



## Three Tarts Bakery and Café

Three Tarts Bakery and Café  
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Three Tarts was a temporary nickname for the three women who started the business, but the name stuck when customers said they liked it. Kate Coyne, left, and Ann Heinz, right, are the two current original owners who run Three Tarts today.

Was it luck or destiny that three graduates of the Washburn Trade School, connected by family, friendship, and a love of baking, just happened to be drawing up plans to open their own business when two of them just happened to be working at Judy's Bakery in Evanston when they just happened to overhear Gale Gand mention she was selling her fledgling Vanilla Bean bakery in Northfield? It does seem as though the stars were aligned just right. Ten days later, with the ink barely dry on the papers, Ann Heinz, Mari Coyne, and sister-in-law Kate Coyne went from being employees to entrepreneurs.

Three Tarts Bakery and Café, as the new business was named, was embraced almost immediately by surrounding residents, and has since become a cherished favorite. Nowadays, customers are drawn to its coziness and charm: natural wood shelves are chock full of sweet and savory selections; Parisian-style rattan café chairs beckon an inviting stay; and French doors along the front side coax the sunlight in. If quaintness could be packaged in a box, Three Tarts would be it.

www.savoringchicago.com

Over the past seven years, Three Tarts has gained a reputation on the North Shore as one of the area's best bakery destinations. It knows how to deliver simplicity and sophistication without pretense, day in and day out.

The selection has something to please everyone. Youngsters peel in after classes from the nearby ballet school and press their noses against the glass case in excitement about what beautifully decorated cookie to choose. Grownups will probably find it harder to select from the cinnamon rolls, Danishes, muffins, scones, brioche pinwheels, croissants, cakes, cookies, and miniature pastries.

"Everything you see here we make," co-owner Kate Coyne tells me, "including our own breads." Over time, Coyne and partner Ann Heinz have developed a diverse selection of tempting treats, all the while staying true to their belief in traditional ways of baking and using quality ingredients, most notably butter. What says it all is the tagline on the back of the Three Tarts' employees' T-shirts: "Simply a butter bakery." As Coyne explains, "Our buttercream has butter in it. Our cakes are traditional butter cakes. We make them from traditional scratch."

You can taste the difference when you bite into one of the "home-style" cakes—chocolate, banana, or coconut—the comforting, simple kind of cakes mothers and grandmothers made, using the same frosting for the filling as for the outside or order one of your own combination (6" \$19.95; 8" \$31.95). Always available are the beautifully decorated Garden Cakes, in chocolate or yellow cake with a mousse, preserve, or ganache filling (\$6" \$21.95; 8" \$33.95). You can conveniently have one inscribed on the spot to take home with you. Of course, orders for custom cakes are always taken, and a wedding consultant is on hand to work with brides.

A French influence is seen in the fresh fruit tarts; petit fours; Pear Frangipane tart, an almond cream tart with pears finished with apricot



Top: Three Tarts' beautiful Garden Cakes are available every day as are the simpler, home-style cakes in chocolate, banana, and coconut. Center: Always something to suit your taste for the day, be it Danishes, brioche pinwheels,

cupcakes, or muffins. Bottom: Assorted treats are artfully displayed. Shown are powder-sugared buttermilk shortcakes, cioccolatti, almond bear claws, pecan tartlets, and lemon-coconut squares.

preserves; and the simple but delicious Colombier, a dense, moist almond cake coated with a rum orange-almond glaze that releases a heady fragrance of lemon and orange zest when you cut a slice. The ultra dark chocolate-coated éclairs are divine. And if you haven't had a flaky, buttery croissant in a long time, don't leave without one (or two or three).

What I like about the sour cream coffeecake, the Danishes, and cinnamon rolls is that as much flavor comes from the dough as from the fillings or finishes, which are flavorful and not too sweet. Muffins are made from true muffin recipes rather than cake batter (which generally has more sugar). Scones are crumbly. Cookies go beyond the typical favorites and include more than 35 different kinds daily: you'll find almond crescents, shortbreads, soft lemon halos, rugalach, and assorted mini tea cookies,



some of which are made with a French butter cookie dough called *nantais*. All of Three Tarts' pastries are made in normal portions rather than gargantuan sizes, allowing you to savor something sweet without going overboard.

There are some things customers can't live without. The chocolate chip cookies with the added flavor dimension of malt are so popular, they are also sold by the bag (\$6.95). The apple cinnamon bread (small/\$2.95 or \$5.95/large) is another regular favorite, and makes a fabulous French toast. And I think there would be mutiny if Three Tarts ever stopped selling its sprinkled butter cookies that kids adore.

The savory selections are definitely worth sampling here as well. One item I can't leave without are the Sesame Crisps, the thinnest, crispiest, toastiest crackers I

have ever had with just a hint of black pepper for some kick. They go wonderfully with cheeses. Three Tarts also makes a delicate Cream Cracker, rosemary breadsticks (all \$5.95/bag), and Parmesan-topped crostini (\$3.25/bag). Other savory selections include homemade dips, goat cheese tortas, and a small but well-chosen assortment of cheeses.

As the weather warms, a great way to plan a trip to Three Tarts is to stop by for lunch inside or out and enjoy a salad, soup, savory tart, or sandwich, all of which are made from scratch in house, including daily baked artisanal bread. I can't think of a better way to welcome spring.

**Hours:** Monday – Friday, 7:00am – 5:30pm  
Saturday, 7:00am – 5:00pm

**Parking:** Shopping mall parking lot

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