

Saratoga Library English Conversation Club: Cake Picnic June 4, 2026

Summer will officially start on Sunday, June 21, 2026 in the United States. June 21st is at the exact moment of the summer solstice (**sohl**-stuhs). This occurs when the Earth's axis is tilted closest to the sun, marking the longest day and shortest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

Many things come to mind when one thinks of summer – travel, vacations, hot weather, the beach, swimming, and many people think of being outdoors more. Some people like to go camping. Many enjoy going on picnics.

This week we will talk about an unusual type of picnic that was invented by a Google project manager named Elisa Sunga. She calls this picnic after one of her most favorite foods: **cake!** Before we read about Elisa and her **Cake Picnics**, review the following vocabulary and answer the warmup questions.

Vocabulary: Review these words and match them to their meanings.

1. to dive (dahyv)	a. plentiful; giving freely and unselfishly
2. to entrance (verb: en-trans)	b. a written order granting special permission to do something.
3. exhibition (ek-suh-bish-uhn)	c. any place where an organized gathering, such as a concert, play, a celebration, or public meeting, is held
4. generous (jen-er-uhs)	d. an American painter known for his colorful works of common objects such as pies, cakes, lipsticks, paint cans, ice cream cones, pastries, and hot dogs, and for his landscapes and figure paintings
5. permits (noun: 'pur-mits)	e. related to a topic, an idea, or subject. For example: The thematic framework for the party was animals.
6. popularity (pop-yuh-lar-uh-tee)	f. a public display of the work of artists, the products of farms or factories, the skills of performers, or objects of general interest
7. Wayne Thiebaud (wayn tee-boh)	g. to fill with delight or wonder; enrapture; to enchant. This word has the same spelling as "entrance (en-truhns) which means "place of entering a building such as a doorway.
8. thematic (thee-mat-ik)	h. being well liked by the public
9. venue (ven-yoo)	i. to involve oneself deeply in something; to immerse oneself

Answer Key:

1-i; 2-g, 3-f; 4-a; 5-b; 6-h; 7-d; 8-e; 9-c

DIALOG: Practice the vocabulary words in this dialog with three people.

Kelly: The **popularity** of that small cafe has grown ever since the new owner bought it.

Andy: Yes, his servings are very **generous**. It's a great **venue** to meet up with friends.

Riley: And everyone loves the **Wayne Thiebaud** art **exhibition** he put up.

Kelly: Yes, we're all **entranced** by how he transformed the place.

Andy: But it's hard to get a table there. It's always so crowded. I heard he might expand.

Riley: Yes, he already **dove** into getting **permits** to expand into the empty building next door.

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Warm up Questions

1. What do you plan to do this summer?
2. Do you like cake? Is it a common dessert in your home country?

CAKE PICNIC

What began as a simple idea to gather friends around cake has grown into a globally recognized celebration of creativity, community, and abundance.

By Kate Bradshaw, May 12, 2026 -Mercury News



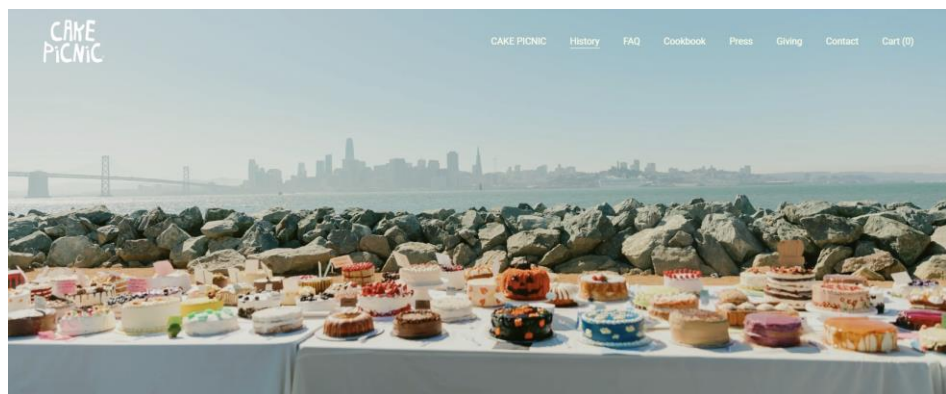
After growing up in the Philippines, where dessert often meant treats like fresh mangoes, sticky rice or coconut candy, Elisa Sunga became **entranced** with baked desserts like cakes when her family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2001.

But it wasn't until the pandemic hit that Sunga decided to make up for lost time and **dove** into the world of baking herself. Sunga worked her way through new recipes and connected with a community on social media in the process. She also co-founded the [Bucket List Bake Club](#), a virtual community for baking.

In March 2024, she posted on social media an invitation to her first Cake Picnic at Potrero del Sol Park in San Francisco. By the end of the April 2024 event, 183 people showed up, each with their own cake and story to share. That event was free.

Since then, the event series' **popularity** has grown significantly, and with that has come the need for things like event **permits** and ticketing fees. Today, Sunga says, she receives daily requests asking to bring an official Cake Picnic event to other cities around the world.

"As a part of growing Cake Picnic and the event to welcome as many cake-lovers and friends, the event itself has also grown in **venue** size, operations and processes that make this possible," the former User Experience program manager at Google says. "It's been such a wild adventure of learning how to do all of this!"



By the time she brought the event to the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in March 2025 — as part of a **thematic celebration** of a **Wayne Thiebaud exhibition** at the museum — the event, with \$15 tickets, was reported to have sold out in under a minute.

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It had 1,387 attendees, each of whom brought their own cake to share, per the event's "no cake, no entry" rule. Then, in October, she brought the picnic back to San Francisco again, this event yielding 2,068 cakes.



San Francisco was just the start. Sunga took the show on the road, bringing Cake Picnics to **venues** in cities like Los Angeles, New York City, San Diego, Minneapolis and London. In 2026, her route so far has included international stops in Mexico and Australia, with a much longer **selection of cities to come**.

Now, Sunga has put her ideas into a book, *Cake Picnic: Recipes for the Love of Cake and Friends*. It is a guide on how to throw a cake picnic and a recipe collection.

"I've learned that happiness often comes frosted, shared, and cut into **generous** pieces. It's about choosing joy, one cake at a time, and surrounding yourself with people who understand that life is sweeter when we celebrate together," she writes in the introduction.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of the *Cake Picnic* idea?
2. Would you go to a Cake Picnic event if it was in your hometown?
3. What is your favorite type of cake?
4. It appears that Elisa Sunga is crazy about cake. What is your favorite type of cake?
5. Elisa also loves to bake. Do you bake cakes? What kind?
6. What was the best cake you ever tasted?
7. Cakes are used for special occasions. What are some of them?
8. Do you think *Cake Picnics* are a good way to bring a community together?
9. Do you have a Bucket List of things you'd like to bake or cook?
10. What are other ways to bring a community together?
11. In your home country, do you have cakes for dessert?

References

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2026/05/12/cake-picnic-founder-cookbook-author-interview/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/29/us/cake-picnic-san-francisco.html>

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Types of Cakes

If you have extra time, read these descriptions of different types of cake from around the world.

Short List of cakes			
Name	Picture	Origin	Distinctive ingredients and description
Amandine		Romania	A chocolate layered cake filled with chocolate, caramel and fondant cream.
Bizcocho Dominicano		Dominican Republic	A cake with a moist, airy texture and meringue frosting.
Black Forest cake		Germany	A cake featuring cherries, kirsch, and chocolate. Typically, there is one bottom layer of chocolate shortcrust and two layers of chocolate sponge cake; the cake is then filled with cherry jam and kirsch.
Angel food cake		United States	A type of sponge cake made with egg whites, sugar, flour, vanilla, and a whipping agent such as cream of tartar.
Bolo de mel		Portugal	A sweet, heavy cake made with molasses or honey, often with walnuts and almonds. The name translates to "honey cake".
Buccellato		Italy	A circular cake containing nuts and candied fruit, traditionally associated with Christmas.
Buche de Noel		France	A traditional Christmas cake made to resemble a log, commonly decorated with confections shaped as various woodland items such as mushrooms, snow and berries. Also known as a yule log.