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arts & entertainment

Tasty tradition dates back more than 500 years

Cake for the choirboys

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Let them eat cake.

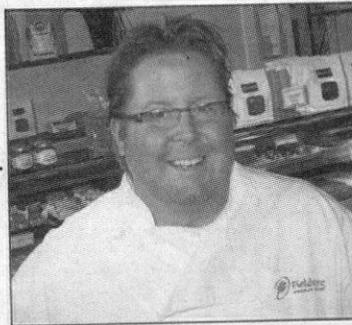
It's not the advice of Marie Antoinette, but rather of the Emperor Maximilian of Austria, who established the tradition of boy choristers as part of the musical staff at his court in Vienna – cited as the origins of today's Vienna Boys Choir – in 1498.

That's why, when the 26-strong Mozartchor group of the choir completes its White Rock Concerts series performance at White Rock Baptist Church tonight (Feb. 26), two representatives of Fieldstone Artisan Breads will march down the aisle with a specially baked cake for the singers.

Although composer Anton Bruckner, once conductor of the choir, was well known for rewarding choir members with cake – provided they sang well – according to White Rock Concerts artistic director George Zukerman, the tradition goes back more than half a millennium, as far as Maximilian himself.

"He decreed that, if they sang well, they would have a cake baked for them," he said.

"Since they've always sang well, the tradition has stuck. Generation upon generation of Vienna choir boys have had cake after



Doug Shanks photo

Fieldstone Artisan Breads owner Paul Hanley is baking a special cake for the Vienna Boys Choir's performance.

they sang, including (later famed conductor) Herbert von Karajan."

Other famous names who have been associated with the group over the centuries include Mozart (as a composer) and erstwhile choristers Haydn and Schubert.

Zukerman said having Fieldstone sponsor the event and the cake as part of the White Rock season "seemed a natural mix."

He and his wife, violinist and teacher Erika Bennedik – whose family used to billet Vienna Boys Choir members when she was a young girl in Germany – are regular customers at the bakery.

While Fieldstone owners Paul and Nicola Hanley won't be present at the event – they'll be home caring for their not-yet one year-

old twins – they are proud to play a part in continuing such a venerable tradition, Paul said.

"This is quite an honour – and so nice to be asked," he added, noting that Fieldstone, where he has been baker for eight years and owner for three, makes a point of following traditional, hand-made recipes.

The cake will be quite large, he said – "a real two-person job."

"We'll be making them a Sacher torte, which is one of the first cake recipes put together, named for the Sacher Hotel in Vienna. But I decided to put a little twist on it," Hanley said.

"Instead of the usual apricot marmelade, we'll use a French raspberry jam. I expect the boys are tired of the other kind."

The cake should be more than enough for the singers, he said.

"Maybe everyone in the audience will get to try some as well."

The Vienna Boys Choir appearance for White Rock Concerts is part of a tour of the U.S. and Canada by the Mozartchor, one of four subgroups of the choir that perform in Austria and at venues around the world.

Next up for the series will be a March 19 performance by 21-year-old Canadian pianist Avan Yu. To subscribe to the concert season, and for more information, call 604-535-6692.