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Cake: A Slice of History

Alysa Levene

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Cake can evoke thoughts of home, comfort someone at a time of grief or celebrate a birth or new love. It is a maker of memories, a marker of identities, and delicious!

It was the year 878 A.D., and a man claims sanctuary in a small village home in Wessex. To the surprise of the villager, the man is not a passing vagabond but Alfred, King of the Anglo-Saxons. The village homemaker is happy to hide him from the marauding Danes, provided he keeps an eye on the cake she has baking in the oven. Preoccupied with how to re-take his kingdom, Alfred lets the cakes burn, and the incident passed in to folklore forever.

From these seemingly ignoble beginnings, not only was Alfred able to reclaim his spot in history, but the humble villagers' cake has ascended in world culture as well. Alysa Levene looks at cakes both ancient and modern, from the Fruit Cake, to the Pound Cake, from the ubiquitous birthday cake to the Angel Food Cake, all the way up to competitive baking shows on television and our modern obsession with macaroons and cup cakes.

Along the way, author Alysa Levene shows how cakes are so much more than just a delicious sugar hit, and reflects on how and why cakes became *the* food to eat in times of celebration. Cake reflects cultural differences, whether it is the changing role of women in the home, the expansion of global trade, even advances in technology. Entertaining and delightfully informative, *Cake: A Slice of History* promises to be a witty and joyous celebration of our cultural heritage.

B&W illustrations throughout

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