

Christmas Tradition

Getting To Seem A Lot Like Christmas—In Afghanistan

(NAPSA)—When an American lieutenant colonel in Afghanistan received a classic fruitcake for Christmas, it began a new tradition there and is helping to improve things here in the U.S.

Lt. Colonel Glenn Bramhall received the gift from his mother-in-law in 2003, and he shared the Claxton Fruit Cakes with the Afghan generals he advised. The cakes made quite a hit with those military men.

The generals and their friends and families were so taken with the fruitcake, they begged Bramhall to give them the name of the Afghani bakery that they thought had created this wonderful new treat.

Fruitcake, however, is not a new treat. It can be traced back to the Roman Empire. Today's version is most directly connected to European nut harvests in the 1700's. After each harvest, nuts and fruits were combined in a cake which was not eaten for an entire year. It was finally eaten at the beginning of the next year's harvest to bring blessing for a successful harvest.

Today's fruitcakes—either sweet pound or bundt cake—are filled with an assortment of fruits, nuts, spices, liquor or liquor flavoring. Bramhall's fruitcake, made by the Claxton Bakery in Georgia, contained raisins, pineapple, cherries, lemon peel, walnuts, pecans and almonds.

After he let his family know how popular his fruitcake had been, Bramhall's family and members of the nearby Spartanburg, South Carolina Civitan Club sent another 100 pounds of Claxton Fruit Cake for him to share. When Bramhall tried to distribute the



Fruitcake has been known to bridge a cultural divide and cause a riot of enthusiasm.

cakes, a riot broke out among the Afghani soldiers.

The connection between fruitcake and Civitan members goes back to the 1950's when the Civitan Club of Tampa, Florida approached Claxton Bakery about using their fruitcakes as a fundraiser. The project was so successful that other Civitan Clubs soon joined in.

Now hundreds of Civitan Clubs sell about one million pounds of the fruitcake every year to fund community service projects. The Club in Montreal, Canada, used their proceeds to establish an association for the mentally handicapped, purchase a building for the group, help the association build two group homes and a new school.

Whether celebrating nut harvests, bridging cultural divides or helping communities, fruitcake has sweetened quite a few lives.

For more information on Civitan International, visit www.civitan.org; for further information about fruitcakes, visit www.claxtonfruitcake.com.