

# FRUITCAKE MARKETING CHALLENGE

## TEACHERS GUIDE

### *Relevant National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship*

Business Functions	
The business activities performed by entrepreneurs in managing the business.	
<b>L</b>	<b>Marketing Management</b> Understands the concepts, processes, and systems needed to determine and satisfy customer needs/wants/expectations, meet business goals/objectives, and create new product/service ideas
<b>Product/Service Creation</b>	
L.02	Generate product/service ideas
L.07	Choose product name
L.08	Determine unique selling proposition
L.09	Develop strategies to position product/service
L.10	Build brand/image

### *The Mystery of Fruitcake*

Can you think of a better product to test your student's creativity, marketing knowledge, and presentation skills...especially at this time of the year?

To prepare yourself (and them) for the challenge, a little history lesson and current information about the market will be helpful.



### **History of Fruitcake**

Food scholars say fruitcake started when the ancient Romans added raisins, pine nuts and pomegranate seeds to barley mash to make granola bars. During the Middle Ages, fruits, honey and spices were added to the list of ingredients to turn them into a dessert.

The big advantage of fruitcakes was that they wouldn't spoil. Once they were soaked in alcohol to prevent mold and buried in powdered sugar in tightly closed tins, they could be eaten as many as 25 years after they were baked. During the Crusades, fruitcakes were carried in saddlebags and backpacks across Europe. Panforte, a thin, chewy fruitcake made in Italy more than a thousand years ago and taken on the Crusades, is still baked today.

Many countries have their own version of fruitcake, but the modern fruitcake we know came from England. It developed out of their recipe for plum cake which contained dried fruits. How fruitcakes became a Christmas tradition is a mystery, but we do have a few clues. In all countries, it was a "make ahead" dish since it could be baked after the harvest and saved to eat during the holidays. In England, it was a common treat to pass out to the poor women singing Christmas carols in the streets. And during the late 1700's, an English law was passed restricting the eating of plum cakes to holidays. For whatever reason, fruitcake is part of Christmas tradition today.

# FRUIT CAKE

Fruitcakes are extremely tasty. Made of dried fruit and nuts with just enough batter to keep everything together, a small bite goes a long way. The baked cakes are vaguely related to English plum puddings (which contained no plums; plum was a generic word for any dried fruit). These, like the fruit or nut ingredients of mincemeat, were often fermented in a crock for a year or more, fed periodic doses of brandy, then added to batter and baked.

If fruitcakes are heavy (and they generally are), that's deliberate. They aren't meant to rise to the light, fluffy texture of modern birthday cakes. Instead, they are meant to be a treat of substance, to be sampled in small pieces.

The shelf life of many fruitcakes is as much as 25 years! So, it's a great food for emergency reserve food stores.

## Fruitcake Trivia



According to **Harper's** Index, 1991, the ratio of the density of the average fruitcake to the density of mahogany is 1:1.

When a research firm polled some 1,000 adults about what they did with fruitcake, 38% said they gave it away, 28% actually ate it, 13% used it as a doorstop, 9% scattered it for the birds, 4% threw it out, and 8% couldn't remember.--Russell Baker, *The New York Times*.

## Activity Guide:

- Decide if you want your students to work as individuals or in teams and how many can be on each team.
- Determine how much in-class time and how much out-of-class time you will allocate for them to prepare their materials and presentations.
- Distribute copies of the "Fruitcake Marketing Challenge" Handout.
- Share some of the history, fun facts, and trivia about fruitcake with them.
- If appropriate, share some of the funny ads from the web site mentioned in the Targeted Teaching Topic on page 11 of the December 2006 issue of Nebraska E-News Monthly. Reminder: Some of the ads are appropriate for use in a typical middle school/high school classroom, but others are probably not. Look at all of them first and decide which are appropriate for your students. Don't just send them to the website to explore.
- Provide the instructions on how long they have to prepare, your suggestions on how to proceed, and when presentations will begin. Adapt the Project-based Scoring Rubric to meet the criteria you are looking for in their presentations.
- Optional: You may want to videotape the presentations and show them later or use with future classes to give them a perspective on how others have approached this marketing challenge.
- Have fun with this...it's not supposed to be deadly serious! For heavens sake...it's fruitcake!!

