

Letter received from Andrea Bolton and reprinted with her permission.

Dear Monks of Assumption Abbey,

Hello! I hope the day is finding you well. The rain is very useful, but we, in Missouri, have had a lot of it lately.

I received your fruitcake in March, and was so excited to see it waiting for me, by my door. I hurriedly took it inside the house to open the package. I felt like a child again, anticipating a gift I had been hoping for.

I wrote to you with my order, that I saw an article about the Monastery, and that I have a life list from lots of traveling, to very simple things including "try a fruitcake." I try to honor Christmas-time in my heart, all year through, and fruitcake is so much associated with Christmas, that is why it is on the life list.

So anyway, back to my story. I eagerly anticipated the tasting of the fruitcake. I was greatly impressed with the article about the Abbey and how the fruitcake came about that accompanied my fruitcake. I read these things before the first tasting began, which just heightened my excitement.

My first bite I was so impressed. This was not at all, what I expected. It was really, good. It crossed my mind, recalling stories of horror and dread, which is associated with fruitcakes, especially bad ones. Stories of fruitcakes centuries old, being brought out for consumption. Stories of family members being traumatized for politely eating a fruitcake, so as not to have the baker feel rejected. Nightmares of those red and green garnishes sitting on top of the fruitcakes. Were those stories just fiction or fact? I had to get to the truth behind "fruitcake."

I tried my second bite, no it was not just a good first bite, and this bite also was delicious. Then it dawned on me, I was not a fruitcake connoisseur, as I had never tried any before this one. So, I decided I needed a second opinion as to just how great this fruitcake really was, coming from someone that may have years of experience tasting fruitcakes.

Therefore, I proceeded to wrap it up like a newfound chick, and take my fruitcake out into the world to be judged by those better equipped than I.

The fruitcake traveled to my work the next day, where I told my co-worker, Shane Parker how I had acquired it and where it came from. He is a husband and a father in his 30's and does enjoy

fishing Missouri's rivers. He told me a story of being down by Ava, Missouri, how he was fishing and saw a Monk by the river. He said, "Hello there," but got no reply from the Monk. Later, while reading his fishing guide, he realized that they take vows of silence. He then, understood. I needed to establish his experiences in fruitcake tasting and his reply was, "I have eaten some homemade ones before." "Did you like them?" I asked. "They were okay," he replied. I asked if he would try some of this fruitcake and his reply was, "Yes."

Taking the fruitcake out of the tin, I cut him a piece. He dug in. "It is really good," he said. I asked, "Are you just saying that?" "No," he replied. "I really like it." He ate every crumb. I began to feel hope growing that I had stumbled onto a great find.

Then the fruitcake traveled to Afton after I got off work, where after a revival at St. Marks Church, a tasting was greatly anticipated by Jean Bolton (my mother-in-law) and her friend, Ruth. Both women are over 60 and should have some experience with fruitcake. I admit I hyped up the fruitcakes success prematurely. Jean put on a fresh pot of coffee to accompany the tasting of the fruitcake. I set up the moment by reading about the Abbey and how the fruitcake came about. I inquired as to how many fruitcakes they had consumed over the years. "Several." they both replied. I felt confident that I had true connoisseurs of fruitcake here. Ones that could judge the fruitcake on all the areas of importance. They informed me that from their experiences with fruitcake, it has to be ordered from a bakery to be good. You could not just pick one up at the local five and dime. In addition, as for a family recipe, it depended on the time spent, as you could not just whip up a fruitcake in a few days, and expect it to be remarkable. "So family fruitcakes could be a hit or miss success?" I asked, inexperienced as I was in fruitcake consumption. "Oh yes." they both replied, nodding their heads in agreement.

The coffee had finally finished percolating. The time had come. The fruitcake took center stage as all other worldly thoughts were left behind. I took the fruitcake out of its tin and slowly lifted it to the serving platter. I proceeded to cut three slices, could not skip myself. I felt honored to be consuming another piece of my newfound delicacy.

The plates were passed out and now came the visual inspection. "Looks good." they both said. "Not too many green and red fruits, but also some unknown fruits poking out of the sides," Ruth announced. They tasted for the first time. Their eyes took on a sparkle. "Wow, it really is good." They both exclaimed at the same time. "Are you sure that you are not just saying that?" I asked.

"Oh no," Jean said, "I wasn't expecting it to be so good knowing that you have never had a piece of fruitcake. Bit it is wonderful, moist and I really like it. It is one of the best I have ever

tasted, maybe even the best." "I agree." said Ruth "it is moist and full of nuts and fruits. I think I may see a piece of apple or pear also." My heart swelled. I was so happy that it was good; really good. How lucky I was to have picked a place that had the perfect recipe. The fruitcake was from here in Missouri, my home state. They asked again how I had found the fruitcake, and I was pleased to tell the story of how I had read an article in the newspaper about the Trappist Monks and their fruitcakes. We passed around the post card again, to see the monk's faces, those who would go down in our memories as being world-class fruitcake makers.

I gingerly wrapped up the fruitcake; it was just a half now. I tucked it into the tin so I could head home. Now I wanted to share its success with the whole world. I remember that my Rubberstamp camp was tomorrow night and I had some women who quite possibly have tried fruitcake before. I planned to reveal the fruitcake tomorrow night to be judged by my peers. To seal the deal per say. Sharing would have to wait until tomorrow.

The same story was told the next night, as Sheri, Beverly, Norma, Pat, Jennifer and Evelyn all said that they would try a piece. I asked for experience in the matter, settling that right away. All had tried fruitcake but Jennifer. I told her that I too was just like her, until a few days ago. And oh, what I had been missing.

Pat told a story of her late mother having quite an excellent fruitcake recipe. How she missed eating her mother's fruitcake, with tears in her eyes. I told them of the fruitcakes success so far, but to judge fairly and tell me their honest opinions.

I cut everyone a piece, and that left a small piece for me. Just knowing the fruitcake was no more, left me a little bit sad.

All was quiet in the house; everyone had a bite of fruitcake in their mouths. Then I began to notice that same twinkle in their eyes that Jean and Ruth had. Could it be? ,,Yes they remarked on how great it was, moist and just the right combination of nuts and fruit. Pat said it was just as good as her mothers, God rest her soul. Jennifer liked it she said, as it was her first try at fruitcake. Someone announced, "Jennifer, don't think all fruitcakes taste this good. They do not. This one is exceptional. It takes time, lots of time to make a good fruitcake." Others in the room agreed. Only one person said it was just, "Okay", but that they did not like much fruit anyway.

What a wonderful success the fruitcake had. Everyone was just as impressed as I had been. I remarked, not to forget those special occasions that could be celebrated with a fruitcake of their very own, just by placing and order. Reminding them that they were not only helping their community but it went to a good cause. I was sure to get one at Christmas each year. Who

knows, maybe my boys would even try it. Later, they might recall fond memories of great fruitcakes that Mom ordered at Christmas. I like traditions and I think one just got started in our house, on that fine March day.

The legend of the fruitcake lives on!

This is an actual letter received from Andrea Bolton and reprinted with her permission.

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