

JANE PARKER FRUIT CAKES

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Review: Classic and Dark Jane Parker Fruit Cakes make their return in 2017. We'll try them both and share our results with you as we celebrate the return of these former A&P bakery classics. Made from the original recipe, and now made in the USA.



Jane Parker Fruit Cakes are back.



Chances are, not too many years back, there was an A&P store in your home town.

A&P, also known as the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, was as well known and popular then as Walmart stores are today.

Actually, they were a great influence on the development of Walmart stores as we know them today. A&P changed the way folks shopped for groceries by becoming the community grocer that

offered almost all of your grocery needs in one location.

Before them, you would buy canned goods at one store, meats from a local butcher, bread and cakes from a local baker, fresh produce and fruits from yet another store. You actually visited separate locations to fulfill your grocery needs. Imagine that.

From 1915 to 1975, A&P was the largest grocery retailer in the United States. In 1930, they were the worlds largest retailer with over 16,000 stores. However, they began to decline in the early 1950's and the last few remaining stores were either sold or closed by the end of 2015.

A&P was the originator of the private label products as we know them today. They bought up bakeries, roasters and other large companies to produce their own private brand of products that were then sold in all of their own stores.

Names such as Eight O'Clock Coffee, Quaker Maid, Ann Page, Our Own Tea, Grandmother's, Marvel and Jane Parker became household favorites around the country.



Jane Parker was one of the bakery items that A&P produced and became well known for their Classic and Dark brands of Fruit Cake.

At one time, A&P operated 37 of their own bakery plants and became America's largest baker. However, the bakery division was closed during company restructuring during 1981-1982.

Jane Parker Fruit Cakes were later produced in Canada, and were still made available in the remaining stores and eventually available for order online up until around 2014-2015.

Following the final closing and sale of the remaining stores, the Jane Parker Fruit Cakes were no longer made and available. A staple of the American families holiday tradition were thought to be gone for good.



This ad, from around 1940, advertises the famous brand of Jane Parker Fruit Cakes. Note the price of \$1.75 for a 5lb cake. Now we know why they call those the "good old days." Smile.

"Don't wait until Christmas.....order your Jane Parker Fruit Cake today. Top the year with a really festive holiday treat. Your A&P Bakers present Jane Parker Fruit Cake..... a genuine masterpiece of the baking art. And... good news to everyone it's price is a mere fraction of what you would expect to pay for a top quality Fruit Cake made of such choice quality ingredients as this one is." says the ad.



This is my older brother and his family from way back when. Smile.

My brother worked for our local A&P stores from 1960 to 1973. He was promoted to Produce Manager shortly after going to work for them, then pulled a few years in the Army.

After the Army, he returned to A&P and became a store Manager around 1969 working their store in the Siler City, North Carolina area from 1969 until he left in 1973.

On a side note, Francis Bavier who played Aunt Bee on the Andy Griffith Show during it's years on television, moved to Siler City after the show ended and shopped his store on occasion. But, that's a story for another time.

My brother remembers the Jane Parker Fruit Cakes very well.

He also remembers another A&P bakery favorite known as the Spanish Bar Cake.



After hearing him talk so fondly about the Spanish Bar Cake, I attempted to make something similar for him a few years back. I've posted that recipe here on Taste of Southern.

He was very kind in telling me the cake was pretty good, but that it wasn't "exactly" the Spanish Bar Cake he remembered from his years at A&P. I tried though, and I have a reason for mentioning it here.

It was the Spanish Bar Cake recipe that caught the attention of Chris Ronacher.

Chris sent me an email saying that he and his brother had just recently purchased the domain, trademarks, rights and recipes of the Jane Parker brand at an auction of the remaining A&P properties.

Chris and his brother Alex from New York, have started producing both of the famous Jane Parker Fruit Cakes – using the ORIGINAL RECIPE – and now have them available for order online.

In years past, the brothers had bought the cakes in bulk to sell on their [Online Candy Shop](#).

When the cakes were no longer being made, and the rights and recipes were placed up for auction, the Ronacher brothers purchased them so they could bring the brand back to life.

Chris contacted me via email to tell me this news. I was both surprised and delighted to hear from him.

That's how I came to learn that the Jane Parker Fruit Cakes... ARE BACK.



Chris offered to send me the two cakes you see pictured here.

One is the Classic Fruit Cake (left) and the other is the Dark Fruit Cake (right)

These are the 16oz. cakes. They also offer the 32oz, 48oz, and 72oz. versions. Some are even available in special holiday tins that will make perfect gifts for Christmas for anyone that might have enjoyed these Fruit Cakes in years past.



Click this photo to visit the [JaneParker.com](#) website and to place an order.



Classic Jane Parker Fruit Cake

This is the Classic cake. As they advertise and as you can clearly see, the cakes have "Over 2/3 Fruit & Nuts." The cake is filled with Raisins, Glace Red Cherries, Glace Pineapple, Orange Peel, and lots of Pecans.

Did I mention the cakes are now being made here in the USA?

I liked the taste of this cake. It was a good mixture of cake to nuts and fruits. I think fruit cakes in general get a bad rap because they seem to have an old dry cake mixture with lots of gummy candied fruit pieces. Not the case with this Jane Parker Classic.

The cakes tasted very fresh and were nice and moist in my opinion. Chris told me they had just received their 2017 cakes a few days before he contacted me, so that's pretty fresh.



Here's a little closer look at all the goodness of the Classic.



This is the Dark Fruit Cake.

With all the ingredients that I mentioned above, this Dark Cake also contains Brown Sugar and Molasses which gives it the dark texture and taste.

Upon first trying the cakes, I liked the Dark Fruit Cake best. This one had more of a nostalgic and old fashioned taste to me I think. I'm sure that's because of my growing up with Molasses being on the kitchen table on a regular basis.

Mama baked her Buttermilk Biscuits often, which we'd use our finger to punch a hole in the side so we could drizzle in some Molasses. The taste brings back memories for me.



Here's a closer look at the Jane Parker Dark Fruit Cake.

Look at that layer of Pecans on the top of the cake. Looks good doesn't it?

It's no wonder they call these "America's Favorite." One can only wonder how many were sold over the years at all those A&P stores across the country.

I'm sure either you, your parents, and probably your grandparents had one about every Christmas. It was a family tradition, and it will become a family tradition once again thanks to Chris and Alex Ronacher bringing it back.



I'm pretty sure you can think of someone that would love to see an Original Jane Parker Fruit Cake under their tree this holiday season. By "original" I'm referring to the fact that these are made using the Original recipe that they were first made with. How cool is that?

My brother told me he fondly remembers stacking huge displays of these fruit cakes at the end of an aisle when he worked for A&P. He said just about everybody bought a Jane Parker Fruit Cake for the holidays. According to him, A&P had lots of excellent products.

He told me that the Southern Division of A&P Stores consisted of 350 stores with headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina during the years that he worked for them. They had a bakery in the Charlotte area as well.

Older brother went on to have several stores of his own after his time with A&P. He spent about 50 years in the grocery business and retired about 10 years ago.

I've been blessed to hear many of his stories about those days on many of the road trips we've been on together over the past five years or so.

What did he think about these cakes?

"Excellent," was his response when I asked him. He said he was very pleased with the taste of both of the cakes and with their quality."

I just couldn't pin him down as whether he preferred the Classic or the Dark one the best.

Guess that means I'll need to buy him one of each for Christmas. Smile.

Personally, I think it's really great that someone has gone to the work and the expense to bring these great flavors of the past to a new generation. I wish the Ronacher brothers all the best.

I would also like to say Thank You to Chris for finding us here on Taste of Southern, for reaching out to us, and for sharing your cakes with me and my brother.

I'd be more than happy to suggest and recommend them to anyone.

I appreciate your trust in my honest evaluation of your products and hope we can work together again.

Be sure to visit www.JaneParker.com and get your order in early. Please note that as of this writing, shipping is included in the price listed on their website.

Thanks for listening, Merry Christmas.

Your Comments: Do you remember A&P Stores and the Jane Parker Fruit Cakes? I'd love to hear your memories of either... or both. Please take a moment to share them with our readers.

It will only take a minute or two for you to leave your comments in the section below.

Just remember, all comments are moderated. That just means that I personally read each and everyone before they are approved for viewing on our family friendly website. Thank you in advance for sharing.

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Be Blessed!!!
Steve