

Once Upon a Garden in Lake Forest | London Calling

NORTHSHORE

Just Desserts

The North Shore's Top 20 Sweet Spots



*Pop's
Pink-Peppermint
Cupcakes from
Wildflour Bakery
in Lake Bluff



ZINGARELLA

If the vaulting 7-inch-tall pillars of **New Orleans carrot cake** served at Zingarella look like they could stand pecans-to-pecans with the behemoths at Gibsons, that's because owner Bonnie Brock designed them with that exact ambition in mind. The actual recipe, however, was borrowed from an old New Orleans Junior League cookbook she happened upon while studying at Tulane University. It's just one of a hundred or so Junior League and church cookbooks Brock has collected over the years, an often-neglected genre that Brock has built her bakery around. "These women," says Brock, "take real pride in those recipes. They test them again and again, not only because their name's on it but because it's their neighbors who are going to be using them." It happens to be a honey of a recipe, redolent of ginger, clove, nutmeg and cinnamon, plus the added appeal of coconut and pineapple. The pineapple holds the moisture, the coconut provides just a twinge of Hawaiian sweetness and the cream cheese stuccos it all together. It's, to say the least, a towering achievement. \$7.95 per slice. *2300 Lehigh Ave., Glenview, 847/657-0707*

SWEETY PIES

No crocodile tears here — our affection for an atypical pecan pie at Sweety Pies in Skokie is genuine to the core. It started when the Kruger family wanted to make a pecan pie that was not "liquid-y and gooey," explains Bruce Kruger, whose wife and daughters are the bakery's co-owners. Then they added chocolate to the mix, which "gives it a different character completely." **Crocodile pie**, as they call it, is a masterpiece

of layering, starting with a buttery pastry crust and an extra-thick, jam-like pecan filling (more nutty than sugar-laden because they cut down on the corn syrup). Next, a sprinkling of Callebaut semi-sweet chocolate chips from Belgium, which melt in the oven to cover most of the pie. Pecan halves on top, emerging from the chocolate, give the dessert its name — they really do look like lurking crocodiles emerging from the water. \$4.50 per slice. *8042 Lincoln Ave., Skokie, 847/213-0900*

DREAM CAKES

Pssst: Wanna hear a secret? You know those lovely tres leches cakes you see gleaming like 24-karat Jell-O molds at your neighborhood Whole Foods? Most of those are the handiwork of Veronica Canete-Kwasigroch, not your friendly Whole Foods baker. You can try Veronica's sacher torte at Whole Foods too, but if you want to see Veronica do magic — actual pastry-chef magic — you'll have to dial up her appointment-only bakery, Dream Cakes, in Northbrook. That's where she makes something called an **impossible cake**. It's a beauty: a base of chocolate cake topped by a flan with cajete (goat milk and sugar made into a caramel sauce). The cool part? It moves. Since the chocolate cake mix is lighter, it rises when cooked, while the heavier flan descends. So it literally flip-flops positions as it rises. It's then flipped again so the cajete and flan is on top. The kids love it, but we hear it makes politicians go as red in the cheeks as a strawberry in July. \$32 per cake. *3100 Dundee Road, Suite 701, Northbrook, 847/675-0500*

Zingarella's Carrot Cake



Crocodile Pie from Sweety Pies



Impossible Cake from Dream Cakes

