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Local Breads and Pastries a Perfect Addition for the Holidays

By A.K. Carroll



Photos A.K. Carroll



This is the season for special meals, out-of-town guests and plenty of holiday gatherings. Though we would all like the time and energy to make our own baked goods from scratch, that isn't always an option. The best thing? Let someone else do it for you. Whether you are hosting extra mouths, supplementing a meal, or in search of a gourmet gift, these Lamorinda bakers have you covered.

The Perfect Pastry—Home/made Kitchen, Moraga

There is nothing large or industrial about the production of pastries at Home/made Kitchen Café and Bakery. Taking tips from such gastronomic masters as Ina Garten (The Barefoot Contessa) and Thomas Keller (Bouchon and The French Laundry), Home/made's daily selection of muffins and scones add just the right touch to breakfast, brunch, or a fireside chat over a hot cup of tea. Order in advance to be sure of flavor and quantity availabilities.

Muffins — Filled with carrots, coconut, raisins, walnuts and everything but the kitchen sink, the \$3 morning glory muffin is Home/made's best-seller, with the raspberry oat (\$3.50) following close behind. Lemon poppy seed and blueberry round out the usual flavor offerings, though seasonal specials like a pear ginger have also made guest appearances.

Scones — At \$3 a piece, these savory and sweet snacks beg for a hot beverage (or just a hungry appetite). Savory pastry fans will be tickled by Home/made's rendition of Bouchon's bacon cheddar scone, while aficionados of the more traditional sweet scone might be more inclined to favor the strawberries and cream scone. Orange currant is another popular seasonal offering.

Fresh-Baked Bread for any Occasion—The Rising Loafer, Lafayette

Have you ever stopped in for sandwich and thought to yourself, "This bread is so good, I wish I could take this home"? That's just what happened to Peru native Maria Gastelumendi when she first tasted the Country Oat Bread at Danville's Rising Loafer (which has since closed). Now part of the duo that owns The Rising Loafer Bakery and Café in Lafayette, Gastelumendi sells fresh-baked bread on a daily basis. Winner of environmental and green awards on all levels, The Rising Loafer is proud to use locally-sourced ingredients and hormone free eggs in each of their made-from-scratch breads. Priced at \$6 each and only available in their storefront near Trader Joe's, loaves can be ordered in advance and are available daily.

Country Oat — Maria's favorite, this slightly sweet bread is excellent toasted, even without butter or jam. It would be a great addition to a holiday meal.

New York Rye — Especially popular with Europeans and East coast natives, this rye offers a taste of home. It's perfect for sandwiches and also pairs well with creamy cheeses or artichoke dips.

Cinnamon Raisin — If French toast or bread pudding isn't a part of your holiday traditions, it should be, and this is the bread to use for it. Sweet swirls of cinna-

mon and plump raisins compliment the egg and milk batter of brunch-time favorites.

Banana Bread (\$7) — This sweet little loaf features big chunks of walnuts and simple spices. Toasted or sliced, it would be great as a gift or an afternoon snack.

Home/made Kitchen

337 Rheem Blvd, Moraga, (925) 388-0841

Rising Loafer

3643-"B" Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, (925) 284-8816

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A few selections:

- Beet Salad:** fresh mint, tomato, golden raisins, goat cheese, herb vinaigrette....7
- Sardines Insalata:** calamata olives, green beans, potato, feta cheese, balsamic olive oil9
- Niman Flat Iron Steak:** potato gratin, green beans, chimichurri sauce18
- Fresh Seafood Cioppino:** in a rich tomato-basil sauce, parmesan, garlic toast..19
- Roasted Scallops:** spinach, saliccia sugo19
- Roasted Wild Salmon:** white wine, capers, braised greens, and potato gratin..17
- Veal Scallopini:** mushrooms, garlic, marsala wine17

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