

Lamorinda's Specialties of the House

The perfect gift of baked goods

By A.K. Carroll

It's the middle of December and the holiday pressure dial is on high. You're getting ready to knock out a seasonal book club, family brunch and an ugly sweater party all in one weekend. But what about the holiday bake sale? The Christmas cookie exchange? Snacks for the Snow Ball? Nibbles for New Year's Eve? No time to bake yourself, but looking for something with a little more sentiment than a frozen pie from Safeway? Look no further. Lamorinda's where it's at for bakery treats made with the same love and attention you'd give them yourself ... if you had the time.



Holiday sugar cookies
Photo courtesy SusieCakes

Two years and counting, **SusieCakes** of Lafayette may be the unexplored answer to your holiday treat needs. All of SusieCakes' baked goods are made from scratch in small batches each day. The decadent texture and flavor of their European-style buttercream frosting is sure to wow family and friends alike. General manager Lisa Roa recommends this season's pumpkin cheesecake or specialty carrot cake, filled with a praline pecan filling and topped with cream cheese frosting. SusieCakes also makes holiday frosted sugar cookies, bite-sized mini cupcakes and a chocolate candy cane cake with real crushed peppermint. Stop by their shop to select something sweet. SusieCakes is located at 3598 Mt.

Diablo Blvd. For information, call (925) 299-0210 or visit www.susiecakes.com/lafayette.

Don't let the name deceive you,



Sam's very messy cupcake, Republic of Cake
Photo provided

Orinda's **Republic of Cake** offers more than gingerbread Meyer lemon, chocolate peppermint, and almond cranberry cupcakes this holiday season. Owner Peter McNiff is also making traditional homemade pies served in flaky all-butter crusts. Pies vary from cranberry-apple to pumpkin custard to maple pecan, and can be ordered by phone or online. And if you're in a pinch for a purchase, there are always cupcakes. McNiff's favorite is Sam's Very Messy Cupcake, a special sweet treat with its own special story. Republic of Cake is located at 2 Theatre Square, Suite 151. For info, call (925) 254-3900 or go to www.republicofcake.com/orinda/index.html.

Moraga may have one of the East Bay's best-kept secrets in pastry artist Kitty Wong, two-year owner of **Kitty Wong's Pastry Shop**. Though Wong specializes in special occasion and wedding cakes, she can also whip up decorated sugar cookies, mini tartlettes, mini cream puffs, cake pops and maca-

rooms with flavors ranging from raspberry rose to cranberry orange to pomegranate and pumpkin spice. Her parents are currently digging her mini cheesecakes with cranberry orange sauce. Wong's products are an edible art to grace your holiday table. Check out Kitty Wong at www.kittywongpastry.com or call



Kitty pops from Kitty Wong's Pastry Shop
Photo provided

(925) 285-5812 for information. Already had your fill of processed flour and refined sugar this holiday season? Looking to bring a goodie that is both good and good for you? Check out East Bay mama Sharon Girdlestone's **Lovely Little Cakes**, an independent business that produces baked goods with more delicious and less of everything else. "My stuff is usually focused on gluten-free, allergen-free and dye-free," said Girdlestone, who does a lot of baking for families and children. Whenever it's her turn to

bring treats, Girdlestone picks nut flour muffins, sweetened with raw honey or fruit and free of gluten and preservatives. "They always shock people," said Girdlestone, "and they're easy to do." Girdlestone also makes gluten-free, vegan and dairy-free pies. Though her baked goods come by order only, Girdlestone delivers for free. Check out **Lovely Little Cakes** at: www.lovelylittlecakes.net, or call (415) 730-7500. Nut flour muffins at: <http://www.mysustainabletable.com/meals>.

And if you're out for a meal and need a treat to take home, Lafayette's **Chow** has plenty of house-made pies and desserts. The assortment of 9-inch pies includes traditional pumpkin, southern pecan

and organic apple, as well as chocolate cream, coconut cream and butterscotch banana cream. If pie's not your thing, try Chow's famous ginger cake or organic apple-cranberry crisp. Chow also offers cookies by the dozen, including gingerbread men and holiday sugar cookies. They can even hook you up with whipping cream, ice cream, chocolate sauce or cookie icing if you're the sort who prefers to add the finishing touches yourself. Pick something up from Chow's Market, or order in advance. All orders require pre-payment and 48 hours notice. Chow is located at 53 Lafayette Circle, (925) 962-2469.

Check out their Christmas menu at <http://chowfoodbar.com/ChristmasMenu.pdf>.

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In Memory

Gordon Erspamer

July 24, 1953 – Nov. 7
Resident of Moraga



Gordon Paul Erspamer, age 61, passed away on Nov. 7 at his home in Moraga after a 9-month battle with brain cancer. He was born on July 24, 1953, in Ironwood, Mich., to E. Gordon Erspamer and Jean McDonnell Erspamer, the third of eight boys. He received his BA from Hamline College in 1975 and his JD from the


University of Michigan Law School in 1978. He met his future wife, Trish Bare, in law school and they moved to San Francisco in 1978.

Gordy began his legal career at the San Francisco firm of Steinhart & Falconer before moving to Morrison & Foerster in 1982, where he spent the next 30 years focusing on energy and intellectual property law. His passion and life's work, however, was his pro bono work on behalf of military veterans. Over the past 30 years, he spearheaded a series of lawsuits that brought about significant changes both in the law and in public opinion. Most recently, Gordy brought suit on behalf of soldiers used as guinea pigs in the testing of chemical and biological weapons at Edgewood Arsenal from 1943-1975. Gordy's tireless advocacy on behalf of veterans earned him extensive recognition during his lifetime, including being named Trial Lawyer of the Year by Trial Lawyers for Public Justice in 1992, the American Bar Association Pro Bono Publico award in 2009, the American Lawyer Magazine Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011 and the National Veterans Legal Service Program Outstanding Public Service Award in 2013.


Gordy was also an avid collector of Native American artifacts and art, an enthusiastic poet and photographer, and he spent many thousands of hours perfecting his cactus gardens at his Moraga home. He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Trish Bare; four children, Kevin (Jessica Fain), Kerry (Ben Ginsberg), Brian, and Brett; his mother, Jean; brothers Dave (Heidi), Mike, Paul, Roy, and Marty and many nieces, nephews and cousins. He was predeceased by his father E. Gordon Erspamer, his younger brother Peter and his oldest brother Dan.

No memorial service will be held as family and friends celebrated Gordy's life and accomplishments in July at the Hacienda de las Flores in Moraga. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Gordy's name to Swords to Plowshares at www.swords-to-plowshares.org. The family wishes to thank their many friends who provided endless support during Gordy's illness, particularly Jim and Jody Balich and Rocky and Chris Unruh.

Should your family follow you to Cal?



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