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MAY 2009

## Break the Wedding-Cake Mold

Unique confections that eschew the traditional *by Lora Zarubin / photographs by Jen Munkvold*

Why is it in this day and age, when weddings are more and more an expression of a couple's individuality, wedding cakes remain stubbornly predictable towers of white wrapped in insipid icing and topped with toys representing the guests of honor?

I want my cake to thread in all the things I love—great style and great taste. I want my guests to remember its flavor and that it represented one of the most important occasions of my life. Like the bride's dress, the cake should be an extension of the couple's sensibilities. Here's my reasoning: Some choose the amazing couture quality and beauty of Vera Wang, while others might want the inventiveness of Rei Kawabuko of Comme des Garçons. In food terms, some want an amazing traditional cake decorated in luscious butter-cream frosting, while others prefer a unique green-tea creation. In any event, claim it as your own.

Sure, there are logistical considerations to serving dessert to a large number of people, but like the dress you wear, your cake should reflect you. Nothing is more symbolic than the culinary centerpiece of your wedding. Whether you use your favorite bakery or have the caterer whip up something from a recipe, make sure your cake reflects your individuality. Don't listen to naysayers—dare to be untraditional. Best of all, Los Angeles boasts some of the greatest pastry chefs and bakers around to make your dream a reality.

### HUMMINGBIRD CAKE

#### Big Sugar Bakeshop

The brainchild of neighbors Lisa Ritter and Mary Odson, Big Sugar is the kind of bakery where you can drop in and discuss the pastries you knew and loved from your past but can't find anywhere. Chances are pretty good that by just describing the ingredients, Ritter will be able to re-create it. So it is with the Hummingbird, which has its roots in the South and is filled with bananas, coconut, pineapple and pecans. In a way, this cake harkens back to the time when wedding cakes were all spice—or even, heaven forbid, fruit. The confection's moist interior and lovely cream-cheese frosting make a pastry that's delectable enough to please even the most traditional taste.

12182 Ventura Blvd., Studio City, 818-508-5855, [bigsugarbakeshop.com](http://bigsugarbakeshop.com).

### OLD-FASHION CAKE

#### Patticakes

If you are a serious chocoholic, these are the cakes for you. Phyllis McLellan and her husband, Mike, run this bakery and turn out traditional chocolate cakes by the dozen. Because of the luscious layers of chocolate, swirls of white icing and fresh cream filling, they're nicknamed the Ding Dong and the Hostess Cupeake. When Patticakes transforms these sweet things for weddings—and they do get many orders—they encase the sides with sheets of dark or white chocolate, wrap each layer with a ribbon to make it look more like a wedding gift and, on request, top each layer with chocolate shavings. My fantasy would be not to decorate it but to make it look more like the Hostess Cupeake itself, white squiggles and all.

1900 N. Allen Ave., Altadena, 626-794-1128, [patticakesdesserts.com](http://patticakesdesserts.com).

### GREEN-TEA CAKE

#### Jin Patisserie

I love the taste of green tea in pastries and have always had a fantasy about finding the perfect green-tea cake. In Paris, I was transported by Sadaharu Aoki's green-tea éclairs, which are both beautiful and delicious. For me, green tea is the next big taste, which immediately brings to mind Jin Patisserie. Good choice, because Annabel Ho, the pastry chef who does the special cake orders, tells me she makes one with fresh tea leaves and rose petals. She covers the cake in traditional marzipan, festooned with pastel-colored white chocolate and sugar-jeweled ribbons inspired by the designer Marni. When it's sliced, everyone is surprised by the amazing green color. Someone please get married and order this cake!

1202 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, 310-399-8801, [jinpatisserie.com](http://jinpatisserie.com).

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