fartons* (Valencian Elongated *Horchata* Dunking Pastry, Spain)**

(Adapted from *Cocinando en un rincón del mundo*. April 15, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://cocinayrecetas.hola.com/cocinandoenunrincondelmundo/20120415/fartons/>.)

Fartons are elongated sugar-glazed sweet confections made to dunk in *orxata* (*horchata*). The centuries-old custom of dunking your *fartón* in *orxata* has spread from Valencia through Spain and throughout much of the Spanish world. You can dunk your own *fartons* at home; they are simple to make, and while tigernuts may be difficult to obtain locally, you can substitute rice with vanilla and cinnamon or follow other regional variations that have sprung up in other Spanish-speaking areas. Or dunk your *fartons* in a warm chocolate beverage—an excellent combination.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

For the Pastry:

2 tablespoons dry yeast	4½ ounces butter,
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons warm water, approximately 105°F	melted
¾ cup sugar	3 medium eggs, beaten
	4 cups bread flour
	Pinch of salt

1. Add yeast to warm water. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. Combine sugar, melted butter, and beaten eggs in a medium-sized bowl. Mix well and set aside.
3. In a large bowl combine the flour and salt.
4. Slowly incorporate the liquids with the dry ingredients, until all ingredients are combined.
5. Knead until a uniform elastic dough is formed.
6. Let the dough rise in a greased glass or nonporous bowl, covered with a clean cloth, until the dough has doubled in size; about 1 hour.
7. Once the dough has doubled in volume, separate about twenty 2-ounce pieces. Roll into thin elongated ropes about 11-inches long and 1 inch in diameter.
8. Place the pieces on a parchment-lined baking sheet, spaced about 2 inches apart. Let stand until doubled in volume.
9. Bake the *fartons* for about 12 minutes, until slightly golden brown.
10. Cool on a rack. Once completely cool, glaze the *fartons*.

For the Glaze:

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|----------------------------|--|
| 1 cup confectioners' sugar | 1–2 tablespoons milk (or water), to produce a mixture thin enough to drizzle |
|----------------------------|--|
- Combine sugar and milk or water and mix until smooth, then drizzle mixture on the *fartons*.
 - Allow glaze to dry before serving.

Serves 20.

Mel i Mató (Miel y Mató) (Catalan Cheese and Honey Dessert, Spain)

This well-known Catalan sweet treat traditionally pairs honey with a goats' milk cheese (*mató*) from the mountain area of Montserrat northwest of Barcelona, a cheese already popular in the Middle Ages when it was scented with orange flowers. *Mató* is a soft fresh white cheese with no salt added, similar to ricotta or curd cheese.

Mató cheese

Honey, for drizzling

- Drizzle honey over single servings of *mató* cheese.
- Garnish *mel i mató* with toasted walnuts (optional).
- Enjoy one of Spain's most popular and delightful desserts.

Orxata/Horchata de Chufa (Valencian Tigernut Sweet Drink for Dunking Fartons, Spain)

(Adapted from Real Food Recipes from Spain. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://user.xmission.com/~dderhak/recipe/horchc.htm>.)

Note: This is different from Mexican *Horchata*, which is made from rice. *Horchata de chufa* has its origin in ancient Egypt.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 2¼ pounds chufas (can be obtained through mail order, also called “tigernuts”) | 2¼ pounds sugar (or to taste) |
| | 5⅓ quarts water |
| | 1 cinnamon stick |

- Clean the chufas thoroughly, rinsing them in clean water.
- When they are completely clean, set them to soak in plenty of cold water for 12–14 hours.
- After soaking, rinse the chufa again in clean water, changing the water until it is completely clear; then drain off all the water.

4. Mash the chufa or put them in a blender—to make them into a soft paste. Add a little water if needed.
5. Add the $5\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of water to the paste that you have made, and put in the cinnamon stick. Let sit in a cool place for 2 hours.
6. Add the sugar to the mixture and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved.
7. Pass the mixture through a metal strainer, or colander, and then through a wet, damp fine-cloth filter. Repeat until the strained liquid does not have any large particles left.
8. You now have a fine, milky liquid that can be placed in the refrigerator to be served cold.
9. You can also serve the *horchata* in slushy form as you would ice cream. Simply put it in the freezer, stirring occasionally so it does not freeze solid.

Pastel Vasco/Gâteau Basque (Basque Cake, Spain)

(There are many regional and individual variations on the famed Basque Cake. Nancy Zubiri provides a useful review of them in *Euskal Kazeta*—Basque News, April 15, 2013, <http://euskalkazeta.com/ek/?p=13741>. The following is one featured, by Dorie Greenspan, from a National Public Radio “All Things Considered” broadcast of December 24, 2009. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/2009/12/24/121461544/gateau-basque-a-perfect-cake-for-the-holidays>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2 cups flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons baking powder	$\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup thick cherry jam or an equal amount of vanilla pastry cream
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	(For the pastry cream see the Prince Albert <i>Millefeuille</i> Pastry with Strawberries recipe from Monaco from pages 479 to 481)
5 ounces unsalted butter, at room temperature	1 egg beaten with a splash of water, for the glaze
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (packed) light brown sugar	
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar	
1 large egg, at room temperature	

1. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt and set aside.
2. Beat the butter and both sugars together until the mixture is smooth. Add the egg to the butter mixture and blend thoroughly. The mixture may look curdled, but that is OK. Add vanilla and mix for about a minute more. Add the dry ingredients in two or three additions, mixing only until they are fully incorporated into the dough.

3. Place a large sheet of plastic wrap or wax paper on a work surface and put half of the very soft and sticky dough in the center of the sheet. Cover with another piece of plastic wrap or wax paper, then roll the dough into a circle just a little larger than 8 inches in diameter. As you are rolling, turn the dough over and lift the plastic wrap or paper frequently, so that you do not roll it into the dough and form creases. Repeat the same procedure with the other half of the dough.
4. Put the dough on a cutting board or baking sheet and refrigerate it for about 3 hours, or for up to 3 days.
5. When you are ready to assemble and bake the *gâteau*, generously butter a 2-inch high, 8-inch round cake pan.
6. Remove the layers from the refrigerator and let them rest on the counter for a couple of minutes before peeling away the plastic wrap or paper. Fit one layer into the pan. (If it breaks, just press the pieces together.) If there is a little extra dough running up the sides of the pan, you can either fold it over the bottom layer or cut it so that it is even. Spoon about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the jam or pastry cream onto the dough, starting in the center of the cake and leaving 1 inch of dough bare around the border. (If you are using a very thick jam, add a bit more.) Add more filling if you do not think it will squish out the sides when you press down on it with the top layer of dough.
7. Moisten the bare ring of dough with a little water and then top with the second piece of dough, pressing down around the edges to seal it. You can work your finger between the top dough and the edge of the pan, so that you tuck the dough under a little. Because of the softness of the dough, even if you only press the layers together very lightly, they will fuse as they bake.
8. Brush the top of the dough with the egg glaze and use the tips of the tines of a fork to etch a cross-hatch pattern across the top.
9. Bake the cake on the middle rack of the preheated oven for 40–45 minutes, or until the top is golden brown. Transfer the cake to a cooling rack and let it rest for 5 minutes before carefully running a blunt knife around the edges of the cake. Turn the cake over onto a cooling rack and then quickly and carefully invert it onto another rack so that it can cool to room temperature right-side up.
10. Both the jam- and cream-filled cakes are best eaten plain, but a little whipped cream or a scoop of ice cream are always nice on simple sweets.
11. Wrapped well, the jam-filled cake could be stored for a day or so at room temperature. You can also store the cream-filled cake overnight, but it will need to be refrigerated. However, because refrigeration can dry cakes, it is best to serve the cream-filled cake the day it is made.

Makes 8 servings.

***Arañitas* (“Little Spiders”)/*Arepitas de Yuca* (Cassava Fritters, Dominican Republic, The Spanish Caribbean)**

(Adapted from Aunt Clara’s Kitchen, dominicancooking.com. December 21, 2003. Accessed November 29, 2013. <http://www.dominicancooking.com/271-aranitas-arepitas-yuca-cassava-fritters.html>.)

Nowadays the Puerto Ricans eat sweet *yuca* (cassava) fritters (*buñuelos de yuca*) less frequently than folks in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and more often Puerto Ricans make their fritters with corn, rather than *yuca*, prompting some to suggest that Puerto Rican sweet *yuca* fritters were originally an import from Cuba and the Dominican Republic. In the Dominican Republic, anise seed is an important ingredient in both fritter versions, *arañitas* and *arepitas*. *Arañitas* are a Dominican Republic *yuca* fritter with shredded-coconut-like cassava threads hanging out on the sides, making it look like “little spiders”; *arepitas de yucas* are more simple deep-fried pieces of shredded cassava.

½ pound of cassava, grated	1 egg
1 teaspoons of sugar	1½ teaspoons of anise seed
½ teaspoon of salt	Oil for frying (about 1½ cups)

1. Peel, wash, and grate the cassava. To make *arañitas*, use the coarsest side of the grater; for *arepitas de yucas*, use the least coarse side.
2. In a bowl, mix grated cassava, sugar, salt, and anise seed.
3. Add egg to the mixture and mix well.
4. Heat oil in a small frying pan over medium heat.
5. Drop tablespoonfulls of batter into the hot oil, being careful not to crowd the pastries, and fry until golden brown. The *arañitas* should have lots of cassava threads sticking out in all directions, producing a “spidery” look. Be careful with the hot oil as it splatters.
6. Rest the *arañitas* or *arepitas de yucas* on paper towels to soak up the excess oil.
7. Serve hot.

Makes approximately 12.

***Biscocho Criolla* (Vanilla Cake, Dominican Republic, The Spanish Caribbean)**

(Adapted from Welcome Dominican Republic. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.welcome-dominican-republic.com/Dominican-Republic-Food-Deserts.html#r10>;

and Mari's Cakes, *Suspiro*, Dominican Frosting or Meringue. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://mariscakesenglish.blogspot.com/2009/11/suspiro-dominican-frosting-or-meringue.html#at_pco=smlre-1.0&at_tot=4&at_ab=per-11&at_pos=4.)

The national cake of the Dominican Republic is typically filled with fresh pineapple jam, then covered with *suspiro* (Dominican Meringue). This is a local homemade version, and recipes vary by locality; commercial versions are more complicated and elaborate.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

16 ounces butter, at room temperature	1 cup fresh orange juice
2¼ cups granulated sugar	½ teaspoon zest of a lime (or lemon) (optional)
10 whole eggs (5 whole eggs/ 5 yolks)	Dash of salt
3½–5 cups of flour (depending on eggs, and desired texture; use less for a lighter cake; try 5 cups first)	Pineapple filling (or pineapple jam)
1 tablespoon baking powder	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting (optional), or use <i>suspiro</i> meringue frosting (recipe below)
1 tablespoon vanilla extract	

Dominican Meringue (*Suspiro*) Frosting

For the Syrup:

2 cups granulated sugar	1 teaspoon lemon juice (optional)
½ cup water	

For the Egg Whites:

1 cup (8 ounces) egg whites (from about 7 or 8 eggs) at room temperature	⅛ teaspoon cream of tartar (optional)
Pinch of salt	¼ cup sugar
	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the Filling (Double recipe if the cakes are split in half horizontally. See below.):

2 cups of pineapple, peeled and cut into cubes	½ cup sugar (more or less, according to taste)
1 cup water	1 teaspoon of vanilla extract

1. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
2. Beat the mixture on medium speed for about 10 minutes, until butter mixture turns a pale yellow color with a creamy texture.
3. Add the 5 egg yolks to the butter mixture one at a time, beat well after each addition, and then add the 5 whole eggs to the mixture in a similar manner, one at time.
4. Sift all dry ingredients together and then add the butter/egg mixture.
5. At medium speed, mix the dry and wet ingredients together for about 5 minutes.
6. Add the vanilla extract and the orange juice and continue to mix for about 2 more minutes. Add the citrus zest, if desired.
7. Pour the cake batter into two round 10 × 2-inch baking pans which have been greased with bottoms lined with parchment paper.
8. Bake the cake in a preheated oven for about 35–45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
9. Cool the cake completely on a rack. Frost the cake with meringue (recipe below), or with confectioners' sugar, and serve.

To Prepare the Meringue:

10. In a saucepan, place ½ cup of water, 2 cups sugar, and lemon juice (optional). Mix well and let the syrup mixture come to a boil.
11. When the syrup begins to thicken slightly, about 2 minutes before desired consistency is reached, begin to beat the egg whites with salt, and cream of tartar (optional), at high speed. Sprinkle in the ¼ cup of granulated sugar while the mixer remains beating at high speed until soft peaks form. Continue to cook syrup, being careful to stir constantly to prevent sugar crystals from forming (using the lemon juice will help prevent the sugar from crystallizing).
12. In a continuous stream, add syrup to the egg whites (that have already been beaten into soft peaks), while the mixer remains on high speed. (To find out when the syrup is done dip a spoon in and remove it, and if dripping is in the form of a thread it is ready to pour over the egg whites. It should have a consistency of corn syrup and a temperature of 245°F.)
13. Continue beating the meringue on high speed until the temperature has cooled and you get the desired consistency.
14. Add vanilla when cool.
15. When done, the meringue should have a shiny appearance. It is ready when the bowl feels cool, and the meringue has a strong peak consistency and shine.

To Prepare the Filling:

16. Mix all the filling ingredients together and simmer in a covered saucepan over very low heat until the pineapple is tender and the consistency of marmalade.
17. Stir the mixture often to avoid scorching and add water as necessary.

- Once the filling is ready (it takes about an hour due to the tough fibers in pineapple), cool to room temperature.

To Assemble and Serve Cake:

- Spread with the pineapple filling between layers. (For more layers, split cakes in half horizontally and spread the pineapple filling between each of the layers.)
- Cover the cake with meringue or confectioners' sugar and serve. The meringue can be left naturally white, or given a quick browning under the flame of a broiler or with a hand torch.
- Decorate the cake according to your taste and skills.

Coconut Milk Tapioca Pudding (The Spanish Caribbean)

(A common sweet treat in the Spanish Caribbean, this version is adapted from Shirazi, Sylvie, *Gourmande in the Kitchen*. September 18, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://gourmandeinthekitchen.com/2013/coconut-tapioca-pudding-with-maple-roasted-plums-recipe/>.)

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|--------------------------------|---|
| ¼ cup small pearl tapioca | 2 tablespoons honey |
| ¾ cup water | ½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds removed; set aside |
| 1 (13½ ounce) can coconut milk | |
| Pinch of sea salt | |

- Soak tapioca in the water for 1–2 hours at room temperature (or overnight in the refrigerator), then transfer to a heavy-bottomed medium-sized saucepan.
- Add coconut milk, salt, honey, and the seeds from the vanilla bean to the tapioca. Bring the mixture to a simmer over medium-low heat. The tapioca beads will swell and become translucent and the pudding will thicken as it cooks. Simmer gently over low heat for 10–15 minutes until thickened, stirring often so as not to scorch the bottom of the pan.
- Remove the pudding from heat and cool.
- Serve the pudding warm or chilled.

Mantecaditos (Almond Sugar Cookies, Puerto Rico, The Spanish Caribbean)

(Adapted from A Cookie for Every Country. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://globalcookies.blogspot.com/2008/01/puerto-rico-mantecaditos.html>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

2¼ cups flour	½ teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg	½ cup sugar
6 ounces butter	Maraschino cherries, cut into eighths (optional)
¼ cup vegetable shortening	Shots, sprinkles, jimmies, or other decorative candies (optional)
1½ teaspoons almond extract	

1. Combine flour and nutmeg; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, beat butter, shortening, and extracts until smooth.
3. Gradually add sugar to butter and cream continue stirring until light and fluffy.
4. Blend in flour mixture.
5. Dough should be slightly moist. If dough looks dry, sprinkle with water and work into dough. If dough is sticky, sprinkle with additional flour.
6. Spoon dough by teaspoons and form into balls. Place on an ungreased baking sheet. Gently press each ball with palm of your hand to form cookie. Garnish with a cherry piece placed in the center of each cookie, or top with shots, sprinkles, jimmies, or other decorative candies.
7. Bake the cookies for 20 minutes or until golden.
8. Remove the cookies to a wire rack to cool.

***Templeque de Coco* (A Sweet Rich “Trembling/Wobbly” Creamy Coconut Custard, Puerto Rico, The Spanish Caribbean)**

(Adapted from Milani Nieves (aka Chef Milani.) Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.squidoo.com/puerto-rico-templeque-recipe>.)

1 (13.5 ounce) can coconut <i>milk</i>	⅓ cup sugar
10 ounces coconut cream (available at specialty food shops)	½ teaspoon salt
⅓ cup cornstarch	Ground cinnamon
⅓ cup water	Cinnamon sticks and toasted coconut flakes for garnish (optional)

1. Mix the water with the cornstarch and whisk until there are no lumps.
2. In a saucepan, heat the coconut milk, coconut cream, and the water with cornstarch, adding the sugar and salt. Stir the mixture constantly.
3. Put the temperature on high until the mixture starts bubbling, then remove immediately from the heat.
4. Sprinkle the bottom of a 9 × 9 mold or pan with water before pouring in the mixture (or pour into individual dessert cups).

5. Let it rest for 20 minutes before putting it in the refrigerator for 20 or more minutes before serving.
6. Carefully separate the *tembleque* from the mold using a knife. Turn it over onto a dish.
7. Sprinkle the *tembleque* with cinnamon. Garnish with a cinnamon stick and/or toasted coconut flakes (optional).

Ada de La Harpe's Christmas Cake (Sri Lanka)

(Courtesy of her grandson, Paul van Reyk, from *The Recipe Book of Ada de la Harpe, a Sri Lankan Dutch Burgher Woman*, 2013. Sydney, Australia: Privately Published, pp. 95–97. Accessed July 27, 2013. http://www.paulvanreyk.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/The-Recipe-Book-of-Ad-de-la-Harpe_First-edition_2013.pdf; http://issuu.com/foodwriter/docs/the_recipe_book_of_ad_de_la_harpe_first_edition_20.)

This is an adaptation of the transcription of Ada de La Harpe's Christmas Cake recipe provided by Paul van Reyk. For a beautiful facsimile version of the original from Ada's "Cookery Book" see van Reyk (2013), pp. 95–97.

1 pound rulang (semolina)	A wineglass full of the syrup of the pineapple may be added too
2 ounces flour	
2 pounds (soft) sugar	16 ounces butter
A wineglassful each of brandy (rose-water) and bees honey	1 pound raisins
½ pound ginger preserve	1 pound sultanas
½ pound chow chow	½ pound currants
½ pound mixed candied peel	1½ pounds pumpkin preserve
25 egg yolks	½ teaspoon powdered cardamom
8–10 egg whites	½ teaspoon cinnamon
100 cajunuts (cashews)	¼ teaspoon powdered cloves
½ pound pineapple preserves (crystalized)	½ nutmeg (grated)
Peel of two limes	Almond paste
	Royal icing

If cake is not to be iced or have almond paste, then into the cake mixture may be added 2 teaspoons of essence of vanilla and 1 of essence of almond, but this is not absolutely necessary.

Method:

1. First prepare the fruit. Stone and cut the raisins in 3 or 4 pieces: wash and stem the sultanas; wash, pick and dry the currants; cut the pumpkin preserve, and

ginger preserve . . . into small pieces; shred the candied peel finely, and skin and chop the cajunuts.

2. Mix the different kinds of fruit together with the flour. Put the butter and sugar into a large basin and beat well (1 hour) until very light and smooth. Then add the egg yolks one at a time, beating well after each is added.
3. Mix in the *rulang* gradually; then add the fruit, cajunuts, and spices.
4. Lastly mix in the Brandy, rosewater, bees honey, and syrup (vanilla and essence of almonds).
5. The whites of 8–10 eggs should be beaten up to a stiff froth. Have ready a tin—not too high—lined with 2 or 3 folds of white paper well buttered. It is best to have about 6 folds of paper at the bottom. Pour the mixture into the prepared tin and bake in a moderate and steady oven from 4 to 5 hours.
6. When the cake begins to brown, cover it with a double fold of paper, to prevent it from burning on the top.
7. When ready, let it stand for a few minutes; then turn it out carefully and allow to cool.
8. This cake improves with keeping, so it should be made at least a week before it is needed, but the icing must be laid on only a day or two before. Cover the cake with a good coating of almond paste then coat it with royal icing.

(This amount will go into two “cream cracker” tins; about half each.)

Ada de La Harpe’s “Singapore Pudding,” and Sago Pudding (Sri Lanka)

(Courtesy of her grandson, Paul van Reyk, from *The Recipe Book of Ada de la Harpe, a Sri Lankan Dutch Burgher Woman*, 2013. Sydney, Australia: Privately Published, p. 100. Accessed July 27, 2013. http://www.paulvanreyk.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/The-Recipe-Book-of-Ad-de-la-Harpe_First-edition_2013.pdf; http://issuu.com/foodwriter/docs/the_recipe_book_of_ad_de_la_harpe_first_edition_20.)

“Singapore pudding is basically sago pudding, sago boiled up in coconut milk till thick, in this case with a little jaggery and then jaggery and milk served on the side rather as you might have porridge. As to why ‘Singapore’ I did find links to sago puddings from [Malaysia], which would make sense,” writes Paul van Reyk. This is an adaptation of the transcription of Ada de La Harpe’s “Singapore Pudding” and Sago Pudding recipes provided by Paul van Reyk. For a beautiful facsimile version of the original from Ada’s “Cookery Book” see van Reyk (2013), p. 100.

“Singapore Pudding”

½ pound sago

1¼ balls jaggery

Method:

1. Boil the sago till very thick, putting in part of the jaggery to give it a nice color. Add a pinch of salt and a table spoonful of butter.
2. Leave it to set; and serve with jaggery honey and coconut *milk* separate, in two jugs.

Sago Pudding

¼ pound sago

Rose water

11 ounces scraped jaggery

Salt

Method:

1. Sago must be put to soak early in about 2 cups of water. Boil with jaggery, rose-water and salt and put it into a mold.
2. Turn out and serve with thick coconut *milk*.

Ada de La Harpe’s “Sweets” (Sweetened “Cajunuts”—Cashews, Sri Lanka)

(Courtesy of her grandson, Paul van Reyk, from *The Recipe Book of Ada de la Harpe, a Sri Lankan Dutch Burgher Woman*, 2013. Sydney, Australia: Privately Published, pp. 99–100. Accessed 27 July 2013. http://www.paulvanreyk.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/The-Recipe-Book-of-Ad-de-la-Harpe_First-edition_2013.pdf; http://issuu.com/foodwriter/docs/the_recipe_book_of_ad_de_la_harpe_first_edition_20.)

This is an adaptation of the transcription of Ada de La Harpe’s “Sweetened ‘Cajunuts’” recipe provided by Paul van Reyk. For a beautiful facsimile version of the original from Ada’s “Cookery Book” see van Reyk (2013), pp. 99–100.

½ pound almonds or cajunuts
(cashews)1 cupful of sugar
Whites of 2 eggs

1. Clean the cajunuts and pound them to a paste.
2. Add the sugar and then the whites of 2 eggs well beaten.
3. Next work it all together with the back of a spoon.
4. Then roll the mixture in your hands into balls about the size of a nutmeg.
5. Lay the balls on a sheet of paper at least an inch apart, and bake in a cool oven until they are a light brown.

***Jordgubbstårta* (Traditional Strawberry Cake, Sweden)**

(Adapted from Ewa, Delishhh, Swedish Birthday Cake—Strawberry Cake “*Jordgubbstårta*.” June 13, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://delishhh.com/2010/06/13/swedish-birthday-cake-%E2%80%93-strawberry-cake-%E2%80%9Cjordgubbstar%E2%80%9D/>.)

Jordgubbstårta, the most common Swedish birthday cake, is also a traditional midsummer’s eve Swedish dessert and a favorite summer dessert of the ever-popular *smörgåsbord*, especially when served with almond cream.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Sugar Cake, Base Cake:

2 ounces butter, plus some for greasing pan	1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ cup milk	2 teaspoons vanilla sugar or
2 eggs	1 teaspoon vanilla extract (vanilla sugar is sugar that has had vanilla beans in it for days or weeks which has absorbed the essence of the beans)
½ cup plus 5 tablespoons sugar	8 cups fresh strawberries
1 cup plus 3 tablespoons flour (substitute ½ cup potato flour to make the cake extra light and porous)	

1. Butter and flour a 9-inch springform pan.
2. In a mixing bowl melt butter and add milk. Whisk in eggs and vanilla to the milk-butter mixture.
3. Add the sugar, flour, and baking powder to the mixture, mixing well until batter is smooth.
4. Pour the batter into the buttered pan and bake on a lower rack of preheated oven for 35–40 minutes.
5. Allow the cake to cool.

***Francipankräm* Filling (Almond Cream)**

5 tablespoons sliced almonds	4 tablespoons flour
2 eggs	1½ cups plus 3 tablespoons milk
½ cup sugar	1 ounce butter

6. In a bowl mix the eggs, sugar, and flour.
7. In a saucepan bring the milk to a boil. Whisk it into the egg mixture.
8. Then pour everything back into the pot. Bring it to a simmer and stir until the cream thickens, but do not let it boil. Mix in the butter and the almonds.

9. Let the cream cool before you using it as filling.
10. When the filling is cool, cut the sugar cake in half horizontally, so you have a top and bottom. Place the *Francipankräm* on the top of the bottom layer.
11. Slice some of the strawberries and add the slices on top of the *Francipankräm* filling. Then add the top layer of the cake.

Whipped Cream:

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1 cup heavy cream | 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar for dusting |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract | |

12. In a large bowl, whip cream until just stiff.
13. Beat in vanilla and sugar to the cream until peaks form. Do not overbeat as the cream will then become lumpy and butter-like.
14. Add the whipped cream to the top and sides of the cake, covering the full cake. Decorate the cake with strawberries. Dust with confectioners' sugar.
15. Chill the cake until served.

Pepparkakor (Crisp, Thin Gingersnaps, Sweden)

(From Melissa Olson Varanasi, St. Paul, Minnesota, passed down from her Swedish Grandmother.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

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|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 8 ounces butter | 1½ teaspoons baking soda |
| ½ cup brown sugar | ½ teaspoon salt |
| ½ cup white sugar | 1 teaspoon ground cloves |
| 1 egg | 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| 4 tablespoons molasses | 1 teaspoon ginger |
| 2 cups flour | ½ teaspoon mace |

1. Cream sugars and butter.
2. Beat in egg and molasses to the sugar mixture.
3. Blend in flour, soda, salt, and spices. Chill the mixture.
4. Roll the dough out as thinly as possible on lightly floured board.
5. Cut the dough with cookie cutters.
6. Bake the cookies on ungreased cookie sheet for 8–10 minutes.

Sweet Soup/Fruit Soup (Sweden)

(Contributed by Melissa Olson Varanasi, St. Paul, Minnesota, from a recipe by Gudrun Kjelshus, in *Vår Så God*, a church cookbook from the Zion Lutheran

Church in Hanska, Minnesota, Worthington, MN: CCSI [Crippled Children's School], 1986.)

2 boxes mixed dried fruit	3 sticks cinnamon
2 handfuls raisins	18 whole cloves
1 package pearl tapioca	1½ cups sugar
3 quarts water	Lemon juice
1 teaspoon salt	

1. Soak pearl tapioca in water overnight.
2. In morning, cook the tapioca (separate from fruit) until transparent.
3. Put the fruits, water, salt, spices, in a separate kettle; cook until the fruit is tender.
4. Remove the fruit from juices. Add tapioca to the juices and boil.
5. Add sugar and lemon juice (to taste) to the tapioca.
6. Add fruit to the tapioca, bring to boil. You may need to add more water to thin.
7. The soup may be served warm or cold.

***Basler Brunli* (“Basel Little Brown Ones,” Chocolate-Almond Spice Cookies, Switzerland)**

(Adapted from Information about Switzerland. April 6, 2014. <http://www.about.ch/culture/food/brunli.html>.)

Brunli, or *Basler brunli* (“Basel little brown ones”), are also known as “Swiss brownies,” even though they are unlike American “brownies.” *Brunli* are a dark, rich, chewy, Christmas almond cookie made with cinnamon and cloves, a tradition and specialty of northern Switzerland since the 16th century. Local recipes vary.

Preheat oven to 325°F.

¾ cup sugar, plus more for rolling	2 tablespoons cocoa powder
Pinch of salt	2 tablespoons flour
9 ounces ground almonds	2 large egg whites
¾–2 teaspoons ground cinnamon (to taste)	3½ ounces bitter chocolate
⅛–½ teaspoon ground cloves (to taste)	2 teaspoons of <i>kirschwasser</i> (<i>kirsch</i> —“cherry water,” cherry brandy) for a little extra flavoring

1. Mix sugar, salt, almonds, cinnamon, ground cloves, cocoa powder, and flour in a bowl.

2. Add egg whites to the flour mixture and stir until all the ingredients are evenly distributed.
3. Cut chocolate in very small pieces, pour hot water over the chocolate, let rest for about 5 minutes. Pour off all water except about half a tablespoon, stir the chocolate until even. Immediately proceed with the next step.
4. Add melted chocolate from the previous step and the *kirsch*; knead to form a soft dough.
5. Roll out the dough on a flat surface (it may be slightly covered with sugar), to slightly less than ½-inch thick. Cut into different shapes and put them on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper.
6. Let them rest in a dry place for about 5–6 hours or overnight.
7. Bake the cookies for about 10–12 minutes in the middle of preheated oven, until slightly puffy and almost firm to touch.
8. Cool completely before serving.

Makes approximately 50 cookies.

***Chnüblätz* (“Knee cookies,” also Known as *Fasnachtsküchlein*, “Carnival Cookies,” Switzerland)**

(Adapted from Information about Switzerland. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.about.ch/culture/food/fasnachtskuechlein.html>.)

1½ cups plus 2 tablespoons white flour	3 tablespoons cream
1 teaspoon salt	Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting
2 eggs	Oil for frying

1. Put flour on a table or in bowl.
2. Add salt to the flour.
3. Add eggs and cream to the flour and blend.
4. Knead until the dough is soft and even.
5. Rinse a bowl with hot water, cover the dough with the bowl, and let it rest for about 30 minutes.
6. Cut the dough in 12 pieces of the same size.
7. Cover the work surface with flour and roll the pieces of dough as thin as possible. Stretch the dough over your knee to get it even thinner—therefore the name “knee cookie.”
8. Dust off the flour that is left on the cookies.

9. Heat the deep-frying oil in a pan to 355°F.
10. Put the pieces in hot oil, push down in center with a stick to help form the pastry's shape.
11. Fry on both sides until the cookies are golden.
12. Drain on paper towels.
13. Spread confectioners' sugar evenly over the cookies.

Makes about 12 cookies.

***Mailänderli* (“Little Milano” Cookies, Switzerland)**

(Adapted from Information about Switzerland. Accessed April 8, 2014. <http://www.about.ch/culture/food/mailaenderli.html>.)

The *Mailänderli* (“Little Milano” cookies), perhaps the quintessential Swiss Christmas cookie, are a just slightly sweet egg-enriched egg-washed shortbread with a hint of lemon that some say are actually the most popular Christmas cookie in all of Switzerland. Local recipes vary.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

9 ounces butter	Zest of 1 lemon
1½ cups sugar	4 cups flour
Pinch of salt	1 egg yolk
3 large eggs	

1. Cream the butter in a bowl.
2. Add the sugar, salt, and eggs to the butter, stir until ingredients are well blended.
3. Add lemon zest.
4. Add flour to the mixture and knead to form a soft dough.
5. Cover the dough, set aside to rest for about 2 hours in a cool place.
6. Cut the dough into pieces and roll out to approximately ¼-inch thick on a flat, flour-covered work surface. Cut out different shapes and put them on a parchment lined baking sheet.
7. Set aside in cool place for about 15 minutes.
8. Before baking, brush the cookies with the egg yolk.
9. Bake the cookies for about 10 minutes in the middle of preheated oven.
10. Let the cookies cool completely before serving.

Makes approximately 80 cookies.

***Karabeej Halab* (Nut-filled Pastry of Aleppo, Syria)**

(Adapted from the *Académie Syrienne de la Gastronomie*. November 27, 2011. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://gastro syr.com/eng/dessert/viewnews.php?id=1.>)

These traditional sweet small cakes that originate from the important culinary center of Aleppo, Syria, are a variant of *maamoul*, are traditionally oval in shape, and are eaten with a very sweet sauce called *natef*.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

For the Cakes:

4½ cups fine semolina	1 small tablespoon of orange blossom water
10⅔ ounces butter	
¼ cup plus two tablespoons water	

For the Filling:

4⅔ cups crushed pistachios (or walnuts)	¼ cup sugar
3 teaspoons ground cinnamon	2 tablespoons of orange blossom water

The Cakes:

1. Heat the butter and mix it with the semolina.
2. Add the water and the orange blossom water to the semolina and let stand for 3 hours; then knead.

The Filling:

3. Mix crushed pistachios (or walnuts) and mix with the sugar, cinnamon, and orange blossom water.
4. Take the cake dough and make balls of about ½ ounces. Put each ball in the palm of your left hand and with the forefinger of your right hand, make a cavity in this ball while turning it in the palm of your left hand; keep your hand always wet in order to avoid crumbling the paste. With a small spoon fill this cavity with some of the pistachio or walnut filling then close very gently. Put the balls on a buttered baking sheet.
5. Bake the balls for 15 minutes or until golden.
6. Cool on a wire rack.

The Dip Sauce (*Natef*):

1½ cups sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
⅔ cup water	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 egg whites	

7. Put the water and the sugar in a pan, heat and stir until the sugar dissolves.
8. Bring the syrup to a boil, and simmer for 5 minutes on low heat.
9. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form, then add the vanilla extract.
10. Add the syrup to the egg mixture very slowly while stirring continuously.
11. Arrange the *karabeej* in a dish, decorate with the dip sauce (*natef*) and cinnamon powder.
12. Serve the *karabeej* cold.

Pistachio Halva Dessert (Nut-filled Pastry of Aleppo, Syria)

(Adapted from Aleppo Food. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://en.aleppofood.com/recipe/pistachio-dessert/#.Uppf_LT-VoE.)

¾ cup toasted pistachios	4 tablespoons water
1 cup sugar	Juice of 1 sour lemon

1. Butter a 6 × 10-inch baking sheet.
2. Add sugar to water in a saucepan on medium heat. Stir until sugar dissolves.
3. Add lemon juice to the sugar and stir the syrup until it boils well and its color starts to change a little.
4. Remove syrup from the heat, add the pistachios, and stir.
5. Pour mixture onto the baking sheet and let cool.
6. Divide the pistachio *halva* into pieces and serve.

Tai Yang Bing (Sun Cakes, Taiwan)

(From How to Cook. August 26, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://howtocookdishes.blogspot.com/2013/08/how-to-make-taiwanese-sun-cakes-tai-yang-bing.html>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

For the Maltose Filling:

⅔ cup cake flour	½ cup maltose (available in Asian food stores)
4 ounces butter	
1 teaspoon hot water	1½ cups confectioners' sugar

For the Oil Dough (the “Inner” Dough):

1 cup vegetable shortening	2 cups cake flour
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For the Water Dough (the “Outer” Dough):

¼ teaspoon salt	⅔ cup vegetable shortening
¼ cup confectioners’ sugar	4½ cups cake flour
½ cup water	1 cup bread flour
½ cup corn oil	

For the Water Dough:

1. In a bowl, sift the bread and cake flours. Make a well in the center of the flour.
2. Add the shortening, salt, oil, water, and confectioners’ sugar to the flour mixture. Mix thoroughly until the dough is smooth.
3. Knead by hand until the dough becomes elastic.
4. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and let rest for half an hour.
5. Make 20 small pieces with the water dough.

For the Oil Dough:

6. In another bowl, combine the cake flour and shortening.
7. Follow the same process as with the water dough, and make 20 pieces.

For the Filling:

8. For the maltose filling, combine hot water and maltose in a bowl. Add confectioners’ sugar and continue to stir. Add butter and flour to the maltose and stir or knead until the dough is formed. Make 20 pieces of the filling.
9. You now have 20 pieces each of the maltose filling, the oil dough, and the outer water dough. Flatten a piece of water dough on your work surface with the palm of your hand, pick it up, then enclose a piece of the oil dough inside the water dough.
10. The next step is to roll the combined pieces out into a long rectangular strip to create multilayered pastry dough. Do that by first flattening the combined piece on your work surface with the palm of your hand, forming a circle. Roll up the flattened circle to form a fat cigar (or “Swiss roll”) shape. With a rolling pin, roll out the cigar-shaped piece lengthwise, into a long and narrow rectangular shape, about a foot or more in length. Next, roll up that rectangle into a cigar shape. Cut the resulting rolled piece into halves. Fold each of the pieces in half, and press each of those folded pieces flat on your working surface with the palm of your hand. Pick up a piece of the newly flattened dough, put it in your cupped hand, make an indentation in the center with your other thumb, and place a piece of the maltose filling in the indentation of the mixed dough. Then carefully wrap the dough around the filling by cupping your hand

and gently working the dough around the filling as you slowly spin the pastry. The filling should end up enclosed by the dough, and that whole piece should then be rolled into a ball. Flatten this ball a little bit on your work surface, and roll the ball (just a little) into a small round pancake-like shape with a rolling pin. Prick some holes in the dough with a fork (5–6 times), being careful not to prick through the bottom of the dough (otherwise the filling may leak out the bottom).

11. Place the balls on a parchment lined baking sheet.
12. Repeat the procedures with the remaining 19 sets of pieces: water dough, oil dough, and filling.
13. Bake the cakes for about 25 minutes, until they are golden brown.
14. Serve the cakes with your favorite syrup.

***Kluai Buat Chi* (Banana Cooked in Coconut Milk, Thailand)**

(Recipe from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.phukettourism.org/phuket/res_thaidesert_frame.html.)

2–3 small, slightly green bananas	1 cup sugar ¼ teaspoon salt
4 cups coconut <i>milk</i>	

1. Slice the bananas lengthwise, then in half.
2. Pour the coconut milk into a pan and add the sugar and salt. Bring to a boil.
3. Add the bananas to the coconut milk mixture, return to a boil for 2 minutes and then remove from heat.
4. Serve hot or cold.

Makes 4 servings.

***Sangkhaya* (Coconut-Egg Custard, Thailand)**

(From *The Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2009, as adapted from Kasma Loha-Unchit. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/features/food/la-fo-thai-dessertrec27b-2009may27,0,2550323.story#axzz2lvaBo6oA>.)

1 cup coconut cream (available in specialty food shops)	5 eggs ¼ teaspoon <i>bai dteuy</i> (pandan leaf essence) (optional)
1 cup palm sugar or coconut sugar	

1. In a medium saucepan, heat the coconut cream and sugar over medium heat just long enough to dissolve the sugar and blend with the cream, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and pour the mixture into a medium bowl to cool to room temperature.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until blended. Whisk in the essence, if using, then whisk in the cooled coconut cream mixture until thoroughly incorporated.
3. Strain the mixture through a dampened cloth or fine wire mesh strainer into an oiled 8-inch square baking dish.
4. Place the dish in an Asian steamer set over simmering water and cover. Alternatively, place the custard on a rack set over simmering water in a large roasting pan and cover. Steam over medium-high heat until the custard is set (a knife inserted near the center should come out clean), about 20 minutes. Remove from heat.
5. Serve custard in serving bowls or cut into slices (about 3 inches by about ½-inch thick) and serve on top of sticky rice made with coconut *milk*. One traditional way to serve *sangkha* is by cooking it in the center of a *kabocha* squash.

Serves 8.

***Sangkha* Fakthong (Pumpkin Custard, Thailand)**

(Recipe from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.phukettourism.org/phuket/res_thaidessert_frame.html.)

Small pumpkin

Pinch of salt

5 chicken eggs

1 cup coconut cream (available in specialty food shops)

⅓ cup palm sugar

1. Cut a slice off the top of the pumpkin; remove the seeds and most of the soft pulp.
2. In a mixing bowl, lightly whisk the eggs, add the sugar, salt, and coconut cream to the eggs and stir until well blended.
3. Pour the mixture into the pumpkin, replace the top of the pumpkin, and cook in a steamer (for approximately 20 minutes) until the custard is set.

Makes 4 servings.

Carrot Barfi (Tibetan Carrot Fudge Dessert, Tibet)

(From *Tibetan Desserts, Recipes of Asia*. September 20, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.asian-recipe.com/tibet/tibetan-desserts.html>.)

2 cups carrots, finely grated	½ cup almonds, thinly slivered
2 cups half-and-half	½ cup golden raisins
4 ounces butter	½ cup cashews
1 cup sugar	A few drops of red food coloring (optional)
1 teaspoon ground cardamom	

1. In a cooking pan, combine grated carrots and milk. Bring to a boil and simmer over low heat for an hour, until the carrots have softened.
2. Add butter, sugar, cardamom, almonds, raisins, and cashews to the carrots; mix thoroughly. Add the red food coloring (optional) and simmer, stirring continuously, for another 15–20 minutes, until the carrot mixture has thickened.
3. Remove the mixture from heat and spread the carrot *barfi* 2 inches thick in a well-buttered dish.
4. Chill the carrot *barfi* overnight in refrigerator.
5. Cut the *barfi* into 2-inch cubes.
6. Serve chilled, topped with sliced almonds.

***Kapse* (Fritters, Tibet)**

(Adapted from Three Delicious Tibetan New Year [*Losar*] Recipes. July 9, 2008. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://balisunset.hubpages.com/hub/Three-Delicious-Tibetan-New-Year-Losar-Recipes>.)

½ cup sugar	3½ cups flour
4 eggs	1 teaspoon baking powder
4 ounces butter, melted	Flour for dusting
1 teaspoon lemon zest	Fat for frying
½ cup milk, warmed	Confectioners' sugar, for dusting
A few drops of red food coloring	Honey, for drizzling

1. Combine sugar, eggs, melted butter, lemon zest, milk, and food coloring.
2. Sift flour with baking powder and gradually add to the batter. A stiff dough will result.
3. Place dough onto a work surface and knead briefly with floured hands.
4. Shape into small, flat balls, or more elaborate shapes. *Kapse* is a fried sweet made in different shapes and forms. Ambitious cooks, for example, shape the dough like lotus flowers.
5. Deep-fry fritters at around 375°F until they are golden brown.
6. Dust the fritters liberally with confectioners' sugar and drizzle with honey.

***Sikarni* (Spiced Sweet Yoghurt-Pistachio Dessert, Tibet)**

(From Tibetan Desserts, Recipes of Asia. September 20, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.asian-recipe.com/tibet/tibetan-desserts.html>.)

4 cups regular yoghurt	1 teaspoon ground cardamom
2 cups sour cream	¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
¼ cup lukewarm heavy cream (for dissolving saffron)	Dash of black pepper
2 cups sugar	A few threads of saffron
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 cup unsalted, shelled pistachios, cut into thin slices

1. In a large bowl, mix yoghurt and sour cream together.
2. Pour the yoghurt mixture into a large colander with a cheese cloth liner. Allow it to drain for about 12 hours.
3. Transfer the mixture into a mixing bowl. Dissolve saffron in lukewarm cream.
4. Fold the sugar, cinnamon, black pepper, cardamom, nutmeg, dissolved saffron, and pistachios into the yoghurt mixture.
5. Chill the mixture overnight in refrigerator.
6. To serve, scoop a cup of chilled dessert into a serving plate, and top with a generous amount of unsalted, shelled, whole pistachios.

***Helva-ı Sâbûnî* (Honey-Almond Candy, Turkey)**

(Adapted from Yerasimos, Marianna, *500 Years of Ottoman Cuisine*, Istanbul: Boyut Publishing and Trading Company, 2011.)

1 cup wheat starch (non-glutinous wheat flour product found at specialty shops)	1½ cups honey
9 ounces butter, melted	1 pound 2 ounces almonds
	3 cups water

1. To remove almond skins boil the almonds for 1 minute, then rinse immediately with cold water. Remove the skins. Put a few almonds aside for garnishing. Pound the rest of the almonds in a mortar or chop coarsely in a blender.
2. In a bowl, dissolve the wheat starch in the 3 cups of water. Make it not too wet and not too stiff.
3. Very carefully heat the honey in a heavy-bottomed pan over very low heat. Stir until thin, and add the starch to the honey.

4. Continue heating, stirring vigorously until the mixture thickens. When it gets hard to stir, start adding the melted butter gradually. Stir the mixture continuously.
5. Add the almonds and stir a bit longer. When it is taffy-like, and too thick to stir, turn it onto a cutting board.
6. When it has cooled completely, cut it into pieces with a knife and garnish with pieces of almond.

Serves 6–8.

***Lokum* (Turkish Delight, Turkey)**

(Adapted from Warren, Ozlem, Ozlem’s Turkish Table. June 18, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2014. [http://ozlemsturkishtable.com/2012/06/home-made-turkish-delight-lokum-and-they-go-so-well-with-turkish-coffee/.](http://ozlemsturkishtable.com/2012/06/home-made-turkish-delight-lokum-and-they-go-so-well-with-turkish-coffee/))

There are many variations of Turkish delight throughout the regions of Turkey. This recipe is for plain (*sade*) *lokum*; you may wish to add shelled and chopped nuts—hazelnuts, pistachios, or walnuts work well.

½ cup confectioners’ sugar	A few drops of red or pink food coloring (optional)
⅔ cup cornstarch	2 tablespoons rose water
3 cups castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	Gold edible glitter (optional)
Juice of 1 lemon	
3 tablespoons powdered gelatin	

1. Line an 8-inch square baking pan with plastic wrap. Sift confectioners’ sugar and 2 tablespoons of the cornstarch into a small bowl. Sprinkle a little cornstarch over the base and sides of the pan. Set the bowl aside.
2. Put castor sugar, lemon juice, and 1⅔ cups water into large pan. Heat the mixture gently until the sugar dissolves—do not boil. In a small bowl, mix the remaining cornstarch with ¼ cup of cold water, and then stir into sugar syrup. Sprinkle gelatin over liquid and stir with balloon whisk to break up lumps. Bring the syrup to boil, then simmer over medium heat for 20 minutes, whisking often. The mixture should thicken and turn pale yellow.
3. Remove from heat and whisk in the food coloring to turn mixture to light pink (optional). Set the mixture aside for 5 minutes, then stir in the rose water. Transfer mixture to the 8-inch square baking pan lined with plastic wrap, and let it set in a cool place overnight.

4. Dust a board with some of the reserved cornstarch mixture, and then invert the Turkish delight mixture onto it. Remove the pan and peel off the plastic wrap. Cut the Turkish delight into cubes, and then roll each gently in cornstarch mixture to coat.
5. Sprinkle a little glitter over the pieces, if using. Store the *lokum* in an airtight container with remaining cornstarch mixture at a cool room temperature for up to 1 month. To pack as gifts, sprinkle a little of the cornstarch mixture into a bag with the *lokum* and coat by shaking, to help prevent sweets from sticking together.
6. Turkish delight goes well with Turkish coffee.

Makes about 64 small squares.

***Babka* (Apple Cheese Cake, Ukraine)**

(Adapted from Zahny, Bohdan, *The Best of Ukrainian Cuisine*, New York: Hippocrene, 2005.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 pound grated farmer's cheese (or soft cheese like ricotta or cottage cheese, beaten or sieved until smooth) | 2 eggs, separated |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt | $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce butter (for greasing the pot) |
| 4 tablespoons sugar | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bread crumbs |
| 1 pound of apples, peeled, cored, grated | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit syrup of your choice (available in speciality shops) |

1. Add salt and sugar to the cheese.
2. Mix the cheese with the grated apples.
3. Add egg yolks and half the bread crumbs to the apple-cheese mixture.
4. Beat egg whites until stiff, then gently fold into the cheese mixture.
5. Butter a pot that can be used as the top of a double boiler. Pour the bread-crumbs into the buttered pot; shake the pot to spread the crumbs up and down the sides.
6. Pour the cheese mixture into the prepared pot. Simmer, covered, in the double boiler, until bubbles form around the edge of the cheese mixture.
7. Remove the mixture from the heat, and continue stirring it until the mixture cools. The stirring ensures a silky-smooth *babka*.
8. Serve with fruit syrup.

***Pampushky* (Jam-Filled Donuts, Ukraine)**

(Adapted from Corona, Annette Ogrodnik, *New Ukrainian Cookbook*, New York: Hippocrene, 2012.)

2 cups strawberry, apricot, or raspberry jam (or your favorite jam)	4 egg yolks
4 cups lard for frying (this is the traditional recipe, oil is acceptable)	1 tablespoon brandy or rum (optional)
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting	2½ ounces unsalted butter, melted
¼ teaspoon dry yeast (one package)	Zest from 1 lemon (or 1 tablespoon)
1 cup warm milk	¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup plus 1 teaspoon granulated sugar	3–3½ cups flour

1. Combine the teaspoon of sugar, the warm milk, and the yeast. Set aside until yeast mixture becomes foamy, about 10 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, mix the remaining sugar, the egg yolks, the brandy or rum (if using), and the melted butter.
3. Add the yeast mixture to the sugar/egg yolk mixture. Stir in lemon zest and salt.
4. Gradually add about 3 cups of the flour. When the dough starts to become a solid, sticky, mass, dump it onto a floured surface and knead it until it is smooth and elastic, adding flour as necessary to produce a smooth, silky-feeling dough.
5. Transfer the dough to a generously buttered bowl and rotate the dough to cover the entire surface with butter. Set aside in a warm draft-free place for about an hour or until it doubles in volume.
6. When the dough has doubled in volume, return it to the work surface. Punch it down and divide it into two portions (for ease of handling).
7. Cover one piece with a damp towel. Roll the other piece to a thickness of about ¼ inch. Cut into circles about 3 inches across. Transfer the circles to a greased baking sheet.
8. On each circle, place a generous teaspoon of jam. Place another circle of dough on top, and seal the edges. Then, place the dough in your palms to make a soft, round ball and return to baking sheet. Repeat this process until all the dough is used. Set *pampushky* aside in a draft free area, uncovered, until they are double in volume.
9. In a deep skillet, heat the lard or oil until it is hot, about 375°F–400°F. Fry the *pampushky* a few at a time until they are golden on each side, usually 5–6 minutes total. Remove them to a wire rack.
10. Allow the *pampushky* to “dry” for 10–15 minutes, then dust them generously with confectioners' sugar.

***Povydllo* (Cooked Fruit Pulp, Ukraine)**

(Adapted from Corona, Annette Ogrodnik, *New Ukrainian Cookbook*, New York: Hippocrene, 2012.)

Povydllo can be made with the very ripe fruits of your choice. Ukrainians usually use plums. Normally, there is no need to add sugar. *Povydllo* is used as jam, or as fruit fillings for pastries, such as *pampushky*.

5–6 pounds very ripe plums or the fruit of your choice (or combination)	Water Sugar or honey, according to taste
1 large, heavy, cast iron pot	

1. Wash, pit, and quarter the plums (or fruit of your choice) and put in the pot. Add some water (usually $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) to the pot, enough to cover the bottom. Bring the plums to a boil, stirring vigorously to prevent burning. When the mixture reaches boiling, reduce the heat to a high simmer and cook uncovered until most of the water evaporates, and the mixture is very thick.
2. Taste the fruit and sweeten to taste.
3. Place the pot in a 300°F oven, and continue to stew the fruit, stirring occasionally, for several hours (usually 5 or 6 hours, depending on the fruit and the moisture content), until the pulp gets so thick that it is more solid than liquid. You should be able to separate it, and the separation does not fill back in.
4. Remove the fruit pulp from the oven and cool.
5. The pulp can be packed into sterilized jars and stored refrigerated for months, or it can be frozen.

Appalachian Apple Stack Cake (United States)

(From Jill Sauceman, Johnson City, Tennessee [cake layers only], *Southern Living* APRIL 2005. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/apple-stack-cake-10000001062186/>.) Note from *Southern Living*: “Jill Sauceman’s grandmother used a less spicy filling during the Depression because spices were hard to come by. We combined her cake recipe with a spicier version. Do not be tempted to eat the cake until it has been stored for two days. This seasoning allows the moisture from the filling to soften the cake layers. This cake also freezes well.”)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup vegetable shortening	4 cups flour
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 large egg	1 teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup molasses

½ cup buttermilk

2½ teaspoons sugar

1. Beat shortening at medium speed with an electric mixer 2 minutes or until it becomes creamy. Gradually add ½ cup sugar, beating the mixture for 5–7 minutes. Add the egg, beating until the yellow color fades.
2. Stir together buttermilk and molasses in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Gradually add flour mixture to shortening mixture alternately with buttermilk mixture; beat until all the ingredients are blended.
3. Divide dough into 5 equal portions; place each portion in a 9-inch greased and floured cake pan or cast-iron skillet, and firmly press with floured fingers into pan. Prick dough several times with a fork. Sprinkle each layer evenly with ½ teaspoon sugar.
4. Bake the cakes in preheated oven for 10 minutes or until they become golden brown, being careful to allow ample space between pans. Remove the layers from pans; cool them completely on wire racks.
5. Saving your prettiest cake for the top layer, spread 1½ cups dried apple filling (recipe below) between each layer to within ½ inch of the edges. Loosely cover the cake, and let it stand 2 days at room temperature.

Dried Apple Filling

(From *Southern Living* APRIL 2005. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/dried-apple-filling-10000001062187/>.)

3 (6 ounce) packages dried sliced apples

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)

6 cups water

½ teaspoon ground allspice (optional)

1 cup firmly packed brown sugar

½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

1 teaspoon ground ginger (optional)

(optional)

1. Stir together apples and 6 cups water in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Bring it to a boil; reduce the heat, and simmer it 30 minutes or until the apples become tender. Stir in the sugar, and, if desired, spices.
2. Return the mixture to a boil; reduce the heat, and simmer it, stirring occasionally, 10–15 minutes or until most of the liquid has evaporated.
3. Cool the filling completely.

Banana Split (United States)

(From Rigby, Will O., and Fred Rigby, *Rigby's Reliable Candy Teacher: With Complete and Modern Soda, Ice Cream and Sherbet Sections . . .*, 13th Edition. Topeka, KS: 1920, p. 239. Source: Weiss, Laura. (2011). *Ice Cream: A Global History*. London: Reaktion Books.)

“Peel a solid banana and split it into two parts. Lay one of these parts on each side of an oblong glass or china tray then between the two, place a disher of vanilla ice cream, a disher of chocolate ice cream and a disher of strawberry ice cream. Over the strawberry, pour crushed strawberries; over the chocolate, crushed pineapple; and over the plain ice cream, crushed cherries. Sprinkle lightly with nuts. Top with whipped cream.”

Butter Drop Cookies (Modern Adaptation of Amelia Simmons's 1796 Recipe) (United States)

(Originally adapted from Amelia Simmons's “Butter drop do.” Cookies, *The First American Cookbook: A Facsimile of “American Cookery,” 1796* [Hartford: Printed for Simeon Butler, Northampton, 1798] by David Walbert, as “Butter drop do [gingerbread].” April 11, 2011. Accessed April 4, 2014. <http://www.davidwalbert.com/recipes/recipe.php?id=6>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1¾ cups flour	2 ounces butter
¼ teaspoon mace	2 eggs
Pinch of salt	1 teaspoon rose water (or brandy)
1 cup light brown sugar	Water, as needed

1. Whisk the mace and salt into the flour.
2. Rub the butter and sugar into the flour with your fingers.
3. In a separate bowl, lightly beat the eggs with the rose water (or brandy), then stir this into the flour-butter mixture until the dough just barely comes together.
4. Shape the dough into 1 inch balls and roll them in granulated sugar. (Amelia Simmons, author of *The First American Cookbook, 1796*, would have shaped these with a pair of soup spoons.)
5. Bake them for 10 minutes in preheated oven on a lightly greased baking sheet, until they are set up but not browned. Cool them on racks.
6. Serve them with a really excellent cup of tea.

Hummingbird Cake (United States)

(From *Southern Living*, February 1978, originally submitted by Mrs. L.H. Wiggins of Greensboro, North Carolina. Accessed April 6, 2014. http://img4-3.southernliving.timeinc.net/static/pdf/humcake_feb_1978.pdf.)

Since the Hummingbird Cake recipe originally ran in 1978, it has become the most requested recipe in *Southern Living* history.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

3 cups flour	1 (8 ounce) can crushed pineapple, undrained
2 cups sugar	
1 teaspoon salt	1½–2 cups pecans or walnuts, chopped, divided
1 teaspoon baking soda	2 cups bananas, chopped
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	Cream cheese frosting (recipe below)
3 large eggs, beaten	
½ cups vegetable oil	
½ teaspoons vanilla extract	

1. Combine dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl; add eggs and oil to the dry mixture, stirring until the dry ingredients are moistened. (Do not beat.)
2. Stir vanilla, pineapple, 1 cup chopped pecans, and bananas into the moist mixture.
3. Pour batter into three greased and floured 9-inch round cake pans. Bake in preheated oven for 25–30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
4. Cool the cakes in pans on wire racks 10 minutes; remove from pans, and cool completely on wire racks.
5. Spread cream cheese frosting between layers and on top and sides of the cake; sprinkle ½–1 cup chopped pecans on top.
6. Store the cake in refrigerator.

For Cream Cheese Frosting:

1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened	16 ounces confectioners' sugar
4 ounces butter or margarine, softened	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Beat cream cheese and butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until smooth. Gradually add confectioners' sugar to the cheese-butter mixture, beating at low speed until light and fluffy.
2. Stir in vanilla.

Ojibwa American Indian Fry Bread—“Indian Donuts” (United States)

(Adapted from Paul Buffalo, *When Everybody Called Me Gah-bay-bi-nayss*, Ball Club, Minnesota, 1971. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/Buffalo/pbwww.html#title>.)

“It’s simple to make fry bread. You just deep fry bread dough in grease, that’s all. It’s simple. You just take baking powder and add that to your flour. Fry bread’s made from flour and baking powder, water, and salt. That’s all. You just mix that together and deep fry it, yes. Boy that’s good. That’s what I call an Indian donut. Indian donuts! Ya, that’s life.”

3 cups flour, plus extra for processing	Maple syrup, honey, berries in thick
1 tablespoon baking powder	syrup, or confectioners’ sugar
½-1 teaspoon salt	(optional)
1–1¼ cups warm water	

1. Blend flour with the baking powder and salt in a large bowl.
2. Make a well in the center of the flour, baking powder, and salt mixture and pour the warm water into the center of the well. Work the flour mixture into the water to form a soft, but not sticky, dough.
3. Gently knead the dough by hand, and form it into a ball.
4. Cover the dough with a clean kitchen towel to prevent it from drying and let the dough rest for 10–20 minutes.
5. Pull off large pieces of dough, and pat or roll each piece to about ¼-inch thickness.
6. In a deep heavy pan, fry the dough in simmering fat a minimum of 1 inch deep. Do not overcrowd the pan. Fry 2–3 minutes per side.
7. Place the finished fry breads on paper towels to absorb excess oil.
8. Serve hot.
9. To make fry breads a sweet treat, top with pure maple syrup, honey, berries in thick syrup, or dust with confectioners’ sugar.

The Original Girl Scout Cookies, ca. 1922 (United States)

(From Girl Scouts of the United States of America, *The History of Girl Scout Cookies*. Accessed November 22, 2013. http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_cookies/history.asp.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

8 ounces butter	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup sugar plus additional amount for topping (optional)	2 cups flour
2 eggs	1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons milk	2 teaspoons baking powder

1. Cream butter and the cup of sugar until light and fluffy; add well-beaten eggs, then add milk, vanilla, flour, salt, and baking powder to the butter-sugar mixture. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
2. Roll the dough and cut it into trefoil shapes; sprinkle sugar on top of the cookies, if desired.
3. Bake the cookies for approximately 8–10 minutes or until the edges begin to brown. Place on wire rack to cool.

Makes 6–7 dozen cookies.

Thomas Jefferson's Savoy Biscuit [Small Cake] Recipe, 1780s (United States)

(Source: Library of Congress and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. Accessed April 6, 2014. For a facsimile of the original Savoy Biscuit recipe, in Jefferson's own handwriting, see <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/gallery/image/184/Savoy-Biscuit-and-two-other-dessert-recipes/>.)

Thomas Jefferson's Savoy Biscuit Recipe

To make biscuit de Savoye

12 eggs
12 tablespoonfulls of sugar

separate the yolk and white perfectly
grate the peel of one orange
mix the whole and beat them very well
6. spoonfulls of flour. put thro' a [sieve]
beat well the whites separately
mix the whole gently
grease the mould with butter
powder it with sugar
put in the mixture and put it in the
oven. of the same heat as directed
in the case of the macaroons.

take care not to shut the oven till
 the biscuit begins to swell up.
 then close the oven.
 a half an hour suffices to bake
 more or less according to size.

Thomas Jefferson's Vanilla Ice Cream, 1780s (United States)

Thomas Jefferson, ambassador to France (1784–1789), brought back a recipe for vanilla ice cream to his home at Monticello, where he often made ice cream, one of the most popular sweet treats served there. For a facsimile of Jefferson's ice cream recipe from the Thomas Jefferson Papers Collection of the Library of Congress, written in his own hand, see <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page056.db&recNum=145>, <http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/home-activity-0>). A transcription is online at <http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/home-activity-0>. (Accessed April 6, 2014.) The backside of Jefferson's vanilla ice cream recipe, also written in his own hand, is a recipe for "Savoy biscuits" (heavily floured sponge cake-like ladyfingers) to accompany his ice cream.

Modern Version of Thomas Jefferson's Vanilla Ice Cream Recipe

(Adapted by Kimball, Marie, *Thomas Jefferson's Cook Book*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1976. First published in 1938.) Accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/ice-cream#footnote14_xd7ugai.)

"Beat the yolks of 6 eggs until thick and lemon colored. Add, gradually, 1 cup of sugar and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil 1 quart of cream and pour slowly on the egg mixture. Put in top of double boiler and when [it] thickens, remove and strain through a fine sieve into a bowl. When cool add 2 teaspoonfuls of vanilla. Freeze, as usual, with one part of salt to three parts of ice. Place in a mould, pack with ice and salt for several hours. For electric refrigerators, follow usual direction, but stir frequently."

True New York Cheesecake (United States)

(Adapted from Stern, Jane & Michael, *Real American Food*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

For the Crust:

1 cup flour	Dash vanilla extract
¼ cup sugar	1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon lemon zest	4 ounces butter, softened

For the Filling:

20 ounces cream cheese	1 teaspoon lemon zest
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar	1 teaspoon orange zest
3 eggs plus 1 yolk	$1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons heavy cream or sour cream	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

To Make Crust:

1. Combine flour, sugar, lemon zest, and dash of vanilla extract in a large bowl.
2. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and add egg yolk and butter, working the ingredients into a soft dough, adding a dash of ice water if necessary.
3. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and chill for 1 hour.
4. Butter the bottom and sides of a 7-inch springform pan.
5. Using a floured rolling pin on a lightly floured work surface, roll out dough to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick. Using springform pan as a guide, cut a circle to fit the bottom. Carefully remove dough from work surface, and press it onto bottom of pan.
6. Press remainder of dough onto sides of pan in an even ribbon, neatly joining the seams, and the sides to bottom.
7. Bake the dough 15 minutes, until it begins to brown at edges.
8. Remove the crust from oven and cool.
9. Reduce the oven temperature to 250°F.

To Make Filling:

1. Beat cream cheese until smooth, then beat in remaining filling ingredients.
2. Pour into cooled crust.
3. Bake for 1 hour at 250°F.
4. Turn off the oven, open the oven door partially, and let the cake sit 15 minutes on the oven shelf.
5. Remove the cake from oven and cool completely.
6. When cooled, remove side of the springform pan.
7. Cover the cake with a loose sheet of plastic wrap and cool it in refrigerator for 1 hour before serving.

Serves 8.

Twelve-Egg Chiffon Cake (United States)

(Tested and contributed by Claire, Eli, and Nora Roufs of Duluth, Minnesota, and Casey Pedro Roufs of Cleveland Heights, Ohio.)

The richly flavored cake invented by Harry Baker in 1927 was rebranded “chiffon cake” by Betty Crocker in 1948. This luscious moist version with a hint of citrus is made with a dozen eggs, if the backyard chickens are laying daily, fewer during the winter months with shorter days and less sunshine, and hence fewer eggs. Both angel food and chiffon cakes are best eaten plain, dusted with confectioners’ sugar, or eaten with whipped cream. Some people like them sprinkled with chocolate bits or with fresh strawberries.

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

1–1½ cups sugar (to taste)	¼ teaspoon lemon extract
¾ cup cake flour	½ teaspoon almond extract
¾ cup flour	Zest of 1 orange
2 teaspoons baking powder	½ teaspoon cream of tartar (or, preferably, if you have a copper mixing bowl for egg whites available, beat the eggs in that and omit the cream of tartar)
½ teaspoon salt	Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting (optional)
½ cup vegetable oil	Whipped cream, chocolate bits, fresh berries (optional)
¾ cup water	
12 freshly laid eggs, separated	
1 tablespoon vanilla extract	
½ teaspoon pure orange extract	

1. Line the bottom of a large tube pan with parchment paper.
2. Whisk the sugar, flours, baking powder, and salt together in a bowl large enough to hold the beaten egg whites.
3. Whisk the egg yolks, water, vegetable oil, orange zest, and extracts in with the dry ingredients, beating until the batter is smooth.
4. Beat the egg whites with a mixer set at low speed until they become foamy; add cream of tartar (if using) and gradually increase the speed of the mixer to high; then beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
5. Carefully and gently fold beaten egg whites into the batter.
6. Pour the batter in a large tube pan. Carefully and gently run the blade of a table knife through the batter several times to eliminate bubbles.
7. With a dry paper towel, wipe off any batter that may have dripped onto the inside walls or the tube of the pan.
8. Bake the cake on the middle rack of preheated oven until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, about 55–60 minutes. Immediately turn the cake upside down to cool. Let the cake cool completely before removing from the pan.
9. Serve the cake plain, or with a dusting of confectioners’ sugar. Whipped cream and strawberries or blueberries, or chocolate bits, are also optional.

***Bien me Sabe de Coco* (Venezuelan Coconut Cream Cake, Venezuela)**

(Contributed by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.)

Bien me sabe is a deliciously rich coconut cake with layers of cream and meringue. The name translates to “tastes good to me.” This cake is similar to *tres leches* cake in that it is served chilled and is extremely moist, sweet, and rich. You can prepare this cake using a cake mix to save time, or use your favorite white cake or sponge cake recipe. *Bien me sabe* is best if allowed to chill overnight; so plan ahead if possible.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

For the Cake:

1 white cake mix, or prepare your favorite white cake recipe	Vegetable oil (according to cake mix directions)
3 eggs	

For the Coconut Cream Filling:

5 egg yolks (reserve the egg whites for meringue)	1⅓ cups milk
½ cup sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 tablespoons cornstarch	1 cup shredded sweetened dried coconut
1 (14 ounce) can coconut cream (available at specialty food shops)	Pinch of salt
	2 cups heavy whipping cream

For the Syrup:

¾ cup sugar	2 tablespoons rum (optional)
¾ cup water	

For the Meringue Topping:

5 egg whites	½ cup water
1½ cups sugar	1 tablespoon corn syrup

To Garnish:

1½ cups shredded sweetened dried coconut for garnish	Ground cinnamon
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1. While oven is preheating, spread ½ cup sweetened dried coconut in a cake pan and place in the oven to toast. Check the coconut frequently and stir occasionally so that it toasts evenly. When it has toasted and is golden brown, remove the coconut from oven and set it aside.

Prepare the Cake:

2. Prepare your favorite white cake recipe, or a cake mix according to package directions. Line a 9 × 13-inch pan with parchment paper. Pour the batter into pan, and bake. Remove cake from oven and cool it completely.

Prepare Coconut Cream Pudding:

3. In a medium saucepan, bring the coconut cream, milk, and salt to a simmer. While the milk is heating, put the egg yolks, cornstarch, and sugar in a separate bowl and whisk until smooth. When the milk starts to simmer, remove it from heat and pour about a cup of the hot milk into the egg mixture, whisking quickly to mix. Pour the egg mixture back into the saucepan, and return it to the stove. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until cream mixture starts to thicken and come to a boil. Remove from heat and let it cool. Stir in the vanilla, cover the surface of the coconut cream with a piece of plastic wrap and chill it for an hour or two.
4. Once the coconut cream is chilled, whip the cream.
5. Whisk a cup of the whipped cream into the coconut cream to lighten it and then fold the remaining whipped cream into the coconut cream. Chill until ready to assemble.

Prepare Syrup (for Moistening Cake):

6. Bring $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sugar and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water to a boil. Remove the syrup from heat, let it cool and then stir in the rum (if using).

Prepare Meringue:

7. Place egg whites in a (very clean) bowl of an electric mixer, and attach the wire whisk. Place the sugar, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water, corn syrup, and pinch of salt in a small saucepan, and bring it to a boil. When the temperature of the sugar syrup reaches about 240°F, or after about 3 minutes, turn on the mixer and start beating the egg whites. When the temperature reaches 248°F, remove the syrup from the heat. The total cooking time is about 4 minutes, the sugar syrup should make thin threads if you drip it off a spoon, and will have thickened. The egg whites should be forming stiff peaks. Slowly and carefully pour the syrup down the side of the mixer bowl, into the beaten egg whites, stirring continually. Stir the meringue until it cools; about 5 minutes. Fold in 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract and 1 teaspoon of rum (if desired).

Assemble Cake:

8. Remove cake from pan, and slice the cake horizontally into two layers. Spread half of the coconut cream mixture on the bottom of the 9 × 13-inch cake pan. Place one layer of cake on top of the coconut cream. Use a pastry brush to moisten the cake with some of the syrup; then sprinkle the cake lightly with cinnamon. Spread the remaining coconut cream on top of the cake. Cover the cream with second cake layer. Moisten the cake with syrup

and sprinkle it with cinnamon. Top the cake with meringue mixture, using a spoon to swirl meringue decoratively. Turn on oven broiler and carefully broil the top of the meringue under the broiler (for just a minute or two, not too close).

9. Sprinkle the top of cake with toasted coconut. Chill the cake several hours or overnight before serving.

***Dulce de Lechoza* (Caramelized Papaya, Venezuela)**

(Contributed by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.)

This delicious fruit dessert is specially made for Christmas holidays.

2 cups sugar	3½ pounds firm green papayas
14-inch cinnamon stick	(<i>lechoza</i>), peeled, seeded, and cut lengthwise into ½-inch thick strips

1. In a heavy 3-quart saucepan spread $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of sugar.
2. Add the cinnamon stick and top the sugar with half of the papaya strips.
3. Sprinkle $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of the remaining sugar on top.
4. Add the remaining papaya strips, and top the strips with the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar.
5. Cook the mixture, covered, over moderately low heat, shaking the pan occasionally (do not stir), for 35–45 minutes, or until the sugar is dissolved completely.
6. Simmer the papaya strips, uncovered, for 10 minutes, or until they begin to appear translucent.
7. Let the mixture cool, and chill it, covered, overnight.
8. The papaya, in cinnamon syrup can be stored, covered and chilled, for 1 month.

***Polvorosas* (“Dusty” Cookies, Venezuela)**

(Contributed by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.)

The cookie name literally means “dusty.” They are delicious, easy to make, and crumbly to eat.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

1½ cups flour	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3⅔ ounces vegetable shortening, or 4 ounces butter	Pinch of salt
1 cup confectioners’ sugar	Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting (optional)

1. Mix flour with sugar and salt, then add the shortening or butter to the flour. Knead the flour mixture with your hand until dough is smooth. The dough might remain somewhat crumbly, which is the nature of these delicate cookies.
2. Carefully, shape small circular cookies, place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and flatten to about ½-inch thick.
3. Bake the cookies for about 10 or 15 minutes in the middle of the oven. When the cookies are done, the bottoms should be slightly browned. Remove from oven.
4. Let the polvorosas cool, and then dust with confectioners' sugar (optional).

Quesillo (A Dessert Similar to Crème Caramel, Venezuela)

(Contributed by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.)

Creamy and sweet, one of Venezuelans' favorite desserts!

Preheat oven to 325°F.

6 large eggs	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk	Pinch of salt
1 cup whole milk	¾ cup sugar

1. In a heavy skillet or saucepan, melt the sugar with 2 tablespoons of water over medium heat, stirring it occasionally, until the sugar has melted completely and starts to turn golden brown.
2. Carefully pour the hot caramel into an 8-inch round cake pan, swirling it around to coat the bottom and sides of the pan (you will need potholders for this as the pan will quickly become very hot). Set the pan aside.
3. Whisk together the eggs, condensed milk, vanilla, and salt until they are well mixed.
4. Pour egg mixture into the pan. Place the pan inside of a larger pan with tall sides. Place the pan in the oven, and pull the rack with pan slightly out from the oven. Fill the larger pan around the *quesillo* pan with boiling water (to make a *bain-marie*).
5. Bake the *quesillo* until it no longer jiggles in the center, or just until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean—about 20–30 minutes.
6. Serve the *quesillo* warm or cold.

Bara Brith (Speckled Bread, Wales)

(Contributed by Jonathan Darby of London, England.)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

1 pound mixed dried fruit	6 tablespoons soft brown sugar
½ pint strong tea (I quite like using Earl Grey)	1 teaspoon of mixed spice (cloves, nutmeg, allspice)
2 tablespoons of thick cut marmalade (you need the chunks)	1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
1 large egg, beaten	1 pound self-rising flour

1. Soak the fruit in the tea overnight.
2. The next day, mix all ingredients together and pour into a greased loaf pan.
3. Bake the mixture for 45–50 minutes or until the center is cooked.
4. Check that the top does not burn and cover with foil, if necessary.
5. Once baked, take the bread from the oven, let it stand for a few minutes and then tip it onto a rack to cool.
6. Serve *bara brith* with butter and cheese, preferably Caerphilly or tasty (*i.e.*, strong) Cheddar.

Welsh Cakes (Wales)

(Contributed by Jonathan Darby of London, England.)

About this recipe, use butter, and only butter. In Mr. Darby’s own words, “If you want to use something instead of butter, use butter—none of that nasty margarine stuff.”

6 ounces butter	½ teaspoon mixed spice
1 pound self-rising flour	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¾ cup castor sugar (“superfine” sugar)	½ cup sultanas
1 teaspoon baking powder	2 large eggs, beaten

1. Rub the flour into the butter, and mix in the other dry ingredients.
2. Mix in the eggs to make a firm dough.
3. On a work surface lightly dusted with flour, roll the dough until it is about ¼- to ½-inch thick, then stamp out 2-inch wide circles with a cookie cutter.
4. Lightly grease an iron griddle and cook the cakes for about 3–4 minutes each side. The cakes burn easily, so keep the heat low so they cook all the way through.
5. Dust the cakes with sugar and serve them immediately, or store them in an airtight container.

Banana Peanut Cake (Ghana, West Africa)

(Adapted from African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania/Bea Sandler, *The African Cookbook*. New York: Kensington Publishing Group, 1993. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Cookbook/Dessert.html#ACCRA%20BANANA%20PEANUT%20CAKE>.)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

4 cups flour	4 eggs, lightly beaten
¼ cup cake flour	8 large very ripe bananas, peeled and mashed
4 teaspoons baking powder	1 cup peanuts, coarsely chopped, divided
1 teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon baking soda	
10 ounces butter, softened	
2½ cups sugar, divided	

1. In a large mixing bowl combine the flours, baking powder, salt, and baking soda.
2. Cream the butter and 2 cups sugar until the mixture is light and fluffy.
3. Blend in eggs to the butter mixture.
4. Fold in dry ingredients alternately with mashed bananas just until they are combined.
5. Stir in ½ cup of chopped peanuts. Scrape batter into well-greased 9 × 13-inch baking pan.
6. Sprinkle the top evenly with remaining chopped peanuts.
7. Bake the cake in preheated oven for 30–40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
8. Combine ½ cup sugar with cinnamon, mix, and set it aside.
9. Sprinkle the cake with cinnamon mixture as soon as the cake comes out of the oven.
10. Cool the cake in pan on wire rack for 10 minutes; turn the cake out of pan and cool it completely.
11. Wrap the cake in plastic wrap or foil. Cake is best if served next day.

Kanyah (Sugar Peanuts, Sierra Leone, West Africa)

Traditional West African snacks tend to be simple and easily prepared. The classic Sierra Leonian snack *kanyah* (sugar peanuts), for example, has only three ingredients.

1 cup parched rice

½ cup sugar

1 cup roasted groundnuts (peanuts)

1. Pound the groundnuts and rice into small pieces and combine them with sugar.
2. Form the mixture into balls, cubes, or pyramids and press them into a pan or cut them into squares, and you are finished. That is it.

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From their high school years in the 1960s at Holy Trinity High School in Winsted, Minnesota, where Kim won the Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow Award and Tim won third place in a regional cake baking contest (and each one the other's heart), the authors have been interested in each other, the cultures of food, and the role of food in cultures, and especially in sweet treats.

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Tim and Kim have lived and traveled in more than 30 countries, enjoying their culinary traditions and collecting, testing, and creating recipes. Few things represent cultures as does their foods, and among foods, sweet treats are universal, and it is to these that they most often turn their attention.