

'Ace of Cakes' star Duff Goldman on holiday baking ahead of Thursday visit



Susan Selasky, Detroit Free Press Food Writer 6:23 p.m. EST November 16, 2016



Duff Goldman is the guest speaker at the annual Jeffrey Zaslow Media Night.
(Photo: Creative Artists Agency)

He's a former graffiti artist and a pastry chef known for his just-about-anything-goes cake designs. And if you've ever watched "Ace of Cakes," Duff Goldman's former Food Network show, you've seen his unusual cakes resembling everything from a beer can to Stars Wars characters.

Goldman, 41, will be in town Thursday as the guest speaker at the third annual Jeffrey Zaslow Media Night at the Berman Center for the Performing Arts in West Bloomfield. Tickets are still available for the

event, which honors the memory of Zaslow, a West Bloomfield best-selling author and Wall Street Journal columnist who died in an auto accident in 2012. This year, the event also marks the debut of the "Friends Cook: Generation to Generation," a new community cookbook by Jewish Senior Life.

Goldman, who was born Jeffrey Adam Goldman in Royal Oak and is a descendant of Holocaust victims, wrote the forward for the book. Goldman, who splits his time between Los Angeles and Baltimore, will share his personal stories — those of Jewish holidays and food — at the Berman Center event.

The cookbook is \$20 and will be sold at Thursday's event. Look for it thereafter at all Friends of Jewish Senior Life boutiques, local synagogue gift shops and on Amazon.com.

The Free Press caught up with Goldman by phone to talk about what's going on in baking circles and get his advice for the upcoming holiday baking season.

QUESTION: You wrote the forward to Jewish Senior Life's new cookbook. What are the recipes like?

ANSWER: The recipes are a lot for a kid who grew up in a Jewish household. It's like comforting food. For me, it's not food that you can find when you're out and about. There's no Jewish grandma restaurant that you go to and get latkes and gefilte fish.

Q: The holiday baking season is upon us. What's popular this year?

A: Bundt cakes are hot. ... Everyone is making Bundt cakes. They are filling them now, which is kind of cool because you don't see that very often.

Q: What kinds of fillings are you seeing?

A: All kinds of stuff. Currant filling, cream filling. Ones with holiday spices like cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. It's a neat thing. Traditionally a Bundt cake is baked and you leave it alone. But taking it out and filling it is the new thing.

Q: What are some holiday baking questions people are asking?

A: People ... don't have a lot of time. It's the holidays; everyone is really busy. ... I always tell them to make things ahead and freeze them.

Q: What are good freezer candidates?

A: Cookie dough freezes especially well. Make it and freeze and it's all ready to go. Cakes freeze well, and pie dough freezes well. Make your pie shells and freeze them. You can put them in the freezer unbaked and pull them out when you need them.

Q: Do you have any holiday baking tips?

A: In the holiday, you can have a good amount of people coming over. Make sure your baking stuff is going to feed a lot of people. But don't overthink it. You don't want to make so much stuff, and things are too time consuming for not a lot of servings.

Q: Aside from baking, what do you like to cook?

A: I love Indian food. And soup, which is always a fun process. I love curries. The flavor is so deep, and it's such a process to make one. When you taste the curry, it's as if you can taste the time that went into it.

Q: Any other holiday baking advice?

A: Have fun with it. Don't get stressed.

Q: What about ingredients? You hear about people finding out they used expired baking soda.

A: Ah. You got to start over. Things like baking soda; it's going to be good for 6-8 months. ... At the start of the holiday season, just go buy some. It's like 99 cents. ... It's not expensive. Toss the old stuff and give yourself a new one. Especially for the holidays.

Q: You've done cakes for presidential inaugurations. Do you think you will do one for President-elect Donald Trump?

A: No one has called us yet.

Tickets to Thursday's Jeffrey Zaslow Media Night at the Berman Center for the Performing Arts in West Bloomfield are still available for \$36, \$54 or \$118. Purchase them through the Berman Center at 248-661-1900 or <http://theberman.org/calendar-of-events/>.

Contact Susan Selasky at 313-222-6872 or sselasky@freepress.com. Follow @SusanMariecooks on Twitter.