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What Will It Be? 'Easy as Pie' or a 'Piece of Cake?'

With dad and 'grad' gatherings in full swing, Troy party hosts have a sweet selection of special-order dessert spots.

By [Megan Swoyer](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 16, 2011

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Graduation party season runs pretty much through mid-summer. Do you prefer these gatherings? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

With Father's Day around the bend and graduation parties in full throttle, we took an informal survey of Troy residents on a recent Friday. Will it be cake or pie?

With such sweet spots as [The Grand Traverse Pie Company](#), [TCBY](#), and [Baskin-Robbins](#), and their frozen yogurt and [Achatz Handmade Pie Co.](#) and the new [Just Baked](#) cupcake shop, it's not an easy decision.

"At a graduation party, I'd like cupcakes from Just Baked," said Laura Scaccia, a mother of four and a marketing specialist.

"Most graduation parties are open house so cupcakes are easy to serve individually for people who are coming and going."

Randy Engle, pastor at [North Hills Christian Reformed Church](#), goes straight for the TCBY cake. "White cake with one

Vicki Belgeri is with Labadie on Achatz's pie acumen. "I love their banana cream or lemon meringue pies -- they just taste like pie," she said. "It's always bursting with summertime flavors."

Honey Longo, a nutrition and food specialist, opts for Achatz's Four Berry. "It's delicious and refreshing, whether warm, cold, or with ice cream," she said. "It's both sweet and tangy and has a variety of textures in the smooth crust and crumbly topping."

Whatever your favorite, we peeked inside a few establishments to get the skinny (well, probably NOT skinny) on what makes some of their secrets of the trade.

Pie Palaces

It's a typical morning at Grand Traverse Pie Company, 1446 W. Maple:

In the kitchen, Doug Smith, of Troy, readies a slew of fruit pies for delivery to local grocery stores. Nearby, "crust crimper" hand-crimping the edges of several round, fruit-filled treats while "bakery lead" Erica Montgomery pours freshly cut fruit into the pie.

"There are no canned foods here," said Montgomery, a Troy resident. "Everything is fresh and we bake pies every day."

The company sources their strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, and apples from Michigan and believes that it's the best of both worlds.

The Grand Traverse Pie Company was founded in 1996 by Mike and Denise Busley in Traverse City. Their aim was to re-ignite the tradition of pie, of course, make up memorable family celebrations including Father's Day and graduation parties.

"Father's Day is a big holiday for us," said Alicia Walters, shift supervisor at the bakery. She said dozens of families will celebrate the honor of Father's Day. Or, he can come in himself on that day and enjoy a complimentary slice of pie (with purchased meal).

Smith said his favorite offering is the pecan or chocolate-cream pie.

Key lime pie lovers might agree with Joshua Celmer, an employee at the bakery who said the green-tinged wedges are the most popular. "It's my favorite," he said.

Montgomery, on the other hand, said it's got to be the Lakeshore crumb pie that rates highest on her list. "It has strawberries and apples," she said.

"Pie is a celebration of family and tradition, neatly and deliciously packaged in a flaky crust," said Grand Traverse Pie Company, who's based in Traverse City. "Our bakers take great pride in crafting each pie by hand and baking them slowly until they are perfectly done."

Micah Graettinger, 4, of Madison Heights, wasn't sure about pie until he sampled a slice of the Lakeshore variety his morning. "It was a fork out of his mouth," said Micah's mother, Tanya. "And to think I wasn't sure if he liked pie."

With 15 years in the pie business, Achatz Homemade Pie Co. also is gearing up for dads and grads. While Achatz's main features six pie shops in metro Detroit, including the location in Troy, 1063 E. Long Lake.

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TCBY (The Country's Best Yogurt) also is in the party mode. At Troy's only TCBY, 2848 W. Maple, customers can order a lot of time for their large gatherings.

"We make them up to whatever specifications you might want and freeze them," said Brian Coury, owner and longtime Troy resident.

His best-selling yogurt flavor is vanilla, followed by chocolate, by white-chocolate and peanut butter. Coury said peanut butter is popular including himself. "We have peanut butter-loving customers' phone numbers and call them when we're offering it," he said.

Coury said that TCBY frozen yogurt (made in California) has gotten healthier than in the past.

"It's very close to regular yogurt now," he said. "It used to be difficult to keep the probiotics active during the freezing process."

Probiotics are live, 'friendly' bacteria found in food — usually yogurt — that help to maintain a healthy balance of bacteria in the gut.

In addition to yogurt, TCBY offers sorbet for those who are sensitive to dairy products. Hard-packed yogurt made in Arkansas accounts about 30 percent of the shop's sales.

But when it comes to parties, Coury said the big seller is the company's frozen yogurt cakes. "Chocolate cake with vanilla frosting is our best seller," Coury said.

Note to Dad: Coury and his team will be giving out a free cone or cup of ice cream to fathers on Father's Day.

Cupcake cuisine

It's a happy, happy world at Just Baked, 3137 Crooks, which opened about a month ago in the former Cold Stone Creamery building. The shop has seven locations in southeast Michigan, including the original site in Livonia.

The shop offers tastings in bright colors and fancifully decorated cupcakes in some 50 flavors.

"The favorite flavors are the Grumpy Cake and the Red Velvet cupcakes," said Sara Kalish, who manages Just Baked's Troy location. "The Grumpy Cake reminds people of the traditional Sander's Bumpy Cake and what they grew up on, although the Grumpy Cake is our own creation."

Featuring a rich devil's food cake stuffed with vanilla buttercream then topped with buttercream pillows and dipped in a hot sauce, the Grumpy Cake is the top pick.

As for the Red Velvet, Kalish said people love the cream cheese frosting. There also are a kitchenful of other flavors -- from chocolate to cinnamon.

"The company's most popular order for parties is the cupcake tower," Kalish said. "It's a nice way to display cupcakes, and --like for graduations, we have caps on them."

Troy resident Laura Scaccia said cupcakes are a creative way to wow party guests. "They come in great colors and unusual flavors."

Top-selling goodies

No. 1 favorite	No. 2	No. 3

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Grand Traverse Pie Co. pies	Cherry Crumb/		ABC Pie
	Apple/Crumb	Traditional Apple	(Apple, Bl
	Tie		
Achatz pies	Michigan Four Berry (fruit)	Apple (fruit)	Cherry (fr
	Banana (cream)	Chocolate (cream)	Coconut (
Just Baked cupcakes	Grumpy Cake	Red Velvet	

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