



THE CAKE REVIEW

WHY PLANK WHEN YOU CAN CAKE?

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"Everything is fair when you're living in the city," so said the prophets known as A Tribe Called Quest. That really has very little to do with the rest of this piece, short of the inclusion of one word, but good writers like to start off with a quote to build rapport with their audience, hence why I chose a song released before most of mine was born and that the rest probably haven't heard of. As you can see, I am exceedingly good at my job.

The word in question is "fair", as last week I was invited to judge the bake-off at the on-campus Fair Trade Fair.* Being the first time I had ever reviewed cake under the inquisitive eyes of strangers, I was filled with immense levels of excitement, anticipatory fear, and a small portion of Copper Kettle crisps. This was all increased by the notion of judging for such a cause.**

(See? The quote managed to be relevant to two words. Double word score! And if we were being completely honest, "living", "city", and "everything" probably could be shoehorned in there somehow, too. I am on fire this morning. Not literally; the rash has cleared up pretty nicely, thank you.)*

*(** Not the Copper Kettle crisps part, though; that would probably violate the laws of physics or something.)*

I'd be lying if I said I was living a life committed to purely ethical action, but I am trying. I've stopped burning plastic bags in my backyard (I enjoyed the smell); I no longer start my dinner parties off with my old special, "mock

turtle soup with real turtles"; and I've released my dwarf Norwegian slaves from their lives of servitude. This was in part because they were nigh-incompetent and were always stealing my stuff, but mostly it was about the whole "ethical living" thing.

I've also, on occasion, elected to use or purchase Fair Trade products. Is it because I was genuinely wanting to do the right thing, or because I was trying to affect the air of the pseudo-artsy trendy hipster hippy/bohemian post-modern quasi-sophisticate set? I guess we'll never know, but the result is largely the same.

Of course, fairtrade isn't without its plenitude of detractors, who are usually more than ready to critique the way in which the system operates. However, my understanding is the objections to fairtrade don't so much come from legitimate economic concern as much as they come from being a wanker. I could be wrong, there, of course, it's just that most people I've heard taking a stand against fairtrade come off as obsequious, self-satisfied wankers.* That's not to say they actually are obsequious, self-satisfied wankers, just to say that's the impression they give. I'm sure they have plenty of redeeming features hidden behind those dull eyes null of spark.

(You know, the sort who would smugly respond to someone revealing they're a vegetarian with "You're a vegetarian? Well, I'm just going to eat twice as much meat because of that." See? Wanker.)*

FAIR TRADE BAKING

CATEGORIES: ethical, homemade, self-righteous

PRICES: N/A

AVAILABLE FROM: The Fair Trade Fair. You know, the one that was last week. Really helpful, I know.

Entry A: Chocolate Cake with Roasted Almonds

Points for making a chocolate cake, and almonds are always a nice addition. A little dry, though, which detracted from the concept, and the almonds just weren't presented in the most attractive manner. Still, a solid effort.

My score: 9

Entry B: Chocolate Cupcakes with White and Dark Chocolate Icing

Beautiful looking cupcakes, and white chocolate icing is one of the best ways to finish one off. Excellent work all around.

My score: 10.5

Entry C: Chocolate Fudge Cake

A beautifully dense cake with just the right level of richness. Nicely finished off with chocolate squiggles and drizzles in a pseudo-artsy café manner.

My score: 11

Entry D: Chocolate Coated Vanilla Cake

Probably the most interesting looking of all the cakes, but the milk chocolate topping did not secure well to the vanilla cake beneath, making for a contrast between cake and icing that was just a little too much. Still, points for interesting presentation and a good taste.

My score: 10

one succeeded fairly well. I did, however, detect a hint of eggshell, but this might just have been a nod to the Liechtensteinian method of cooking.

My score: 10

Entry F: Dark Chocolate Brownie

A brownie, but with no raspberry. To some extent, it was always going to pale in comparison, but it was a good job nonetheless, though perhaps a little dry.

My score: 8

Entry G: Fair Trade Chocolate Cake

A fairly standard chocolate cake, but executed extremely well, with an excellent moistness. Speaking of which, "moist" sure is a popular word, isn't it? I can tell by the way people seem to wince slightly when they hear it. "Moist." "Mooooiist." "Moist!" Wonderful.

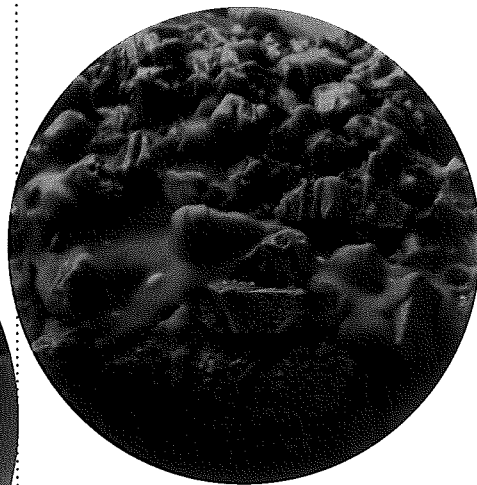
Anyway, a Fair Trade Logo added to the top in coloured icing could have been a bit cheesy, but it worked, and the cake's texture and taste more than made up for it.

My score: 12.5

Entry H: Vegan Chocolate Chip Cookies

I'm pretty sure Vegans are out of Scientology, though I could be wrong. These were a nice cookie, though perhaps a little dense without a pleasing chewiness to offset it. Plus, it's a *cookie*. Was it ever really going to have a chance against *cakes*?

My score: 8



Entry E: Chocolate Raspberry Brownie

Chocolate and raspberry is a classic combination, and the inclusion of raspberry allows one to fool themselves into thinking they're actually eating something with even a hint of health value. Though brownies can be screwed up, they're not too challenging to master, and this

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Per the scores, my winners for the day were entrants G, C, and B. Averaged out with the other two judges, the final winners were G, E, and C. I remain fairly confident in my choices, which were, of course, although quite unintentionally, all cakes.

