

## The Ignoble Fruitcake

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After one becomes unemployed it is amazing where one's thoughts can become lost (*In light of the following suggestions it's highly debatable as to whether or not they should be found.*). One evening while lying in bed (*Not that I really lie or purposely tell untruths, but I do spend many evenings...morning...afternoons... and, well, some holidays in bed.*) I was contemplating ideas for a comic strip on working class people. I used to be in that group; so, I figured I knew something about it. My best ideas usually come in the "twilight zone", that nebulous period between the time I take an antihistamine for allergy relief and the moment my mind opens the door to "never, never land" and nightly repose. Anyway, I wondered what would be amusing for a construction worker to use if he or she found themselves in a position to pound in a nail but had lost their hammer. The first image that came to mind was that of employing a fruitcake for the purpose (*Of course, not that I would actually pay the thing, being the Scrooge that I am.*). Quickly, several other seemingly valuable uses came to mind and then I realized that the ignoble fruitcake deserved a volume of its own. Later, after compiling the following list, I found out that there was already a book entitled "One Hundred and One Uses for the Fruitcake". None-the-less, I still present my own views in this treatise.

Some speculate (*me, myself, and I*) that perhaps the extinction of the mighty dinosaurs was due to the accidental creation of the fruitcake by a prehistoric excuse for homo-erectus (*It's hard to fathom that the fruitcake was invented on purpose...come on, really.*). Certainly, looks can be deceiving and nowhere is it more exemplified than with the fruitcake. It has long fooled people with the illusion of being palatable, as was the case for the ancient lizards.

Perhaps the fruitcake was an alchemist's experiment to create gold that had gone awry. It could even have been an attempt at organic cement; however, there is no written record admitting to either case. I affirm that had Nebuchadnezzar used fruitcakes to construct his Hanging Gardens of Babylon, this awe inspiring wonder of the ancient world would still be around today for us to admire.

The fruitcake has an attenuated history and I shall only enlighten you on some of the more salient points. Before the Middle Ages (*Ya know, that time also referred to as the "Age of Puberty"*) the history of the fruitcake is vague. By the 1100's in Europe, fruitcakes became popular as catapult ammunition. Whoa, isn't that a scary thought? Rumor has it (*at least the one I'm starting*) that also during this period, and until the 1890's, fruitcakes were used, along with blood letting, by mental health clinicians to help cure delusional patients. It was later replaced by electric shock therapy. Fruitcake had also been experimented with as a cure for dementia. Unfortunately, mad people actually acquired a taste for fruitcake and developed immunity to its condign persuasions. Since treating various psychological ailments with fruitcake was widely spread, the term "fruitcake" thus became a synonym for crazy people. So, if someone today is fond of fruitcake, it's probably an evolved genetic trait from an ancestor of theirs that enjoyed a lengthy stay at a "funny farm" (*not to be confused with a R&R facility for comedians*).

By the way, it's a very little know fact (*like ultra-microscopically recondite*) that an evolutionary subspecies of humans addicted to fruitcakes is called "vamfruitcakers". This was also a result of psychiatric experimentation with fruitcakes. Vamfruitcakers prefer to take their fix intravenously, or through injections. During the 1960's, several "enlightened" flower children O.D.'d on this bleached and finely ground substance they confused with LSD. They had not developed a tolerance for fruitcakes. This information was kept from the public because fruitcake manufacturers and their suppliers would have been bankrupted (*Ya, like that information would really hurt sales, eh? It prob-*

*ably would have increased the number of vamfruitcakers and the Goth sub-culture populations.).*

Here's another interesting tidbit. While it has been historically accepted that the Titanic sunk after an intimate encounter with an iceberg, according to an unofficial eye-witness account, the demise of the Titanic was, in truth, caused by a frozen, floatin' fruitcake that it struck! *(Try and say that fast ten times. It's a tongue twister you never heard Robin shout: "Holy frozen floatin' fruitcakes, Bateman!")* It had been thrown overboard by a cook who considered the comestible to be bad luck. He was right! *(There are several varieties of fruitcakes; some float, some don't.)*

While some people believe fruitcakes to be eatable, others don't. This concept has been attested to by a colleague of mine. She recalls having a roommate in college bringing back a fruitcake after Christmas Break. She left the thing in the dormitory for several months and no one touched it. As she put, "If a college student won't eat it, it's not edible!" How true!

Following are some time-honored applications for fruitcakes and several neoteric suggestions. So, anyway, enjoy and I hope you find the list insightful, as well as practical.

### **Around the House and Farm**

Do-it-yourselfers, college students, and those on a fixed income will, no doubt, appreciate the pain staking *(Hey, side-splitting laughter can hurt at three in the morning! This is also the best time to read the list, when you are a little "sleep drunk.")* few hours I spent compiling the estimable decorating and maintenance morsels of suggestions for around the home. Take notes here, Martha Stewart!

Book ends.

Use granulated fruitcake for kitty litter.

Cutting boards.

Footings for deck posts.

Sink and bathtub drain stoppers.

Use as lava rock in the family barbecue grill. Old dry ones that your grandparents willed to you work best for these.

Doorstops. This is the longest held tradition.

The cowboy in the family will be elated if you shape one into a bootjack with the shop grinder.

Keep a few near you bedroom window to throw at howling dogs that insist on interrupting your blissful repose.

Soak with arsenic and place at strategic locations in the basement to get rid of those pesky rodents that have been keeping you awake at night with their condo construction.

Ones that have been freshly baked may be cured for a week and then burned in the fireplace to keep you and your guests warm. A fruitcake makes a wonderful Yule Log.

Have your teenagers paint them white and arrange along the drive way and around trees for decorative landscaping (*Incidentally, this will greatly compliment those pink flamingos that may have migrated into your yard and froze stiff.*).

Use as booby-traps to get any burglars. At the same time, you should proudly display a sign on the house that reads: "Warning! This house is protected by fruitcake!" (*Please do not consider "fruitcake" as the occupant of the dwelling.*)

Hollow out to use as a mailbox.

Use as a base to support mailbox post.

If you raise poultry, use ground particles in place of oyster shells for egg layers.

Warm in the oven or microwave for a great hotplate.

In northern areas they can be useful for weight to increase traction on icy and snow packed roads.

They can be use to support your car's rear axle while you hitch a ride into town and get the flat tire repaired.

Then again, if you could not get the tire repaired, the fruitcake would serve admirably as a short term spare.

They may also be placed under a car jack to level and keep it from sinking on soft shoulders.

Additionally, you will find that they work terrific for blocks to keep the vehicle from rolling.

Use chips of fruitcake as mulch around the base of ornamental plants in your landscape projects. (*Please do not use your own chipper/shredder to make them. Borrow you neighbors or leave the dangerous job to professionals and let them ruin their own equipment instead.*)

Replace that broken off hood ornament with a fruitcake lavishly crafted in your workshop.

The weekend do-it-yourselfer also finds that they make great patio blocks.

How about as doggie chews for Fido?

Fido will also like it if you bake one in the shape of a fire hydrant and give to him at Christmas to help him mark his territory.

Need to re-roof that luxurious vacation cottage? Have them split and use as shakes. (*Note: they can also be used as siding.*)

Thinking about putting up a backboard to shoot some hoops?

Use as a footstool.

Screw some legs on it and use as an end table to match #30.

For the college student they are good for stacking between boards to erect a bookcase. (*Hey, why not use as bookends also?*)

Put an electric wire through, stick a light bulb in, and put a shade on top. "Ta da", a beautiful lamp to go with the rest of the fruitcake furniture ensemble.

Once you have created these refined house furnishings, keep them as heirlooms. You now have a home furnished "decor a la fruit of the cake".

The bride's family will find fruitcake valuable as dowry to bring to the nuptial union.

Equestrian enthusiasts can shoe their horses with them. If you also raise cattle and have problems with delinquent adolescents "cow tipping" for amusement, you may want to use them as galoshes. (*Uh, the fruitcakes, not the adolescents, but then cow tipping would arguably confer "fruitcake" status onto the adolescents.*)

Proudly display one of these buggers as a conversation piece on that wooden spool coffee table in the living room.

Find yourself a little on the side of vertically challenged? Use as soles in elevator shoes.

Got a canary? Attach a slice on the side of the cage for the bird to sharpen her beak on and use the rest to line the bottom of the cage.

Does your cat need a scratching post? There, you have that problem solved.

Your pet goldfish will be happy if you decorate its bowl with it.

Those of you who are environmentally conscientious can put one in the toilet tank to conserve water with each flush.;

Make sure you pick out a nice fruitcake to use as a headstone to go along with your family plot.

Residents in southern states may use it as a pesticide to eliminate fire ants. Place a hefty one on top of a mound and in no time you'll be walking bare foot in the grass just like the "good ole days."

### **At the Office or Work**

Need a sledge hammer? Take the conversation piece off the coffee table when your significant other, spouse, or roommate is out and get it back before they return. No one will be the wiser.

Use in place of sandbags for flood control.

Keep one handy for a baby booster seat if you are going out to dine at a four-star restaurant. Oh, sure, the restaurant will have booster chairs, but yours will be classier. Hey, who says you can't start a fashionable trend?

Have one engraved as a name plaque for your desk.

It makes a matching paperweight for that name plate.

Are you promoting a new product or having an open house? Use a fruitcake as a surprise gift for a door prize.

Use in the parking lot to stop cars or as speed bumps.

Do you plan on attending an office party? Use as a "white elephant" gift.

Computer monitor.

A balancing weight for a backhoe.

Shape it into an analogue satellite dish.

### **Sports and Recreation**

How about a new track and field event: the fruitcake toss? We could petition the International Olympic Committee to recognize the “Fruitcake Fling” as a sanctioned event. *(It sounds like a rock group: the Fling’n Fruitcakes.)*

Going camping? Take a few along to secure tent ropes.

Use as a last resort to defend yourself against wild animals, or other campers, who may also be mistaken for wild animals.

Hold down a tarp to keep your firewood dry. Maybe take along a few fruitcake fuel logs as well.

Use for bases in softball.

The petit fours variety make good hockey pucks.

Honestly, there’s no substance to use as stones in curling that are more accurate.

Petrified fruitcake material may be used to make croquet balls, pool balls, bowling balls, and bowling pins.

Need an anchor for that boat?

Saw one into cubes for dice. It will certainly give a new meaning to “loaded dice.”

Ballast for hot-air ballooning.

How about an aerobic stepper?

Weights for bodybuilding.

Use as biodegradable “clay pigeons” for skeet shooters. Oops, I just remembered, the biodegradability of fruitcakes has not been confirmed.

Dartboards.

Trophy bases.

With a 1 and 16 record, “fruitcakes” would be well as a new mascot for pro football teams.

### **Holiday Use**

If you can’t find last year’s Christmas tree stand, a handy fruitcake is just the thing to keep the pine from toppling.

Cub Scouts can replace the old traditional Christmas birch log candleholder with the new and improved fruitcake candleholder projects.

Cut Scouts can also replace the Pinewood Derby events with fruitcake cars.

Wrap the pine boughs and nail one of these beasts to the front door for dual purposes: a) as a Christmas wreath and b) as a doorknocker.

A fruitcake could be made into a Halloween mask; what’s scarier than a fruitcake?

Paint a face on a fruitcake and pretend it’s a Jack-O-lantern.

What could say “I Love You” more sincerely at Valentine’s Day than a heart shaped fruitcake? Of course, be careful, it could also be construed with an opposite sentiment: “You fruitcake!”

### **Arts and Crafts**

As an art teacher in public schools, I can attest that running an arts program on an extremely limited budget forces one to be resourceful. There are many excellent uses for fruitcakes for the creative teacher. Here are a few to get started. Remember, the best time of year to ask for donated fruitcakes is around Christmas Break.

Use as a pounding block for leatherworking.

Ceramists find fruitcakes useful ground into grog for clay bodies.

Slice and use for jewelry making for such things as beads, key chains, matching earrings and necklaces. Sell these at the next crafts fair or flea market you attend.

Attach an old veteran cake to the grinding wheel for sharpening axes, carving tools, and chisels.

They are wonderful for blocks in students sculpting projects.

When their sculptures are completed, put them on a fruitcake base.

Hollow the inside and use as a jewelry box or safe for your valuables. After all, what thief would mistake a fruitcake for something of great worth?

Take a freshly baked one, before it has hardened too much, and insert plastic floral pieces to create a festive flower arrangement and use as a centerpiece on the dining table.

### **Civic**

Use as gravel for driveways and streets (see 92).

Another time-honored favorite is to use for filling potholes. They could also be used as cobble stones for paving streets and sidewalks.

Rebuild the World Trade Center with these and no terrorists could ever bring them down again.

Use as manhole covers.

Have incarcerated, incorrigible ingrates smash them up for adding to cement to create a stronger “mud” for roads.

Fruitcakes could deter crime. Certainly a sentence of life imprisonment crushing fruitcakes is “a fate worse than death.”

Crash test dummies like it when fruitcakes are used for blocks to create walls for safety testing automobiles.

Use to complete the Alaska Highway.

Replace the dropped apple for the New Years countdown in Times Square with a huge fruitcake.

Use to mold hardhats and military helmets.

Military aircraft could drop them as bombs. This could, however, be a violation of the Geneva Convention rules.

They could perform as insulators on telephone poles.

100. Throw away those popular Tickle Me Elmos, Barbie Dolls, and Cabbage Patch things. Now we have the adorable, everlasting Pet Fruitcake (*no assembly or batteries required*).

101. By this time you have no doubt come to realize the significance of the indomitable worth of the malevolent fruitcake. Consequently, it should become a currency standard to replace the silver and gold standards of global monies.

102. Finally, as a tribute to the versatile, eternal eminence of the enduring fruitcake, suggest it replace the eagle as the adopted national symbol of the United States of America and that one should fly along with "Old Glory" at the White House.

Upon completing this document, you may have comprehended that the fruitcake is a true, renewable resource: a significant monument to the ingenuity of humankind. Perhaps someday when astronauts venture to another planet they will leave behind a fruitcake as a testimony from the people of Earth that we are benevolent beings (*On second thought, I take it back; it could be interpreted as a hostile act.*).