

seattle

M A G A Z I N E

EAT + DRINK ARTS + EVENTS SHOPPING + FASHION BEAUTY NW HOME NEIGHBORHOODS GETAWAYS BLOGS

Best Desserts

By [ALLISON AUSTIN SCHEFF](#), [ANDREA DELIMONT](#), [Cynthia Nims](#), [Ginny Morey](#), [Lorna Yee](#), [Sara Dickerman](#)

Buzz up! Share    



Be sure to leave room for dessert? Who are we kidding? In a city nearly dribbling delicious ice creams and heady with the scent of artisan chocolates, finding something sweet has never been easier—or more sinfully satisfying. We've licked our spoons eagerly at the highest-end eateries, the most irresistible bakeries and the humblest holes-in-the-wall, searching high and low for full-fat goodies, sky-high cakes and chewy, gooey cookies (tough research, we know). And boy, did we find the best of them.

A WALK ON THE DARK SIDE: BEST CHOCOLATE DESSERTS

As any serious chocoholic will tell you, a little too much chocolate is just about right. Luckily, our fair city is blessed with a seemingly endless array of the darkest, most wickedly scrumptious offerings, and we've savored every morsel!

Restaurant Dessert of the Year

Chocolate Covered Chocolate (\$12) at Canlis restaurant

Creator: Pastry chef Neil Robertson

Why we love it: We adore the chocolate blackout of it all. While we have a tendency to yawn when we see another molten cake, Robertson executes the new-school classic perfectly with Cacao Barry 64 percent Guayaquil chocolate—dark and deep, but not too acidic—and then pairs it with a lollipop of chocolate ice cream that's covered in a chocolate shell and dipped in the crumbs of homemade chocolate cookies.

Best Updated Retro Cake: Triple Layer chocolate cake at Bakery Nouveau

(\$4.50/slice) We don't know if this chocolate-chocolate cake is better than your nana's, but the retro-luxe triple-layer cake with thick, rich ganache frosting and a lighter bittersweet chocolate mousse filling is a surefire contender.

Most Valuable Chocolate Truffle: Gold-flecked bittersweet truffle at Cadeaux Chocolates (\$2 each) A tiny edible gold flake adorns the almost-too-pretty-to-eat dark chocolate truffle from Seattle-based Cadeaux. Melt-in-your-mouth smooth and deliciously rich, one is never enough.

Most Decadent Fusion of Chocolate and Coffee: Deathcake Royale from Cupcake Royale (\$6.65)

This intense cupcake-on-steroids made with Theo dark chocolate, and a combo of chocolate cake, espresso-infused ganache and flourless chocolate cake—all enrobed in more ganache—is only in stores around Valentine's Day, but Seattle magazine readers can custom order for pickup on November 26.

Fieriest Truffle: Chocolat Moderne's Sesame Shichimi Praline (\$2.25 each) The dainty beauty of this shichimi (Japanese seven-spice blend) praline packs a deliciously fiery punch with an underlying note of caramelized orange zest. (Pssst—Queen Anne's Chocopolis is the only place in the city to sample this upscale New York line.)

Best-Excuse-to-Eat-the-Whole-Box Truffle: Theo's Earl Grey Tea ganache (\$2 each) Velvety ganache laced with the distinct fragrance of bergamot orange is just one reason to surrender to this box of truffles. A double whammy of antioxidants never tasted so good!

Prettiest Chocolate Gem: Red Wine Rosewater chocolate tart at Dahlia Bakery (\$5.95) Each perfectly crisp chocolate tart shell is filled with smooth, dark ganache and then crowned with a sweetly sugared rose petal for a darling, picture-perfect treat.

Best Chocolate-Chocolate Cookie: Chocolate truffle cookie at Dahlia Bakery (\$2.50) Dahlia Bakery is generally a sunny place, but its chocolate truffle cookie takes you to chocolate's dark heart: It's a brownie-like cookie, studded with small slabs of bittersweet chocolate. We won't tell if you need a glass of milk to handle its fudgy punch.

Best Deep, Dark and Delicious Dessert: Mousse au Chocolat at Cremant (\$9) With a bit of magic, someone in Cremant's kitchen takes rich, dark bars of bittersweet chocolate and transforms them into big bowls of fluffy, deeply delicious chocolate mousse. Order two—this dessert will have everyone clamoring for spoons!

Best Rainy-Day Sweet: Chocolate cranberry pound cake at Macrina (\$3.65/slice) The chocolate cranberry cake makes an occasional appearance in Macrina's gloriously overstuffed pastry case—an indulgently generous slice is the perfect soul-satisfying treat on a rainy Seattle day. So good!

A PIECE OF CAKE

Whether your tastes lean toward that perfectly simple old-fashioned white cake, chocolate cake or the fantastically constructed custom cakes dreamed up by Seattle's best bakers, we have your cake—and you can eat it, too!

Best Custom Cake: The Phoenix cake at Bakery Nouveau (\$5.50/individual size, \$38 for 8 inch) This intricate, three-layer creation of caramel, pear and chocolate mousse sandwiched between sheets of chocolate sponge cake and surrounded by thin tiles of chocolate, was specially created for Seattle magazine food columnist Lorna Yee's recent wedding by head baker William Leaman.

Tastiest Tropical Treat:

Hawaiian haupia and guava cake at Hiroki (\$5/slice) Light as air and not too sweet, this treat with thickened coconut milk sports a sponge-cake bottom, a creamy white haupia middle, and a thin, tangy top layer of pinkish guava goo. Yum.

Best Steamed Cake:

Banana cake with savory coconut sauce at Monsoon (\$6) The irresistible cake, which gets its moist texture from a quick steam in banana leaves, is embellished with pillowy mounds of slightly salty coconut cream—the quintessential foil to this barely sweet dessert.

Best White Cake with a Twist: Cassata cake at Columbia City Bakery (\$4/slice, \$45 whole) • Transport yourself (if only for a moment) to the fragrant hillsides of Sicily with a cassata cake. Two layers of white cake are brushed with Marsala wine, bedecked with an orange flower-scented ricotta filling and encased in a thin sheet of almond paste.

Best Fall Fruit Cake: Pear, hazelnut and thyme at Canlis (\$11/slice) • This almond brown-butter pear cake languishes in a sweet pool of spiced dessert-wine poaching liquid; the house-made thyme ice cream that caps it off is the consummate accompaniment.

Best Tea Party Cake: Almond cake at North Hill Bakery (\$32/whole) • The unassuming simplicity of this moist almond buttercream cake is an appealing choice for a crowd—even those who claim to have no sweet tooth will happily indulge.

Best Hong Kong–style Cake in the ID: Chestnut cream cake at Cake House My Favorite (\$26/whole) • A generous smear of chestnut purée is cradled between layers of soft white sponge cake, simply adorned with whipped cream. (Turns out this cake is their baker's favorite, too!)

Nuttiest Cake: Pistachio financiers at Spur Gastropub (\$13/slice) • The intensely buttery, warm-from-the-oven financière takes the cake on a dessert plate that also features a subtle foie gras ice cream, elderflower gelée, and Rainier cherries.

BEST BIRTHDAY CAKES

Sure, you can get a birthday, graduation or retirement cake at Costco and feed a crowd, but a step up in price is worth it to get a taste of these irresistible cakes

Affordable and Elegant: Both the coconut cake and the carrot cake at Whole Foods are our top picks for quality cakes without the sticker shock. (8-inch cake for \$27, serves 10–12.)

More Bang for Your Buck: Macrina's Mom's Chocolate Cake has that retro-elegance that's perfect for a dinner party. (25-inch cake for \$60, serves 20–25.)

Completely Splurge-worthy: Iska Pallis of Cake is garnering raves for her winsome flavor combinations—try the orange blueberry, with layers of moist orange cake, white chocolate Bavarian mousse, orange curd and organic blueberries. (\$60, serves 8–10.)

HEY THERE, CUPCAKE!

Cupcake parlors are sprouting up all over town, tempting us with little cakes topped with billowy frostings in the creamiest, dreamiest of flavors. But when a craving hits, we make a beeline for Trophy, which creams the competition by baking their beauties every hour! Located in the south end, Tacoma's Hello Cupcake's sweet temptations are irresistible with pretty toppings that put a finishing touch on moist cakes and decadent frostings. In fact we liked 'em so much, we couldn't pick just, um, six.

[On pedestals, from left]

Chocolate mint cupcake at Trophy (\$2.99)

Many chocolate cakes disappoint with underwhelming flavor, but not these dark beauties. Each cupcake is topped with creamy mint buttercream flecked with chocolate sprinkles and adorned with a green mint wafer.

Chocolate graham cracker with toasted marshmallow at Trophy (\$3.50)

Yup, you guessed it: This cupcake tastes a lot like a S'more, right down to the perfectly browned Swiss meringue topping. Glowing embers not required.

Chai Cardamom cupcake at Trophy (\$2.99)

Imbued with an exotic, subtly spicy, cinnamon flavor, these cupcakes are a delicious departure from your standard vanilla or chocolate combo.

Carrot cupcake with cream cheese frosting at Hello Cupcake (\$1.95)

With just the right balance of spices, this carrot cupcake is the most delicious way to get in an extra veggie serving for the day. (We kid, we kid!)

The Hummingbird cupcake at Trophy (\$2.99)

Made with coconut, banana and pineapple and adorned with a lavish portion of tangy cream cheese frosting, this little hummer wins points for its tender crumb and moist texture.

Red velvet cupcake at Trophy (\$2.99)

This classic Southern favorite is a slightly tangy, moist, cocoa-flavored cake with a generous swoop of cream cheese frosting.

Lemon cupcake with various frostings at Trophy (\$2.99)

Citrus lovers: Sink your teeth into Trophy's moist, dense-crumb lemon cupcake with lemon butter cream, or, for a kiss of the tropics, try it with coconut cream frosting and shaved coconut sprinkles. The sweetest-tasting version is strawberry-frosted.

Mocha cupcake with coffee butter cream at Hello Cupcake (\$1.95)

The dark chocolate cake portion of this cupcake is tasty, but it's the pronounced espresso flavor in the decadent icing that makes this treat sensational.

SWEET STACK: A BAKER'S DOZEN OF SEATTLE'S TASTIEST COOKIES**Best in Show:** Chocolate chip cookie at DeLaurenti

DeLaurenti makes the purest expression of this classic in town: big and beefy with large chocolate chips (\$1.75). If your timing is right (around 11 a.m.), you can get one still warm and gooey from the oven.

Best Nut Cookie: Brutti ma buoni at Café Juanita

Brutti ma buoni translates roughly to "ugly but yummy," but these staples, served on cookie plates (\$8 for a cookie assortment including this one) aren't even all that ugly. They are dense and bumpy with fragrant Holmquist orchard hazelnuts, but also a little bit chewy.

Best Madeleine: Chocolate madeleines at Lark

Whether a madeleine is a cookie or a cake might be a matter of debate, but there is little doubt as to the happiest way to eat them: chocolaty and straight from the oven (\$8/order of 20).

Best Butter Cookie: Scottish oat cake at Macrina Bakery

It takes a good bakery to make a cookie as plain as this (\$1.10) so delicious. The diamond-shaped crisp is thin, flaky and just right for tea.

Best Texture in a Cookie: Chocolate macaroon at Honoré

With a perfect meringue-like chewy texture and a deep, oozing chocolate ganache filling, this Ballard newcomer's soft chocolate macaroons (\$1.75) have already earned "best in Seattle" status.

Best Crumble: Russian tea cookie at Café Besalu

Fragility is strength in a Russian tea cookie (\$1.35), and these are so tender they practically quiver. They collapse in your mouth into an airy cloud of confectioner's sugar and buttery pecans.

Best Use of Peanut Butter: Peanut butter sandwich cookies at Dahlia Bakery

Nutter Butters are a fantastic concept—peanut butter cookie, peanut butter filling—but if you've always found them a little disappointing, restore your faith with this ultra-intense cookie (\$2).

Best Tea Cookie: Black sesame tea cookie at Fresh Flours

This buttery cookie (75 cents) is an ideal dipping shortbread—not too sweet and almost effervescent with tiny, nutty-tasting black seeds.

Best Grown-up Cookie: Chocolate ginger cookie at Volunteer Park Café & Marketplace

Dark and brooding among the kid-friendly classic cookies here, this cookie (\$1.75) offers the grown-up heat of freshly grated ginger in perfect balance with dark chocolate chunks.

Best Morning Cookie: Cornmeal cherry cookie at Seattle Art Museum's Taste Restaurant • Chubby as a muffin top, this buttery but not-too-sweet cookie (\$2) is a great morning snack; perfect with a cup of coffee beneath the hanging cars in the museum's lobby.

Best Kids' Cookie: The super chips at Columbia City Bakery

They might look puny, but these little chocolate chip cookies (75 cents) are packed with almost double the chocolate chips (and none of the nuts) as the bakery's Columbia Chip cookies.

Best Sugar Cookie: Lemon Crunch cookie at Sugar Bakery & Café

A really good sugar cookie is hard to find, but this one (\$1.95) is a star. Chewy-tender and vibrant with oodles of lemon zest, it gets its all-important crunch from sparkling briochettes of coarse sugar.

Best Over-the-Top Cookie:

The Redmond crisp at Pomegranate Bistro • Oatmeal cookies may seem wholesome, but this crisp (\$1.75) is as racy as they come—lots of butter and brown sugar for a smooth taste, while cornflakes and pecans add texture and tang.

Best Prepacked Grocery Store Cookies: Chewy Molasses Ginger

You can't always get to your favorite bakery, and for that we're grateful to local packaged-cookie maker Cougar Mountain for making the best grocery store cookies we know, including a classic ginger molasses (\$3.99/box of 8) that is always chewy and tender.