



"A TENDER, RAUNCHY COMEDY"
MANOHLA DARGIS, *The New York Times*


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SFoodie's 92 No. 70: Blackstrap Molasses Gingerbread from Lotta's Bakery

By John Birdsall, SFoodie Editor, Tue., Feb. 8 2011 @ 5:08PM

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Gil Riego Jr.

Lotta's Bakery's blackstrap molasses gingerbread, \$2.75.

SFoodie's countdown of the 92 best things to eat and drink in San Francisco, 2011 edition.



Small, owlish Earl Darny does American baking like few pastry chefs in San Francisco: flaky, butter-crust pies with fruit he sources from Heart of the City farmers' market; spiral cinnamon rolls; plump layer cakes. But in the four years since Darny opened **Lotta's Bakery**, he's gotten almost exactly zero notice from the local food press.

Maybe it's because so much of what Darny bakes has the throwback feel of the well loved. "Nobody does stuff about you unless you're the hot ticket," Darny says in a matter-of-fact voice, and Lotta's – which

takes its name both from famed S.F. personality **Lotta Crabtree** and Darny's drag alter ego, **Lotta Lust** – is definitely not the hot ticket. The dominant color here is a grandma shade of cake-box pink. And because Darny shares the place with Sweet Antiques, which belongs to

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his life partner, Richard Pullano, one side of the room is crammed with shiny Deco toasters, a sleek ceramic panther from the 1940s, and scores of other vintage chotchkes.

Darny's amazing blackstrap molasses gingerbread, too, is grounded in the past. The recipe comes from alpha blogger **David Lebovitz**, who developed it when he was pastry chef at long-defunct Monsoon. The inch-and-a-half slabs Darny cuts from the loaf are sticky and black, minutely whiskery with fresh ginger fibers, and with a snarly, nearly smoky taste of the blackstrap, the dregs of the sugar-refining process. The thing is almost savage in its depth of flavor and the dankness of its crumb, served up in the city's frilliest pastry shop.

Lotta's Bakery: 1720 Polk (at Clay), 359-9039.

Dishes in our series so far:

- 92: **Goat tacos** from **El Norteño**
- 91: **Faux shark's fin soup** at **Benu**
- 90: **Esperpento's** alcachofas a la plancha
- 89: **Poco Dolce's** olive oil chocolate bar
- 88: **Decantr's** chicken-liver mousseline
- 87: **Outerlands'** levain bread
- 86: **Fraiche's** frozen yogurt
- 85: **Gyro King's** spinach pie
- 84: **Tandoori fish** from **Lahore Karahi**
- 83: **Braised oxtail and daikon** from **Namu**
- 82: **Golden Gate Bakery's** custard tart
- 81: **Commonwealth's** cured foie gras with umeboshi purée
- 80: **Star Stream's** Liège-style waffle
- 79: **Mexican hot chocolate** from **La Oaxaqueña**
- 78: **Meatball sandwich** from **Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe**
- 77: **Cheesecake** from **Zanze's**
- 76: **Chicken pepian** at **San Miguel**
- 75: **Macau iced coffee** at **Vega/Special Xtra**
- 74: **Comstock Saloon's** Pisco Punch
- 73: **Hai Ky Mi Gia's** duck leg noodle soup
- 72: **Sauerbraten** at **Walzwerk**
- 71: **Boudin noir** at **Cafe Bastille**

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Tags: best dishes 2011, blackstrap molasses gingerbread, David Lebowitz, Earl Darny, Lotta's Bakery, Richard Pullano, SFoodie's 92, Sweet Antiques

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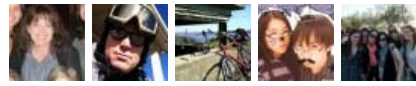
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