

following review helpful. Good manual on scratch cake baking. Highly Recommended. By B. Marold 'Little Cakes' by professional writer and 'cookbook archeologist' Susan Waggoner is a very pleasant discovery I am happy to recommend to all, especially occasional bakers who want to go just one step beyond the Duncan Hines and Betty Crocker packages to make cakes from scratch. In spite of the delightful watercolor illustrations dotting the dust jacket, I was expecting a weak effort on petit fours and other less than useful preparations. This especially in light of my recently having reviewed expert baker and baking writer Flo Braker's reissued 'Sweet Miniatures'. I was very pleasantly surprised with what I found. For starters 'little cakes' in this book means primarily single layer cakes baked in an 8-inch square or round pan, with icing. There are plenty of recipes which can be adapted to two or three layers, and the author gives many suggestions for same, but the heart of the matter is cakes baked with a relatively small amount of batter for a relatively short time. Within those constraints, the variety of cakes presented in this delightful book is wide indeed. The basic types include silver cake, white cake, white chocolate cake, yellow cake, gold cake, genoise (French sponge cake), whipped cream cake, chocolate cakes, devils food cake, marble cakes, 'German' chocolate cake, flourless chocolate cake, red velvet cake, pound cake, marble pound cake, butter pecan loaf, lemon pudding cake, orange cake, banana cake, grapefruit cake, pineapple upside-down cake, raisin spice cake, oatmeal cake, pumpkin cake, gingerbread, carrot cake, walnut cake, spice cakes, sandwich cakes, tea cakes, ginger buttons, petit fours, icebox cakes, ladyfingers, and cheesecakes. I will be happy to forgive the author for including cheesecake (a cheese custard pie) and other non-caky desserts such as trifles and tiramisu, as she has successfully created a highly accessible source of good recipes for quick reference when you do not want to wade through a 600 page tome to find something quick for a last minute baking need. The litany of cake types above is multiplied by pairing each type of 'crumb' with an appropriate icing, of which Ms. Waggoner gives several such as whipped creams, lady Baltimore frosting, white decorator icing, basic vanilla icing, basic chocolate frosting, lavish fudge frosting, chocolate ganache, white chocolate buttercream, white chocolate meringue, basic cream cheese frosting, grapefruit frosting, powdered sugar glaze, quick-set fondant, browned butter frosting, peanut butter frosting, penuche frosting, and caramel icing. On top of these are recipes for fillings and syrups for 'kicking things up a notch' to borrow a phrase from someone. While Ms. Waggoner does not have the professional baking credentials of Flo Braker or Nick Malgieri or Gayle Ortiz or Gail Gand, she is no slouch when it comes to starting one out with excellent advice on how to go about baking a good, simple cake. As far as I can tell, she touches all the right bases and gives absolutely no spurious advice. Some practical folk may object to her ward against using an oil spray from an aerosol can to lubricate a pan. I suggest those folk go and read the ingredients on those little cans and realize that the 'no fat added' advertising claim is based on a fuzziness in the labeling law which says that if the amount is less than 1%, it can be deemed zero. The wrapper or a stub end of a stick of butter will give no more fat and probably be a lot healthier. A huzzah for Ms. Waggoner on this point. For those of us who bake cakes only about three or four times a year, I still recommend Ms. Waggoner's book, as it is a very entertaining read for foodies as well as being an exceptionally good quick reference for a wide variety of basic cake types. The very short biography on the dust jacket says Ms. Waggoner enjoys rummaging through old magazines and newspapers for recipes. Well, she has really put all that rummaging to good use. Before the recipe for each major classic recipe, there is a little story on the source and age of the recipe and where it has been between the time it was created and its appearance in this little book. There are even some references to that greatest of pastry chefs Antonin Careme who is credited with the invention of the strawberry charlotte russe. It is a small point for a book of such high quality recipes, technique, and stories, but the book is also exceptionally well designed to be both pleasant to read and easy to follow when you are doing recipes. The watercolor illustrations contribute little to the appreciation of the end result, but they succeed in being very decorative. I compared some of Ms. Waggoner's recipes to my favorites and I will not give up my Nick Malgieri recipes for carrot cake or gingerbread and I will not stop referring to Rose Levy Beranbaum or Shirley Corriher for advice on what went wrong with my genoise, and I will definitely go to Maida Heatter when I want a seriously impressive production, but I will definitely turn to Ms. Waggoner the next time I need something I can make quickly from the pantry of a very short trip to the local grocery store. Highly recommended to all foodies, occasional bakers, and readers in general.

We all deserve a little cake now and then. But with today's cramped kitchens and even more cramped schedules, making a big threelayer cake can be a monumental undertaking. And unless you're baking for an army, you risk having much of it go to waste. How about a small cake with big flavor? Little Cakes is here to liberate us from the toobig, tooboring tyranny of boxed cake mixes and the traditional layercake recipes. Betty Crocker has fooled us into thinking that "yellow" and "white" are the only flavors available. We've forgotten about the imaginative range of cakes that our grandmothers made. Little Cakes brings back the creativity of those lost classics but updates them for today's smaller households. Illustrated with original watercolors, Little Cakes makes a charming gift. But it's also an essential addition to any baker's bookshelf, with more modest sized cake recipes than any other cookbook. Rediscover the simple pleasures of baking and enrich any occasion with just the right amount of sweetness.

From Publishers Weekly
White cakes, yellow cakes, genoise, petits fours, tea cakes, chocolate cakes, icebox cakes,

cheesecakes, loaves, angel cups and trifles all get their due in this charming little book by cake lover Waggoner (Vintage Cocktails; Nightclub Nights). Despite the title, not all the cakes in this book are tiny. Instead, what Waggoner means by "little" is home-sized and homemade, "the opposite of the towering confections that show off their icings like models strutting down a runway." Most are made in eight- or nine-inch pans, the perfect size for a family dinner or small party. Waggoner's attitude toward cake-making harks back to an earlier era when fresh-baked cakes appeared regularly at family tables: she's precise about her measurements and temperatures, but spontaneous when it comes to fillings, frostings and decorating. Many of her recipes, such as the one for Silver Cake, are derived from vintage cookbooks, and she includes several variations for dressing up each of her batters. For example, Perfect White Cake can be turned into Coconut Cake, Lady Baltimore Cake or Strawberry Cream Cake, depending on what extra ingredients are added before the pan goes into oven and what toppings are used once the pan comes out. Novice bakers will particularly appreciate the 10-page introduction to cake-making, but everyone will drool over the final 20 pages of toppings and fillings, which includes such delicacies as apricot glaze, caramel icing, chocolate ganache and candied citrus curls. Though there are no photographs in this volume, the recipes are copiously illustrated by Susan's stylish watercolors.

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About the Author Susan Waggoner is the author of several books, including Vintage Cocktails and Cocktails A-Go-Go.