

Best Of The Best Chocolate Cakes In State

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— With 62 entries from across the state in the Greatest Cocoa Cake Contest, what are the chances of two best friends ending up in the top three placings?

Shrieks, tears, hugs and gasps broke out when Belinda Myers of Dallastown was proclaimed first-place winner after her friend Judy Ulrich of York placed third. The two have entered competitions together before, but to qualify for the state contest, each needed to place first in a local fair. Judy placed first at the York Fair and Belinda at the South Mountain Fair before meeting again for the bake-off. Second-place winner was Julie Raup of Montour County.

Belinda's prize is a weekend trip for four to the Hershey Resort and Conference Center in Hershey.

An expectant crowd gathered in front of the 62 chocolate cakes that were being judged last Saturday during the Greatest Cake and Cookie Contest held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show. While the top three cakes are held for display during the Farm Show, the remainder are sliced and distributed to the waiting crowd.

All of the cakes and cookies have been selected as previous blue ribbon winner at a local fair. So when tasting begins, this is no ordinary run-of-the mill cake. Each is a culinary and visual delight. One square layered cake was wrapped in gold ribbon like a present. Another was heart-shaped, and another shaped as a basket and topped with fresh flowers. Cakes with basket weaves, some with chocolate flowers or

butterfly shapes, some with cherries, nuts, caramel, butterscotch, some drizzled with chocolate and others piled high with frosting showed that there is more than one way to bake a prize-winning cake.

First-place winner Belinda Myers had decorated her cake with intricate lattice-work triangles. But she is confident her win came from the taste and not just appearance.

"It's the black raspberry filling and liquor," she said. "Judges like that taste," she said confidently.

For the local contest, Belinda cooked the black raspberry jam herself to prepare the cake filling spread on three layers. But, when state competition came, Belinda discovered she had used all her homemade raspberry jam. Fortunately her grandmother had some frozen raspberries for her to make a new batch.

She and her husband Andy have two children who raise show beef cattle. The expert cook won the apple pie contest at the 1989 Farm Show.

It was the first ribbon for Julie Raup who entered the state competition for the second time. The dark cocoa cake with light colored frosting was decorated in a basket weave and topped with nuts.

"The secret is moistness," Judy said of the third-prize Bavarian Torte made with black coffee, oil, and milk to keep it moist. "And the icing is light and fluffy made with heavy whipping cream and cream cheese."

Although Judy and Belinda often vie for the same prize, they said the competition doesn't hurt their friendship.

"We're just like one big family and help each other out," Belinda



Out of 62 entries in Hershey's Greatest Cocoa Cake Contest best friends Belinda Myers, right, and Judy Ulrich, left, took first and third places respectively. Julie Raup, center, placed second.

said.

Here are the top three recipes in the contest sponsored by Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and Hershey Foods.

Belinda Myers' Chocolate Chambora Cake First Prize

Cake:

½ cup Hershey's cocoa
3 tablespoons oil
¾ cup butter, softened
¾ cup cake flour
1 teaspoon salt
2½ cups ice water
1 cup black raspberry jam with

seeds

¾ cup Chambora liquor
1½ cups sugar
¾ cup brown sugar
3 eggs
2½ teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoons vanilla

Icing:

¾ cup butter
1 cup cocoa
½ to ½ cup milk
2 tablespoons Chambora liquor
5½ cups confectioners' sugar
For cake: Blend oil and cocoa to make a paste. Cream butter, sugar, and brown sugar. Add vanilla, la, and cocoa paste. Cream until

light and fluffy. Gradually add flour, salt, and baking soda alternately with ice water until blended well. Grease two 8-inch round cake pans lined with waxed paper. Divide cake mix evenly between the two pans. Bake in a 325 degree oven for 40 to 50 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool.

Place one layer on dollied covered board. Split layer in half. Brush ½ cup Chambora Liquor on cake. Spread ½ cup raspberry filling. Place other half on top. Repeat.

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Dairy Farm Wife Bakes Best Apple Pie In State

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— For seven years Judy Kneebone's goal has been to bake the best apple pie in the state and take home the \$100 prize from the annual contest held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

This year perseverance paid off. Judy's pie was proclaimed the best of the best from 54 entries that first needed to take first place at a local fair before being eligible for state competition.

"I'm always in the kitchen," said this dairy farm wife, who loves to bake and can for her husband Bob and children Shawn and

Shelly. The Kneebones live in Banger, Northampton County. Judy's pie took top honors at the Blue Valley Farm Show, which qualified her to enter state competition.

The waiting for Judy and the other contestants was nervewracking. Competition begins at 10 a.m., but judging continued for more than three hours.

"The competition is so stiff because there are so many great pies here," Judy said.

That fact is confirmed by the vast array of pies, many with artistic and elaborate crusts, some had dough cutouts that were painted or intricately cut. There were apple

pies baked with strawberries, pecans, caramel, lemon, lime, and raspberries.

Last year Judy came close to winning by placing second. Unlike many other regular contestants who enter the same pie recipe each year, Judy always made up a new recipe. This year's basic apple pie was topped with a caramel topping sprinkled with pecans. An apple sliced in half was plopped in the center for eye appeal.

Judy prefers using MacIntosh apples because "they are sweet, soft, and easy to test for doneness," she said. "I don't like lots of spices—just cinnamon," she said.

She credits her mother and 4-H

involvement with helping her develop cooking skills. In other competition, Judy placed first in her division in the Fashion Show. She also won several ribbons for baked goods that she had entered.

"My husband said that we might as well make it worthwhile if we are coming anyway," Judy said. Her parents take care of the dairy while the Kneebone family participates in the many activities the Farm Show offers.

It was a tough call for judges Roxanne Price, Patricia Powley, Wilma Jane Ferster, and Brad Flick. In fact, when the scores were tallied, second and third-place winners were tied and judges needed to recast their votes.

Taking second place was Sherry Cashdollar of Mars, Butler County. Her Nutty Caramel Apple Pie won first place at the Butler Fair and Agricultural Association earlier this year.

It was the third year Sherry had entered.

Her secret for baking a prize-winning apple pie she revealed is in using four or five varieties of apples—at least three should be used she said.

"Apples should be as fresh as possible, although at this time of the year that is difficult," she said.

After several experiments, Sherry braided the edges of the crust with two strands of dough to hold in the pecan and caramel topping that she placed on top of the pie.

The family needed to drive five hours from their home to the Farm Show the day before. On the way, her daughter accidentally threw a pillow on top of the pie. After a few minutes of panic, a relieved mother found the pie showed no

signs of being hit by a pillow. Sherry also baked a cake to bring for competition.

Her five-year-old daughter also loves to bake and won a best of show in bread baking competition at the local fair.

Third place and \$40 went to Michelle Davis of Lancaster County who qualified at her hometown New Holland Farmers Fair.

It was the second time, Michelle entered. Last year, she placed in the top twenty finalist selection.

Michelle said that she began baking when five years old. For competition, she perfected her grandmother's crust recipe by adding creative touches. She dipped sliced apples in a candied sugar mixture to garnish the top of the pie crust.

"It took five tries before it worked because the mixture kept hardening," Michelle said.

Her unusual pie filling included cranberries, white raisins, and orange juice.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show Tenth Blue Ribbon Apple Pie Contest was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association of County Fairs, The Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program, and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Here are the top three recipes.

Judy' Kneebone's Apple Pie First Prize

Crust:

2 cups flour
1 heaping teaspoon salt
¾ cup shortening
3 tablespoons butter
5-6 tablespoons ice water
Sprinkle of cinnamon and sugar

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After seven years of entering the annual Blue Ribbon Apple Pie Contest at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, perseverance paid off for dairy farm wife Judy Kneebone, whose pie was proclaimed best in the state. Second place went to Sherry Cashdollar, center, and third to Michelle Davis, left. Behind her is Jacquelyn Everitt of the Department of Agriculture. Russ Redding, right, handed out the ribbons for the Department of Agriculture.