

FRESH NOW

The 12 Sweets of Christmas

From sugar plums to figgy pudding, Christmastime is a dessert-filled wonderland. Here are 12 globe-spanning holiday delights from Bay Area bakeries and sweets makers.

— Michael Bauer, Tara Duggan, Sarah Fritsche, Jonathan Kauffman, Alissa Merksamer and Miriam Morgan



Fruitcake

Preserves maker **Robert Lambert** makes several kinds of this love-it-or-hate-it holiday pastry — a molasses-laden dark version, a white (based on his English grandmother's recipe) and chocolate-infused — each of which bursts with an array of candied fruits and nuts, not to mention booze. The finished loaves are wrapped in cheesecloth and garnished with a bay leaf and a candied citrus peel star. For the serious fruitcake aficionado, Lambert offers aged versions.

\$55-\$75 depending on the kind/age of fruitcake at www.robertlambert.com



Rosca de reyes

Also known as kings' ring, this traditional leavened sweet bread is eaten as part of the Epiphany celebration on Jan. 6. **La Victoria Panadería** owner Jaime Maldonado opts for fresh fruit instead of the traditional dried, adding a garnish of candied citrus. The bakery also makes a Mexico City-inspired version that's filled with a custard cream. The roscaes are available only Jan. 1-7 and are popular, so ordering ahead is recommended.

\$21/4½-pound ring; \$31/3½-pound ring; \$41/4½-pound ring (large enough to "feed the clan," says Maldonado). Cream-filled version is an additional \$10. 2937 24th St. (at Alabama Street), S.F.; (415) 642-7120. www.lavictoriabakery.com



Classic Christmas cookies

When it comes to Christmas cookies, **Two Fish Baking Co.** owners Margaret Smith and Hilla Ahvenainen go old school with a mouthwatering assortment that includes raspberry linzer, Russian tea cakes reminiscent of snowballs, colorful apricot and raspberry window panes, chocolate ginger crinkles and, of course, tried-and-true shortbread cutout cookies piped with royal icing. Enjoy throughout the holiday season, but be sure to save a few for Santa. Price varies by type of cookie. 240 Ritch St. (between Bryant and Brannan streets), S.F.; (415) 970-6965. Also:



Pío Quinto

Supposedly named for Pope Pius V, this Nicaraguan Christmastime sweet from **Lelenita's Cakes** has a base of rum-soaked cake topped with custard, raisins and cinnamon. The syrup that soaks the cake — sometimes called sopa barracha or "drunken soup" — is made with water, sugar, rum and spices. Though it's usually available year-round, ordering ahead is recommended.

\$15/8-inch cake; \$3.50/slice. 3743 Mission St. (at Park Street), S.F.; (415) 282-2253. www.lelenitascakesandservices.com