



Too many cooks.

# Eating 'mistakes' helps make better batter

If you make a bad cake in Archie Carr's baking class, chances are you're doing the right thing.

"We want to make a bad cake—it's not our intent to make a perfect product," Carr said. "This is not a home-rec class. We're not showing these people how to, but how not to."

Carr, a general foreman at Sanders and a Southfield resident, is also an instructor in the hospitality industry curriculum at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus.

Ninety per cent of his 14 students have already launched careers in the industry, as they refer to the hospitality business. More than 80 per cent are supervisors in various bakeries and restaurants, which means they must be concerned with quality control, Carr said.

"These people are going to have to know why the cakes have risen too high, before they get all the way down the production line to the tier. If not, the cakes are going to keep coming out that way. The mistake will cost the company a lot of time and time is money."

But it wasn't the essence in the classroom where students, called "whites"—the bakers' uniform—worked in pairs as they mixed ingredients, poured the batter and slid the pans onto steel planks in a rotary oven.

WITH PLANKS about six feet long and more than a foot wide, the oven could easily have accommodated fifty cakes more than the two baking.

Not only the oven, but the rest of

the kitchen facilities are a source of pride to Carr, who pointed out their superiority to most bakery and restaurant kitchens.

"Look at this, it's all stainless steel, and bigger than any retail bakery you're likely to find around here. I'd say it could supply a whole community with food."

He raised his arm in an expansive gesture, which encompassed ovens, giant mixers with bowls, countertops and cupboards and sanitation equipment.

They, OCCC, didn't skimp on any of this, he said, proudly.

But his students did. One of them carefully measured out half the amount of shortening required in the basic yellow cake recipe.

Another cut the baking powder in half, but added whole measures of the other ingredients. The intent, he explained, was to see what happened when ingredients were inadequate or omitted.

Others across the room dumped double portions of ingredients into their mixing bowls and watched carefully to control the splatter.

Some of the cakes which emerged from the oven looked like the humps on a camel's back. Others sagged in the middle and crumbled between the fingers of bakers trying to shake them out of tins.

After scrutinizing his attempt at failure, one student pulled a pocket calculator out of his pocket and jabbed at the buttons.

"Mathematics is essential in this course," Carr explained, "you have to

have reached a certain level of math before you can take it."

THE MATTER is one of simple algebra, because in altering a recipe or converting it from per cents to pounds, an unknown quantity is sought, he said.

Carr teaches six hours of slide rule instruction, and maintains that the rule is even faster than a calculator. It has the added advantage of allowing a student to check his original figures, he said, because a calculator allows work with only one figure at a time.

"The only ones who can beat me on a slide rule are the oriental students. They pick up that abacus, and moved those beads so fast, I just couldn't keep up," Carr said.

Baking is a science, he said, which is why they also make "control" or normal cakes with every batch of deliberate failures.

The students will test the cakes on texture, odor, color, general appearance and finally taste. When they don't know the deliberate additions or omissions, they are expected to make a judgment. Oftentimes they don't know what went wrong.

"Once I put the ingredients out on the tables without telling them what they were. It happened that some mistook the salt for sugar, and added it to the mix without tasting it," Carr said.

It was obvious that something was wrong after the cake was baked, but the students didn't discover their mistake until he let them sample it.



Proper criteria for testing cakes includes good batter consistency

Photographed by Craig Newman



You have to weigh the matter carefully.



Some students go directly to class after all night on the job.