

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ

WEEKEND

★★★★ \$2.50

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 - 11, 2011

WSJ.com



THE OFF DUTY 50

YOUR GUIDE TO AN AWESOME AUTUMN

OFF DUTY



50 THE OFF DUTY FALL

Your one-stop guide to autumn. Fifty inspired ideas, things and places to herald the season with style

16



REVENGE OF THE LAYER CAKE

REMINING US THAT THE CUPCAKE is but a poor man's layer cake, the country's savviest bakers are getting innovative with old-fashioned, multidecked marvels. Already acclaimed for her seven-level caramel stunner (which made a cameo in the film "The Help"), Maryland's Caroline Ragsdale Reutter recently added a seasonal pumpkin version (pictured) to her menu. Packed with an ice-cream-thick buttercream filling flecked with cinnamon and ginger, it travels (and freezes) like a champ (\$58, carolinescakes.com). Others must be enjoyed locally. In Chicago, Stephanie Hart's Brown Sugar Bakery offers a Bananas Foster version, with brown-sugar-and-butter-drenched fruit folded into creamy custard layered between four moist tiers of sponge. At New York hot spot the Dutch, pastry chef Kierin Baldwin renders devil's food cake divine by studding it with cacao nibs, slicing it into three strata spread with crème-fraîche-enriched chocolate and covering the whole with toasted black pepper boiled icing. Out West, Karen Krasne of San Diego bakery Extraordinary Desserts heightens carrot cake with a vanilla crème brûlée filling and nut meringue topping. And in Los Angeles, Elizabeth Belkind of Cake Monkey gives classic Black Forest a huckleberry spin, supported with homemade preserves and glossy maple frosting. The best part: Six-inch rounds are available by mail-order (\$58, cakemonkey.com). —Charlotte Druckman