

Draeger's Pumpkin Pie

TASTER'S CHOICE *By Janny Hu*

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Alone at the Top!



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Last year, Taster's Choice celebrated Thanksgiving with endless helpings of pecan pie. This year, it's onto another holiday classic—pumpkin pie.

Together, the pie brethren are the most popular of Thanksgiving desserts, and one supermarket bakery has nailed them both.

Draeger's, whose pecan pie tied for the top spot a year ago, has the winners' podium all to itself this year.

The store's pumpkin pie (\$14.99 for a 7-inch pie at Draeger's Menlo Park, Los Altos, San Mateo and Danville) had "the best crust of all"—"flaky" and "nicely colored." Most tasters also found the filling excellent, with a "mild sweet spice" balancing the "pumpkin savoriness." It was the most expensive in the tasting, yet three panelists would buy this brand, one might and one would not.

Meanwhile, second-place Jessie Lord (\$5.99 for an 8-inch pie at Cala Foods) is perhaps the value pick. While this pie was an unnatural "electric orange" color, several tasters liked its "light texture" and "nicely spiced" filling. Others found the dough undercooked and the pie "bland overall." Three would buy it; two would not.

Christine's Upper Crust (\$14.99 for an 8-inch pie at Whole Foods) came in third. Though panelists generally liked the "firm" filling that was "flecked with spices," they were split on the crust. Some found it "nice and crumbly," while others deemed it "very salty" and even "bitter" tasting. One would buy, two might and two wouldn't.

In fourth was Whole Foods (\$12.99 for a 9-inch pie at Whole Foods), whose pecan pie tied with Draeger's for first last year. Panelists found the pumpkin version to be "the most homemade looking of the pies." The "wet," "puree"-like filling was "a bit heavy on cloves," and the crust had its own textural issue. "Dough is soft — under-cooked." While one taster would buy and one might, three would not.

Scores dipped from there, with Rocky Mountain (\$7 for an 8-inch pie at Mollie Stones) trailing in fifth. Saying it was "too sweet," "over-spiced" and "raw-tasting," none of the panelists would buy this brand.

Pumpkin pie

Draeger's	71
Jesse Lord	61
Christine's	59
Whole Foods	47
Rocky Mountain	34
Andronico's	32
Costco	32
Safeway	26
Trader Joe's	25

Panelists were Linda Anusasananan, food writer/consultant, San Mateo; John Carroll, cookbook author, San Francisco; Marc Halperin, culinary director, Center for Culinary Studies, 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.

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