

# 3 pecan pies worth a holiday splurge

TASTER'S CHOICE *By Janny Hu*

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## Draeger's Pecan Pie is voted # 1!



Panelists were John Carroll, cookbook author, San Francisco; Marc Halperin, culinary director, Center for Culinary Development, San Francisco; Shelley Handler, consultant, San Francisco; Rosemary Mark, recipe developer, Walnut Creek; Roland Passot, chef-owner of La Folie in San Francisco and three Left Banks. All products are tasted blind; a perfect score would be 100. Prices listed are the lowest found, but products may be available at other stores.

It's that time of the year when pecan pies become a market mainstay, going crust-to-crust with pumpkin pies for a spot on the holiday dinner table. Rich and syrupy sweet, just a sliver is enough to send someone bouncing off walls.

With eight pecan pies to sample, then, it wasn't long before our Taster's Choice panelists were on a sugar high. But after going through every pie - and two pots of coffee - only three got the thumbs-up.

Tying for first place were the house pies from a pair of markets - Draeger's and Whole Foods.

Draeger's pecan pie (\$19.95 for a 9-inch pie) was "loaded with nuts," more than twice as much as any other pie. It also hit all the right notes: "buttery," "nutty" and "not too sweet." With a "good American pie crust" and "smooth brown sugar filling," **all five tasters would buy this pie.**

Meanwhile, the "well-seasoned" version from Whole Foods (\$14.99 for a 9-inch pie) struck a "good balance of sweet and nutty." Its "buttery brown sugar filling" had "good natural flavor," and the crust was "flaky," reminding one taster of a "puff pastry." Four would buy this pie, and the fifth might.

In third place, just behind the winners, was Christine's Handmade Pies by Upper Crust (\$19.99 for an 8-inch pie at Whole Foods). Though this pie had a "good caramel-y flavor and candied texture," some felt there was "not enough brown sugar flavor - more buttery than sweet." The crust? "Very crumbly" and "cookie-like," with one taster noting that the pastry was "unbelievably salty." Three panelists would buy this brand, one might, and one would not.

After that, the scores tumbled down faster than a sugar crash.

The pecan pie from Andronico's (\$15.99 for an 8-inch pie) was a distant fourth. "Just plain sweet," wrote one panelist. "Nothing else of interest going on." Indeed, the "syrupy filling" paired with a "stale-tasting crust" had another taster summarizing the pie as simply "acceptable." Two tasters might buy, while three would not.

Trader Joe's pecan pie (\$6.99 for an 8-inch pie) came in fifth - not that any of the panelists actually liked it. "Filling is grainy, crust is soggy," one wrote. "Dough is virtually tasteless," another added. About the nicest comment was that the pie was "boring." None of the panelists would buy this pie.

### Pecan pie

<b>Draeger's</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Whole Foods</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Christine's</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Andronico's</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Trader Joe's</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Safeway</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Jessie Lord</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Sweet Earth</b>	<b>10</b>

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