

Nutty for FRUITCAKE



By Darragh Doiron

If you don't like fruitcake, maybe you haven't had it done right.

Corsicana's world-famous Collin Street Bakery's tins, heavy with pecan-embellished richness offer it right.

They are a far cry from the shriveled, back-of-the-shelf packages of fruitcake filled with lurid, neon strips of rubbery dried fruit.

Still, the late talk show host Johnny Carson's joke is still making the holiday rounds. He purported there was one fruitcake in the world and it just kept getting passed around each year. Aunt Maude re-

wraps it for Cousin Walter and so on.

Some are heavy as a brick and suitable for doorstops, but a good, homemade fruitcake has reason to be heavy.

Old time cooks used to bake them weeks ahead of the holidays and bathe them in liquor several times before they were "ripe." That fruit was probably fresh from the tree and just soaking up that rum or bourbon.

Jim Thomas of Port Neches remembers the fruitcakes his grandma made in Odessa.

"She put everything in there," he said.

That also meant "a little

liquor." "But not much, because she was Baptist. She kept it in the back of her closet," he joked.

The ritual baking is often a family affair. Ann Kleinpeter of Groves has total recall of a batch she made years ago.

"It was 1951 and I was expecting my second child," she said. "I had purchased all the ingredients for fruitcakes. These were to be given away as gifts."

Uncomfortable with the pregnancy, she tossed and turned the night before baking day.

"Sleep was not to be," she said, so she got up and got to it.

"When my husband woke up,



every available flat surface was covered with fruitcakes cooling. My gifts were ready," she remembered.

Bridge City's Patty Collins is on the other side of the fruitcake debate.

"I don't like it. That's what I have to say. No, no, no," she reiterated.

Choir members share the meaning for the season with a musical performance.

Beaumont Civic Ballet presents "The Nutcracker"

Julie Rogers Theatre, 765 Pearl Street, Beaumont
Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 8-9
838-3435

Beaumont Civic Ballet's production of a Christmas tradition, the full-length "Nutcracker," is a tradition for children and adults. Tickets may be purchased from the Beaumont Civic Center box office, 409-838-3435, Ext. 1.

Krewe Le Bon Temps Christmas Dance

Brad Club, Twin City Highway, Nederland
Saturday, Dec. 8, 7-11 p.m.
Ticket information, Phil Losack 962-2300

Krewe Le Bon Temps will host its Christmas party from 7 to 11

p.m. Dec. 8 at the Brad Club. Tickets are \$10 a person for non-members. Krewe members are asked to bring a gift wrapped and labeled for either a boy or girl for the Salvation Army toy drive.

Holiday Open House Tours

W.H. Stark House
610 Main St., Orange
Tuesday and Thursday,
Dec. 11 and 13, 5-8 p.m.
883-0871

Completed in 1894, the Queen Anne home of William Henry Stark and his wife, Miriam Melissa Lutzer Stark, stands in Orange as an extraordinary statement of Texas social history. The perfectly restored 14,000 square-foot home is a testament to the opulent lifestyle afforded wealthy turn of the century Texans.

H-E-B Feast of Sharing

Friday, Dec. 14, 8 a.m.-5

p.m.
Ford Park, Interstate 10, Beaumont.
866-2007

The grocery chain will provide a day of holiday events and food for the public.

Christmas on Boston and Nederland holiday parade

Boston Avenue
Saturday, Dec. 15
722-0279

Get in the holiday spirit "brick-walk style" with the city of Nederland's Christmas on Boston and Christmas parade. Shops along the historic Boston Avenue will feature holiday specials and local school bands and dancers will perform. The event will continue all day with the lighted night parade beginning at 6 p.m.

Bridge City Holiday Parade

West Roundbunch Road
Saturday, Dec. 15, 10 a.m.

Parade begins at First Baptist Church and continues to Bridge City Intermediate Campus, where a Holiday Festival Showcase will follow.

Royal Krewe of Neptune Christmas Party

Pompano Club, 330 Twin City Highway, Port Neches
Saturday, Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m.
724-2145.

Come join the Royal Krewe of Neptune as they celebrate Christmas with a party. Organizers say dress can be "as dressy as you like." Tickets for the event are \$25 per person.

Holiday Concert

Julie Rogers Theater, 765 Pearl Street, Beaumont
Sunday, Dec. 16, 2 p.m.

Holiday Concert featuring music composed by Handel. Presented by the Symphony of Southeast Texas.