

Hastings Prescott Area Arts Council (HPAAC) has an established group of writers going into their fifth year! They meet monthly at the LeDuc Historic Estates on the first Tuesday of the month. ***Next month they will meet Tuesday, October 4th, 6:30-8:15 p.m.*** Usually meeting in the dining room, this last month (9/6/16) they met in the bedroom--Lucy's bedroom to be exact, on the second floor. Bed, dressers, wash stand etc. were all present along with eight writers, clipboards in hand, since we had to forego the dining table! It was necessary to accommodate the writers in Lucy's bedroom because the LeDuc staff had also scheduled an ice cream social the same evening. After much good humor about the venue for the evening, Diane Saed, the facilitator of the group greeted them with the writing prompt, ***"Who is the best cook that you know? And what special food do you remember eating that they prepared?"***

Diane prepared the lesson around Ruth Reichl's book, ***Delicious***. Ruth was the editor of ***Gourmet Magazine*** prior to its closing its doors and ***Delicious*** is her first novel, published in 2014. The novel is about a cooking magazine, the staff and their stories that keep the offices of ***Delicious***, a fictitious publishing house, going. Within the story is the recurring mention of a very special ginger cake.

After working with the prompt and writing, members discussed their fondest memories of food, remembering to make use of the five senses as well as the "who, what, when, where, and why" of their memories.

Several quotes from the book were shared, and the evening closed with sharing the ginger cake made from the recipe in the book.

Quotes from *Delicious*, by Ruth Reichl (2014)

"I have so many memories wrapped up in this cake. All I have to do is start grating ginger and I'm ten years old again, in the kitchen with Genie and Aunt Melba learning how much I love to cook. As I pick up the oranges I think back to that first

day at ***Delicious***, when Jake asked me to bake for him, grateful that I'm no longer frightened. By the time the cake is in the oven, sending its rich, spicy aroma into the air, I'm thinking about Lulu, and how lucky I was to find her.

This cake is great when it's been glazed, but it's even better the next day; spicier, richer, more forceful. When I put a little sliver into my mouth, its friendly intensity reminds me how much I like my life now, and I turn to offer Mitch a second bite.

Is my gingerbread as good as the one mother made? How could I possibly know? But I do know this: it's good enough. (Reichl, R. ***Delicious***, p. 373.)

"Her unexpected meanness was like an electric shock, and it jerked me backward, jolting me into the moment, the effect was so immediate and so strong that the dizziness receded. It was like a miracle; I almost laughed. What was the worst thing that could happen? I'd faint? Scream? Make some kind of fool of myself? I straightened up, looked her in the eye, told her I'd need ginger, eggs, and oranges, and began ticking off the spices. She silently pointed to the refrigerator, the cupboard, the spice cabinet—staccato little jerks as if she begrudged me every motion...Captured by the cooking, I picked up the pace, my spoon ringing against the bowl, my body vibrating to the familiar moves. I was so in to sifting flour, greasing pans and pouring batter that I didn't even realize I was talking as the cake went into the oven." (***Delicious***, 2014, p. 12)

"Ten minutes later, they were still talking. I opened my oven door, and as the carnival scent of gingerbread came spilling out, they all looked toward me before resuming their conversation...Maggie, a practiced joust, shoved his fork aside. "I'll take the first bite." She said, lopping off a chunk. She put it in her mouth and her lips twisted, as if

she'd swallowed a mouthful of vinegar. For a moment I thought she hated it. But then she said, reluctantly, "Oh, God, this is fantastic. Jake's going to love it. " (*Delicious* p. 13)

It was the gingerbread, of course; when Jake tasted it, he said anyone who could turn the world's most banal cake into something so compelling—he actually used that word—belonged at *Delicious*! He said he had to hire me if only to get the recipe.

As if I'd give it to him! (Reichl, Ruth, *Delicious*, 2014, page 15.)

Ginger Cake

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Butter and flour a 6—cup Bundt pan.

*Whole black peppercorns, whole cloves, whole cardamom, 1 cinnamon stick,

2 cups flour, 1 tsp. baking powder, 1 tsp. baking soda, ½ tsp. salt

3 large eggs, plus 1 egg yolk, 1 cup sour cream,

1 and ½ sticks of unsalted butter at room temperature, 1 cup of sugar

¼ cup of fresh ginger, grated and tightly packed (about 2 large pieces of ginger, peeled)

Zest from two to three oranges finely grated

Directions:

***Grind** your peppercorns, cloves, cardamom and measure out ¼ tsp. each *(*You can use pre-ground spices, but the cake won't taste as good.*)

Whisk the flour with the baking powder, baking soda, spices, and salt in a small bowl.

In another small bowl, whisk the eggs and egg yolk into the sour cream. Set aside.

Cream the butter and sugar in a stand mixer until the mixture is light, fluffy and almost white. This should take about three minutes.

Grate the ginger root---this is a lot of ginger---and the orange zest. Add them to butter/sugar mixture.

Beat the flour mixture and the egg mixture, alternating between the two, into the butter/sugar mixture until each addition is incorporated. The batter should be as luxurious as mousse.

Spoon batter into the prepared pan and bake for about 40 minutes, until cake is golden and a wooden skewer comes out clean. Remove to a rack and cool in the pan for 10 minutes.

Then, while the cake is cooling, mix ½ cup of bourbon and 1 and ½ TBSP. sugar in a pan.

Simmer the bourbon and sugar until it is reduced to about 1/3 cup. While the cake is still in the pan, brush half of the bourbon mixture onto its exposed surface with a pastry brush. Let the syrup soak in for a few minutes then turn the cake onto a rack. Gently brush the remaining mixture all over the cake.

Glaze mixing ¾ cup powdered sugar and 5 tsp. orange juice. Once the cake is completely cooled, drizzle the glaze randomly over the cake. Enjoy!

(Taken from the book, *Delicious*, by R. Reichl, 2014) Used for HPAAC Writing Class, Diane Saed, instructor, September 6, 2016.