

# The Art of Cake Decorating



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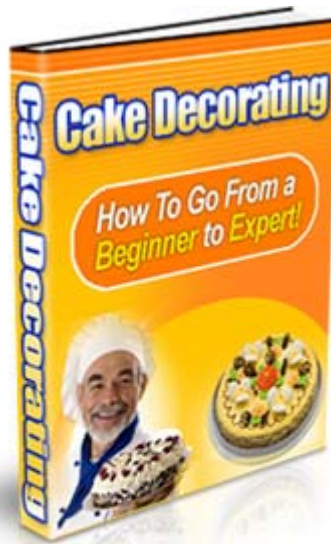
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## INTRODUCTION

The art of cake decorating is centuries old. Around the world, people have used the art of cake decorating to make elaborate edible sculptures that are the centerpieces of holidays, birthdays, and all kinds of special occasions. In any celebratory meal, having a gorgeous cake as a dessert is the crowning culinary delight of the evening.

Have you ever looked at a particularly fancy cake and thought, how do they do that? The artist probably spent years perfecting the art of cake decorating in order to create that cake. Some Sugarcraft artists will sell their designs; some will teach classes and teach students how to make their “signature” cakes and some will guard their techniques like a national security secret.

Cakes are a unique food product because cakes can be cooked, molded, shaped, and decorated to look like just about anything imaginable. Pastry chefs, wedding cake designers, and other Sugarcraft artists spend years, sometimes their entire lifetimes, perfecting new methods of decorating cakes and creating new and unique designs for cakes.

Cake decorating is a popular art form all over the world. Even though it's less common in North America for people to bake cakes from scratch than it was a few decades ago, decorating cakes is still a very popular pastime. The rise of cable TV stations like the Food Network have led to the creation of entire TV shows that feature celebrated Sugarcraft artists, cake decorators and designers, and pastry chefs.

Cake decorating is an art, but it's an art that almost anyone can learn. There are lots of resources to help you learn how to become an expert cake decorator. You can find books, magazines, websites, classes and groups all devoted to the centuries old art of cake decorating. You may even find that you have such an interest in and talent for cake decorating that you want to decorate cakes as a profession!

## Sugarcrafting

Sugarcrafting is a term that is usually used to describe anything related to the art of cake decorating. People who are in the cake decorating profession use the term “Sugarcrafting” to refer to all aspects of cake decorating but the term has another definition too.

Sugarcrafting is the term for a particular type of cake decorating technique that is usually associated with the really elaborate cakes where the cake designers and decorators create ornate 3-D pieces to decorate the cake.

Normally you wouldn't see the kind of decorating that constitutes “Sugarcrafting” on a cake that is made for your neighbor's four year old's birthday party but you would see it in some of the cake decorating competitions where cake decorators create masterpieces of confectionary skill or in really elaborate wedding cakes.

In the past, when women were expected to be responsible for all things domestic, the art of Sugarcrafting was highly competitive and women were expected to create works of edible art at every feast or fancy occasion that called for a cake.

These days, Sugarcrafters can be men or women and the stakes for professional Sugarcrafters are high. Often in cake decorating competitions, the cake decorators and designers can win hundreds of thousands of dollars, a chance to host their own TV shows on cake decorating, or highly lucrative book and endorsement deals.

Sugarcrafters are in high demand to create specialty cakes for weddings and formal events, but also increasingly people are hiring professional Sugarcrafters to create masterpiece cakes for over the top Sweet Sixteen parties and other coming of age

parties that occur in different cultures. There is fierce competition among Sugarcrafters to build up impressive portfolios and a solid reputation because cakes for weddings, parties, and other festive occasions can cost thousands of dollars.

These days, people are rediscovering the beauty of Sugarcrafting and are willing to pay for Sugarcraft artists to create unique works of art for their special occasions. Modern Sugarcrafters are reviving centuries old techniques of cake decorating and proving that the old methods are the best when it comes to creating wonderful edible confectionary art.



## The History of Cake Decorating

Cake as we know it today has only been around for a couple hundred years. Cake is thousands of years old but the cake that originated in Ancient Egypt was not like the cake we know today. Cake in ancient times and until about the 1700's was more like what we consider bread; it was spongy and had a bread-like consistency. Cakes in North Africa and the Mediterranean often were more like pastries or cheesecake.

The first cakes were yeast based, like bread, which is why they had the same type of consistency. The first non yeast cake was sponge cake, which is still enjoyed today, although not usually in the same way that dairy based cakes like we have today are enjoyed. Dairy based cakes, cakes that are made with butter, eggs and baking powder, are the cakes most often used in modern cake decorating.

In the 1700's, women in Europe started using special cake pans to create that kind of flour based cake that we're more familiar with today. It became very popular for royalty and aristocracy in Europe to compete with each other to see who could serve the most ornate and unique cakes and pastries.

Great chefs and cooks who could produce fine pastry and exceptionally decorated cakes were given places of high esteem in the household and could become quite rich for their art. The French were the first people to serve dessert as a separate course and not as part of a larger meal.

In the mid 1800's, the temperature controlled oven, the style we have today, was invented and it revolutionized the art of baking. Cakes become even more like the cakes we know today and cake decorating became almost a sport. Having the most

elaborately decorated or unique cake at a social function was crucial to anyone who wanted to acquire social standing so once again Sugarcrafters were in high demand.

Most people today who are not professional cake decorators and even some who are rely on pre-mixed cake mixes to make sure that their cakes turn out light, moist, and fluffy. There is a renewed interest in Sugarcrafting today brought on by a desire to glorify the past and the retro days of the 1950's and 1960's when women spent their days creating gorgeous edible works of art for coffee dates and holidays.

The Food Network and shows like The Ace of Cakes and Top Chef have brought cake decorating and Sugarcrafting back into the spotlight and men and woman are discovering the artistry involved in Sugarcrafting.

## Popular Methods of Cake Decorating

There are many different styles of cake decorating. Each individual chef puts their own unique spin on their style of cake decorating, but there are some basic styles that all chefs and Sugarcrafters use to create beautiful cakes.

Each cake decorating method has its own unique quirks and uses unique materials and artistic methods to achieve its signature look. Sometimes the styles seem very similar to the untrained eye, but really they are quite different.

The different methods of cake decorating can be learned through books, magazine, websites, videos, or classes. Learning some of the more popular methods of cake decorating is not restricted to culinary students. Anyone can take a class at the local craft shop, community education center, or online to learn some of the basic cake decorating techniques.

Just because the technique you're using to decorate the cake is old doesn't mean it's outdated. Many of the top cake designers still use these old fashioned methods to create their cakes because the old methods are still the best when it comes to cake decorating. Cake decorators may use different tools to help them create cakes that are more works of art than food, but the basic decorating styles from long ago remain in use today.

There are three popular cake decorating styles that have influenced all the cake designers and all the cake decorating methods that came after them. The Lambeth Method, the Australian Method, and the Wilton Method. After reading a little more about each one you will have a better understanding of the history of cake

decorating and a better understanding of what each type of cake decorating style represents and how it's done.

As you continue learning how to create edible works of art you may find that you are better at one type of cake decorating method than another. Most people find that they have a natural affinity for one design style or another based on personal preference and talent. It's ok to prefer one style over another, but you should have at least a basic understanding of each style so that you have a better understanding of the art of cake decorating.

## The Lambeth Method

The Lambeth Method is derived from a style of decorating that was popular in England where chefs and decorators would use a lot of intricate piping to create 3-D scrollwork, leaves, flowers, and other decorating on a cake. The Lambeth Method is still popular today and is frequently one of the methods used by wedding cake designers and decorators to decorate ornate wedding cakes. A cake decorated in the Lambeth Method and accented with fresh fruit or flowers is the wedding cake of choice for anyone who wants a traditional looking, elegant wedding cake.

In 1934, Joseph Lambeth put out his own book on decorating cakes using the Lambeth method. The book was a how-to book and included many tips and lessons on using the Lambeth Method to create ornate scrollwork, flowers, vines, and specialty figures.

The Lambeth Method's unique use of overpiping to create lacey, floral and ornate patterns on top of a fondant covered or marzipan cake is easy to recognize and often, people add embellishments to the ornate piping work, such as pearls or gems, lace, fresh flowers, or a bit of embroidery.

Because of the detailed instructions in the book and the popularity of the book, the Lambeth Method became extremely popular and the ornate scrollwork patterns originally designed by Lambeth became associated with American Sugarcrafting. The most common American cake decorating style is derived almost entirely from the Lambeth Method.

Examples of the Lambeth Method in American cake design can be seen most clearly in the designs of the 1950's when women had competitions to outdo each other in creating the most unique and ornate cakes for every occasion. The Lambeth Method is great for writing on cakes, so many cake decorators will use the Lambeth Method when creating cakes that have poems, songs, or other words running through the design.

## The Australian Method

The Australian cake decorating method originated in Australia during the time of English colonization. When the colonists from England settled in Australia, they brought all their own customs and cooking methods from home and one of them was the Lambeth Method of cake decorating.

Once they were settled in Australia, the settlers began experimenting with more ornate cake decorating techniques and the Australian method was born. The Australian method is similar in style to the Lambeth Method because it also involves the use of overpiping on fondant covered cakes. The Australian Method uses the same style as the Lambeth Method but incorporated the use of much more ornate scrollwork and lots of curtaining.

To get the effect of a beautiful beaded curtain cake, decorators using the Australian method often use seed beads, pearls, or little candies in their decorations. It is very difficult to create frosting curtains but cake decorators who practice can achieve stunning results using the Australian Method of cake decorating.

The Australian Museum of Cake Decorating and Sugarcraft has some of the most stunning examples of the Australian Method of cake decorating ever seen. It's hard to believe that they are edible when you look at the picture perfect decorations and most people would never dream of spoiling such artistic work by cutting into it.

While eating the cake is usually the best part of making a cake, for cake decorators, it's the time spent decorating and coaxing the cake into the final finished artistic form that is the most fun.

Just like the Lambeth Method, there are classes in cake decorating using the Australian Method taught around the world, everywhere from fine culinary institutes to craft shop classes.

Since the Australian Method of cake decorating is an offshoot of the Lambeth Method of cake decorating, most classes require students to have taken a class in the Lambeth Method or be experienced with the Lambeth Method before they can take a class that teaches the Australian Method of cake decorating.



## The Wilton Method

The Wilton Method of cake decorating is probably the most famous cake decorating style. The Wilton Method uses buttercream icing instead of royal icing for cake decorating. Buttercream icing is very tasty, but tends to be heavier and less refined than royal icing so it's really not a good frosting to use when decorating in ornate scrollwork patterns or very thin piping like the Lambeth Method and the Australian Method.

There are two things that make the Wilton Method unique in the art of cake decoration. One is the use of buttercream frosting instead of royal icing to decorate the cake. The other is using special pans to change the shape of the cake and then adding icing and decoration to finish the effect.

The use of special cake pans is a truly unique feature of the Wilton Method. Previously, cakes were always the same shapes, either round or square, but the Wilton Method changed the way that cakes were decorated by using specially shaped pans. When the shaped pans were used to create the cake, the cake itself became a major feature of the design and icing and decoration were applied to finish off the design.

Before the Wilton specialty pans were invented, the cake was really a blank canvas on which the cake decorator would create art. But the introduction of the specialty Wilton shaped pans made the cake the focus of the design instead of just the blank canvas.

Also, the use of the Wilton pans meant that truly three dimensional shaped could be achieved to create cakes in shapes that were thought impossible. A great example

of the Wilton Method of cake decorating is the Wilton doll cake, where a cake is baked in a large funnel pan with a hole in the center.

A plastic doll torso and head from a craft store is inserted into the hole at the top of the funnel shaped cake and the cake becomes the doll's skirt. The doll's dress is made entirely of icing, finishing off the effect. The icing dress forms a cohesive unit of the plastic top of the doll and the edible skirt and the cake is a three dimensional work of art.

The Wilton company not only makes cake pans and a full line of cake decorating accessories; they also sell books and videos that show people how to create amazing cakes using the Wilton method. In addition, classes are taught at craft stores around the world that teach people how to use the Wilton Method to create gorgeous, one of a kind cakes.

## Baking a Cake

If you want to be a great cake decorator, in addition to knowing how to decorate the cake, you need to know how to bake a great cake. The cake is your canvass, and the better quality your canvass is the better your art will be. While some cake decorators use mixes in order to get a good cake to start with, lots of professional bakers and Sugarcrafters swear that in order to get the best cake you need to bake it yourself, from scratch.

Baking a cake used to be very hard work, which is why cakes and cake bakers and decorators were prized members of noble families; the royal courts of Europe. Before things like temperature controlled ovens, mixing machines, and cake pans, baking a cake was serious business, and since the ingredients used in cakes were often rare in European households, mistakes were costly.

Cake has been around in one form or another for thousands of years, but once modern equipment came along and it was easier to bake cakes, the types of materials used to bake cakes changed too. These days, so many people have a wide variety of food allergies, sensitivities, and dietary restrictions that coming up with alternative cake ingredients has become quite a large business.

No matter what the actual ingredients are, all cakes have the same basic components:

- **Flour** – this can be one of several different kinds but nearly all cakes have flour.
- **Sweetener** – most often this is sugar, but there are also sweeteners made from sugar substitutes or even fruit juice.
- **A binding agent** – usually, eggs are used in cakes as a binding agent, but for people who don't eat eggs or can't eat eggs, there are binding agent substitutes that have the same consistency as eggs. Like Ener G foods egg replacer to name but one.
- **Fats** – are essential in cake, although for people who follow a low fat diet, substitutes have come along in the last few decades to accomplish the same purpose, but do not contain any actual fat. Fats commonly used are butter, shortening, and sometimes fruit puree for those who can't have fat or dairy products.
- **Liquid** – some type of liquid is needed to make the cake batter. Usually this is water or milk, although sometimes fruit juice is used to add to the taste of the cake.
- **Leavening agent** – Not all cakes have a leavening agent like yeast or baking powder, but many do. In the past, when non dairy cakes were common, people didn't use leaveners but relied on air bubbles to make the cake rise.

## Tips for Baking a Great Cake

Since starting off with a great cake is so important when you are trying to become a great cake decorator, here are some fool-proof tips to help you create the perfect cake to be your blank canvas:

- **Temperature matters** – If you don't know how accurate your stove is, or you have an older oven that hasn't been serviced in many years, buy an oven thermometer to make sure that the oven is really the right temperature before putting the cake in. Sometimes, oven temperature readings can be off by as much as 75 degrees and that can mean the difference between a great cake and a mediocre one.
- **Use High Quality Pans** – When your cake pans start to get old, burned, or are in bad shape, throw them out and get new ones. The shinier the pan, the more heat it will reflect. That will effect how the cake bakes and eliminate uneven heating that may occur with old, scratched up and dull pans.
- **Blend flavors in your ingredients when you can** – If you are making a chocolate cake, then use cocoa powder instead of flour to grease the cake pans. That way, you won't get a white mess on your cake and you will be blending more chocolate into the flavor. When making a white cake or vanilla cake, use powdered vanilla that coffee shops use on their coffee drinks instead of flour to add a light dusting of vanilla flavor to your cake.

- **To get a better cake texture** – If you want to get a finer, lighter texture for your cake, use buttermilk instead of regular milk in the cake recipe. When using buttermilk, add ½ teaspoon of baking soda per cup of buttermilk to the dry cake ingredients in order to make the cake come out better.
- **Add-ins** – To make chips, nuts, raisins, or other items that you are putting into your cake suspend in the cake batter more and not settle at the bottom of the cake, toss them in flour before adding them to the batter.
- **Making chocolate whipped cream** – If you are using whipped cream on a chocolate cake, put 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder and 2 tablespoons of confectioner's sugar in a chilled bowl and whisk in heavy whipping cream. Whip until frothy and refrigerate until set.
- **Cleanly section a layer cake** – If you need to section your layer cake, take a long strand of unflavored, waxed dental floss and pass it through the center of the cake. Pull the edges where you want the sections to be. The dental floss will make clean slices and sections without sticking to the cake.

## Making Alternative Cakes

These days, many people have special dietary restrictions that are necessary, either because of medical conditions, allergies, or lifestyle choices so some cake decorators and bakers have begun specializing in finding alternatives to traditional cake ingredients to create cakes that are tasty and beautiful, but meet special dietary restrictions.

Here are some ways to substitute alternative ingredients to make your cakes fit a variety of different diets:

- **Gluten and Wheat Free Cakes** – For people who are allergic or sensitive to wheat gluten, you can use a gluten-free flour to make a traditional cake or for people who can't tolerate any flour at all, there are lots of easy recipes for flourless cakes. Flourless cakes are more dense and heavier than cakes that use flours, but cake without flour can be just as tasty as cake with flour, although you may not be able to get the same kind of rise and consistency that you would get using flour. If you are making a cake for someone who can't tolerate wheat flour, try rice flour instead.
- **Sugar Free and Low Sugar Cakes** – To make a sugar free cake, just substitute your favorite sugar substitute into the cake recipe for sugar. Be careful, though, because some sweeteners may not give the cake the same amount of sweetness. To make a low-sugar cake, try using fruit juice as the liquid portion of the cake and cutting the amount of sugar the recipe calls for in half. That should give the cake enough sweetness while using less sugar.

- **Vegan Cakes** – Vegans don't eat any animal product, meaning you can't use eggs or animal milk or butter in your cake. You can, however, use egg substitutes, rice or soy milk, and soy butter or olive oil. You can also use distilled white vinegar, but rice milk or soy milk is usually a better choice. Since rice milk and soy milk are a bit thinner than cow's milk, you may need to add a thickener.
- **Low Fat Cakes** – Low fat cakes are easy to use if you modify your ingredients. Use low fat or no fat milk, low fat butter, and low calorie and low fat versions of other ingredients.

Remember that you may also need to adjust the recipes for your icing to accommodate different dietary restrictions!



## Getting a Cake Ready for Decorating

When you are getting ready to decorate a cake, preparing the cake for decorating is very important. It's just like when an artist starts to prepare to create a piece of art and needs to assemble all the materials needed and pre-treat the canvass. There are some tips that professional cake decorators use to get their cakes ready for decorating that you can use to create your own very professional looking cakes.

**Cooling the cake** – Everyone knows that letting a cake cool completely before frosting is crucial to having the frosting process go smoothly. One way that professionals get their cakes ready for decorating is to let them cool completely, and then put them in a refrigerator overnight to make sure they are chilled, but not frozen, before the decorating begins.

Properly chilling the cake before you start icing it can make a huge difference in the final product, so if you have the time to wait overnight and let the cake sit in the refrigerator to chill, you should take the time to do that.

**Creating a smooth surface** – Even though it would be nice if every cake popped out of the oven perfectly smooth and ready to be iced, that usually doesn't happen. So to create that perfectly smooth and level overall surface that you need in order to create a cake work of art, use a wide serrated knife or a professional cake leveler to trim up the edges of the cake.

Take a wide paintbrush or a horsehair sauce brush and brush away the crumbs from the sides and top of the take to make sure that the surface is level. You can also put the cake on a Lazy Susan so that you can rotate it without damaging the cake. Level

the sides while you rotate the cake and you will get a perfectly trimmed smooth cake that is ready and waiting to become your latest work of Sugarcraft art.

**Add a "crumb coat"** – Still worried about crumbs getting into your icing or creating an uneven frosting surface? Mix up a clear glaze and apply the glaze to the entire cake. Let that glaze dry, in the refrigerator if possible, to let the cake settle and become firm, and once the glaze is dry, you will have a perfectly level cake surface to work on with no stray crumbs to get into your frosting.

Once you have begun frosting the cake, remember, if you are not using fondant, to use plenty of frosting on the top of the cake so that the cake doesn't show through.

## Cake Decorating Ideas

No matter what the occasion may be, there are hundreds of choices for cake decorating ideas. You can choose a simple, elegant cake decorating design, or a very ornate and intricate cake decorating design, or even a fun, offbeat, or humorous cake decorating design. The only limit is your own imagination and, of course, your cake decorating skills.

So you have a big party or event coming up and you want to make a really special cake. Where do you go to look for ideas? Inspiration is all around you! Cakes can be made and decorated to look like anything you can imagine. You can get inspiration from the season of the year, a favorite movie, a favorite photo, a favorite quote, even your favorite sweater!

The Internet is another great source of inspiration. There are thousands of websites dedicated to Sugarcraft and cake decorating. You can join an online community of cake decorating enthusiasts and pick up ideas for cakes and discuss ways to make those cakes a reality.

You can shop for supplies, or books and videos on cake decorating that will show you step by step how to make that perfect cake. You can even go on a video sharing site like YouTube for video instructions on making a stunning cake.

Need more inspiration? Head down to your local craft store. Many craft stores hold classes on cake decorating in the three most popular cake decorating methods that could be inspirational and teach you the skills you need to know in order to decorate a gorgeous cake.

If you don't want to take a class, browse through the aisles of cake decorating equipment and find inspiration among the Wilton specialty cake pans, free decorating instruction sheets, and other items that might trigger a flash of cake decorating genius.

You can also turn to TV for ideas on cake decorating. Check out the Food Network and shows like *Ace of Cakes* for ideas and instructions on making phenomenal looking cakes that taste great too. The Food Network website also has a lot of recipes and photos to help with cake decorating.

## Birthdays

Birthdays are occasions where people pull out all the stops and try to make wonderful cakes for their loved ones. But there are a lot of things to consider when you're planning a birthday cake. Is the cake for a large party? If so, you'll need a large cake. Who is the party for? Does that person have any allergies or dietary restrictions?

Those are just some of the questions you should ask yourself when you start planning a birthday cake for someone else. Of course, if it's your own cake then you can go crazy and plan exactly what you like! But if the cake is for someone else then try to take that person's likes and dislikes into account.

If you are making a birthday cake for a party where there will be a large and diverse crowd, you may want to make several cakes of different flavors and with different ingredients. To keep some cohesion, you can keep all the cakes in line with the theme of the party while making one that the birthday person will like, one with vegan ingredients, one that is sugar free, or whatever the case may be. You can never have too much cake at a birthday party.

If the party is for small children or if there will be small children at the birthday party, you might want to make some cupcakes since a full slice of cake is often too much sugar for little ones to handle. A great way to keep kids busy at a birthday party is to bake a few dozen plain cupcakes then whip up some frostings in different flavors and colors and set out a buffet of topics. Let the kids decorate their own cupcakes and then eat them. It will keep them busy and out of trouble and they will have a great time doing it.

Cupcakes are great for older children who may not want to eat a lot of cake. Some simple cupcakes and pizza may be better than a fancy, but kiddie-style cake, for a middle schooler who wants a more “sophisticated” birthday party this year.

If the birthday cake is for an adult, it’s probably a good idea to make at least one low fat or sugar free cake since there is a good chance that at least some of the people at the party will be watching their weight or will need to limit their sugar intake. Making a sugar free or low fat cake will allow everyone to join in the fun and it will surely be appreciated.

The same rule applies when you are making a birthday cake for the people at the office. Since you don’t want to offend anyone or leave anyone out, make two cakes; one regular and one low fat or sugar free, or have one person make one cake and one person make the other so that there are options for the people who work in the office when it comes to birthday cake.

## Kids' Birthday Cakes

Some people like to have birthday cakes for their kids that are gender specific and some people like to have birthday cakes that aren't. There are thousands of choices for cakes in both categories, so here are some fun ideas for kids' birthday cakes that are gender neutral.

**Aquatic** – Everyone loves fish, right? A cake decorated to look like a fishbowl with fish swimming around in it is a great birthday cake idea for kids. Another great aquatic themed cake is a cake shaped like a dolphin, a walrus, a penguin, a fish, or other sea creatures and sea mammals.

Wilton specialty cake pans in animal shapes can make it easy to bake a cake in an animal shape and then you can use some creative icing techniques to create realistic looking frosting skin and details for the animal.

**The Jungle** – Rainforest cakes with lots of trees and tropical animals like birds, and exotic animals like big cats and lizards are always a hit with the younger crowd. To make a great looking Jungle or Rainforest cake, start with a sheet cake to give you the room to create all the animals and trees. Start by creating frosting trees and then create either frosting animals or use little plastic animals to complete the scene.

**The Circus** – Get some clowns to help celebrate the birthday! A cake filled with clowns in different colored clothes and with lots of different expressions will please any group of kids.

For a more exotic look, create an elephant shaped cake and mix up gray icing to make the elephant look more realistic. To make things really fun, bake a small individual sized clown shaped cake for each child and let the children decorate their clown cake the way they like.

**Kites** – If the cake is for a summer birthday, make a unique cake shaped like a kite, complete with little individual cakes for the tail. This is a great way to feed a large group of kids and still make a cake that the kids will love. For more fun, have the kids make their own kites out of paper plates, craft materials, and strings and let them run outside and fly a kite after they ingest all that sugary cake and birthday punch or juice!



## Boys' Birthday Cakes

Need to find a special birthday cake for a beloved little boy? There are thousands of ways to make a very special birthday cake for boys. No matter how young or how old, boys love toys, so any toy themed cake is going to be a surefire hit. Some other popular cakes for boys include:

**Sports** – No matter what sport is “his” sport, a little boy will love a sports themed birthday cake. Make a cake that has balls and equipment from all different sports or pick one specific sport and make a cake celebrating that sport. A sheet cake with three dimensional images is always a hit with little boys.

Personalize it too; create an image of the birthday boy on the cake wearing his own personalized jersey. Or make a cake in the shape of a football, or a soccer ball, or a basketball, and put his name on it.

You can make a cake that has a team photo of his favorite team on it. Or copy the signature of his favorite athlete and make an “autographed” cake with best wishes for the birthday boy.

Another fun but very ambitious sports related cake idea is to make a cake that looks like a stadium, and on the “playing field” put the little boy playing as a member of his favorite team in whatever sport he enjoys. A cake like that would be far too advanced for beginning cake decorators but an experienced cake decorator could do a fantastic job with such a cake.

Not all sports involve balls and bats. Does your little boy like motor sports? Water sports? Skiing or snowmobiling? Try to incorporate those images into a fun cake. For a winter sports cake, use an ice cream base for extra fun.

How about video games? Is your boy a video game fanatic? Make a sheet cake that is decorated to look like a Guitar Hero Guitar. Use a specialty cake pan to create his favorite video game character or landscape. If your son is a World of Warcraft fan, use some of the great World of Warcraft fan art to create a World of Warcraft landscape complete with races of the Horde or the Alliance, whichever your child prefers.

Video game and sports game cakes are popular with grown up boys too! Boys of all ages love sports so you can't go wrong with a sports themed birthday cake for boys.

**Toys** – Making a three dimensional cake out of your little boy's favorite toy like his Tonka truck or his little red wagon will be a great crowd pleaser. For parents who are more ambitious and more experienced at cake decorating, attempting to recreate in three dimensions a toy like a Transformer or robot can be an interesting challenge.

To make an army cake for your boy, bake a sheet cake and decorate it in lots of dark icings with lots and lots of trees and three dimensional frosting hills. Place lots of little green plastic armies around all the cake to look like soldiers out in the field. Your little boy will love it and the kids can keep the little green army men as party favors.

**Stuffed animals** – If toy cakes aren't really what interests him, try making a cake to resemble his favorite stuffed animal. A teddy bear, a horse, a lizard, all kinds of stuffed animals can be created in cake to make a party cake that the kids will love and the parents will marvel at.

**Cartoons** – Is your little boy a cartoon watcher? Lots of craft stores sell patterns, plastic toys, and other cake decorating accessories with popular cartoon characters on them. You can also get specialty cake pans shaped like your son's favorite cartoon characters to make it easy to make a cake of his favorite cartoon character.

Make one cake of his favorite that's just for him, and then make the other characters on that series for the guests. It will make him feel extra special to have a cake that is just his own.

**Cars and trucks** – Little boys love fast cars and big trucks. Big boys love them too! Make a racecar shaped cake or a cake with his favorite model of truck on it and watch his eyes light up. To make the cake more fun, draw an image of him in icing driving the car or truck.

There are no limits to the kinds of cakes that you can create to please a young or old boy. Use your imagination and all the resources around you and you will be sure to come up with a fun, interesting, unique cake that your boy will love no matter how old or young he is.

## Birthday Cakes for Girls

“Sugar and spice and everything nice” is exactly what birthday cakes for little girls are made of. Making cakes for little girls can be a lot of fun, especially when you make a cake that is in the theme of a fun birthday party. There are so many fun cakes to make for little girls that they could never all be listed, but here are a few ideas that are always popular.

**Pretty in Pink** – Little girls love anything pink, so stock up on pink icing to make the perfect little girl cake. A simple pink cake with lots of pretty three dimensional flowers is always a classic little girl cake idea, but if you want to go more modern then go with a bright hot pink motif. A bright pink “Powder Puff” cake with a circular cake sculpted to look like a jar of powder with a fluffy pink whipped cream puff on top is always fun for middle school girls who have just discovered the joys of playing in mommy’s makeup.

A Pink Fairy cake made up of a sheet cake with delicate green frosting and icing trees and flowers filled with delicate little pink fairies flitting through the trees is a beautiful way to celebrate a little girl’s birthday.

**Fashion** – Older girls love fashion and makeup, so make a cake in the shape of a dress, a purse, and a pair of shoes or other fun fashion accessory. A cake shaped like a lipstick tube or eye shadow compact would be a real hoot! Bake a sheet cake, section it off into small sections and use different colored icings to create the look of eyeshadows or lipsticks. Your older girl will love it!

**Horses** – From My Little Ponies to the real thing, every little girl loves horses. You could make a cake featuring unicorns or other mythical horses. Or you could make a fun horse themed cake with a decoration of a barn or a pasture with a horse inside. For a real challenge, try making a cake in the shape of a horse with a rider and decorate it in real life colors. Or make a cake that looks like a saddle, or a riding helmet or even riding boots. The possibilities are endless.

**Princesses and Brides** – Every little girl dreams of being a princess and every little girl dreams of her wedding day. Make a lavish princess or bride cake by using the Wilton doll cake pan to create a three dimensional doll with an edible cake dress. If it's going to be a large party then make a queen or princess doll for your little girl and a bunch of other doll cakes to be her royal court.

**Cartoons** – Little girls love cartoons too, although they usually like different cartoon characters. Cakes featuring cartoon characters like the Power Puff Girls, the Care Bears, My Little Ponies, Hello Kitty, Strawberry Shortcake, and other favorite girl's characters are a surefire hit at any little girl's birthday party.

**Fairy Tales** – Does your little girl love fairy tales? Create a cake that is straight out of a fairy tale and looks like a fairy tale castle complete with a wishing well and a frog waiting to be kissed. Or, make a cake featuring the fairy tale heroine of female empowerment, the Paper Bag Princess. Bring your little girl's favorite fairy tale to life and make her birthday party extra special.

**Flowers** – There are endless possibilities when it comes to creating flower cakes. A daisy cake or a sunflower cake using a round cake as the middle of the flower and smaller shaped cakes as the petals make beautiful birthday cakes that any girl would love. Another great idea for a flower cake is to make one cake that resembles a dozen roses, or carnations, or whatever the birthday girl's favorite flowers are.

**Tea Parties** – Doesn't every little girl love having tea parties? Instead of having one large birthday cake for your little girl, create an elegant tea party with dozens of small, delicate, ornate cakes and pastries to accompany the girl's tea.

Or you could have one large cake that is very ornate and decorated in the Lambeth Method with lots of pretty pink overpiping on a white frosted cake, or add small, delicate white pearls to a pale pink frosted cake covered with icing roses. Think of the most elegant and glamorous and feminine cake designs you can and then miniaturize them to individual cakes that the girls can use to play tea party with.

**Kitties and puppies** – Little girls love household pets like dogs and cats almost as much as horses. Create a cake shaped like a cat or dog and then decorate it to look like the family pet for a cake that is sure to make your little girl smile. You could also make a cake in the shape of a basket of kittens sleeping, or a puppy romping in the grass.

Pets make great cake themes and they are fairly easy to decorate so making a kitty or puppy cake would be a good choice for someone who hasn't had a lot of experience decorating cakes. You can even take a photo of your child with a favorite pet and have that image recreated in icing on the cake. Kids love photos and having a favorite photo on their birthday cake would be a great birthday surprise.

## Adult Birthday Cakes

There are even more choices for adult birthday cakes than there are for kids' cakes. Adult birthday cakes can range from simple and elegant to naughty and risqué. While it's important to keep in mind the individual taste of the person that you are making the cake for and how large the birthday party will be, there are some adult birthday cake themes that are different and unusual and some classics that are tried and true birthday party staples. Just remember that the important thing when making an adult birthday cake is that the flavor is great and that the design is interesting.

## Classic Adult Birthday Cakes

**Elegant and traditional** – If the birthday party is formal or there will be a mix of business and social acquaintances at the party, you may want to choose a formal, elegant and traditional birthday cake. Cakes that are elegant and traditional most often use the Lambeth Method or the Australian Method and are decorated in ornate piping with decorations like pearls, ribbons, and fresh flowers.

A popular simple and elegant birthday cake design is to make a white cake with white fondant icing and then use the Lambeth Method to pipe on three dimensional scrollwork in pink, red or in white and then garnish the cake with fresh fruit.

Since you are keeping the design of the cake simple when you use a more elegant and traditional cake decoration, a nice way to make the cake stand out is to use exotic flavors or combine exotic ingredients to give the cake some punch. Instead of using a plain white cake mix to make the cake base, use a white chocolate or a French vanilla cake and instead of using plain icing for the piping and decoration use French vanilla icing or some other flavor.

**The Chocolate Cake** – Chocolate cakes and birthdays go hand in hand but just because you want to create a chocolate cake doesn't mean that cake needs to be a plain old chocolate cake. Use exotic chocolates like Vosges Haut Chocolates to create exotic cakes flavored with coconut chocolate curry, or wasabi and chocolate, or red chili peppers and chocolate. Use high quality chocolates and exotic ingredients to make and decorate a decadent chocolate cake.

There are many ways to twist traditional birthday cake styles and make them much more personal and modern to suit anyone's taste and still look beautiful.



## Unusual and Fun Adult Birthday Cakes

When you want to do something fun and different for an adult's birthday cake there are lots of interesting, unique and even risqué cakes that you can make to add some spice to a birthday. Here are just a few ideas of unusual and fun birthday cakes for adults.

**Alcohol flavored cakes** – These cakes are real crowd pleasers! Turn your favorite cocktails into your favorite cakes. To give any cake the flavor of your favorite liquor, replace half or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the water or liquid in the cake with your alcohol of choice.

Want to make a chocolate cake with a little punch? Use some Kahlua to make a Chocolate Kahlua cake. Take a regular cake mix and mix it up as the directions state, but instead of using all water, use  $\frac{1}{2}$  portions of water and Kahlua to mix the cake. Once the cake is done, frost it with Kahlua frosting. Your guests will love the rich Kahlua flavor blended into the chocolate. Any flavor of liqueur will work similarly; feel free to experiment.

Want to make a really unique and special alcohol flavored cake? Try a White Russian cake. Start with a very rich cake mix; the pudding cake mixes work really well for White Russian cake. Instead of using water to make the cake, use  $\frac{1}{3}$  portion heavy cream,  $\frac{1}{3}$  portion Kahlua, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  portion vodka to make up the liquid portion of the cake. Using flavored vodka like Stoli Vanilla vodka also adds a nice twist to the flavor.

Once the cake has cooled and you have leveled it and prepared it for decorating, mix up some frosting again using  $\frac{1}{3}$  part heavy cream,  $\frac{1}{3}$  part Kahlua and  $\frac{1}{3}$

part vodka and use that to decorate the cake. To complete the Russian theme, use Blue, Red, and other color frostings to overpipe decorations that would be worthy of the Romanoff's themselves. You can even use a layer of thin gold foil to add accents and decoration. If you are really skilled at cake decorating, create a few ornate Faberge eggs out of icing and place a few on the layers of the cake.

A heavily decorated White Russian cake is even suitable for a wedding or anniversary cake but it's a great birthday cake to make for someone who is elegant and unique and wants something elegant and unique for their birthday celebration.

To make a Black Russian cake, repeat the same steps, using chocolate cake but add water instead of cream. A Black Russian cake decorated with Red icing and Gold foil can be a true work of art.

**Champagne cake** – Champagne cakes are great for birthdays and for any occasion. Remember, when making a champagne cake that the flavors of the cake should be delicate so that they don't overwhelm the taste of the champagne. To make a great basic champagne cake for a birthday or for an anniversary, start with a basic cake mix in a light flavor like a vanilla or just a white cake. A strawberry cake also is a great choice as a base for a champagne cake. When you're mixing up the cake, instead of using just water in the mix, use champagne for  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the liquid portion instead of water. Do the same with the frosting. Use a white or pale pink icing to create a delicate, elegant looking cake. Accent the cake with fresh strawberries to bring out the taste of the champagne in the frosting.

**Candy Cane cake** – A Peppermint Schnapps cake is great for Christmas birthdays! Mix up a white cake using a regular mix; just substitute Peppermint Schnapps for  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the liquid portion of the cake. Using fondant icing, you can create a beautiful snowflake design for the cake or you can use a Red and White Candy Cane theme.

For an even better effect, shape the cooled cake to look like a candy cane, then put a layer of icing on the cake and overpipe some red candy cane stripes on it. Garnish with small candy canes or small peppermints. The Candy Cane cake is a great way to do something different that incorporates Christmas and a birthday for someone who has a holiday birthday.

**The Pirate Cake** – Ahoy matey! The adult in your life who has always wanted to be a pirate will love this Rum and ginger cake. To make the cake part you need to make a traditional English ginger cake called a parkin. Parkin cake has a moist, sticky texture similar to a pound cake.

There are easy to make Parkin recipes on the Internet so finding a recipe shouldn't be difficult. Replace the water portion of the Parkin recipe with  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  premium Rum. You can also create a rich Rum frosting by using a standard frosting recipe and replacing  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the water portion with Rum. Garnish with some fresh ginger and you will have a tasty treat that will make even the gruffest pirate smile!

You can also create other fun alcohol flavored cakes using your imagination and your favorite cocktail. Alcohol flavored cakes are very popular, but make sure that you have an alcohol free cake available for anyone who doesn't want to have the alcohol flavored cake or for any children who may be attending the party.

## Wedding Cakes

Wedding cakes are one wedding tradition that everyone loves. The wedding cake is central to the wedding reception and no matter how formal or informal the wedding is, the wedding cake plays a huge part in the celebration of the marriage.

Wedding cakes are also high art in the Sugarcrafting world. Wedding cakes are known for their ornate decorations and elaborate design. Many wedding cakes stand 5 feet tall or higher and often have cascading designs that bakers and decorators spend months perfecting. One of the first things that a new bride-to-be picks out is her wedding cake. And wedding cakes are one part of the wedding that people spare no expense on. Part high art and part Sugarcraft, the wedding cake is seen as a symbol of the new couple's life together, an omen of the future, and an expression of the couple's personality.

So a wedding cake needs to convey many things, which is partly why wedding cakes are so expensive. A traditional simple wedding cake usually costs around \$600 and the prices climb rapidly for highly decorative or ornate wedding cake styles, personalized wedding cakes, exotic ingredients, and the number of guests at the wedding. It is not unusual for brides to pay thousands of dollars for a wedding cake.

Wedding cake styles change from season to season but the most sought after wedding cake designers are usually the ones who design cakes for the weddings of the rich and famous. With a budget of \$10,000 or more, these designers create haute couture wedding cakes with fresh exotic flowers, fine jewels, and other details that make their cakes part Sugarcraft and part fantasy.

Wedding cakes are almost always tiered cakes, and the tiers are worked into the design of the overall cake. The tradition of using tiered cakes for wedding cakes dates back to Medieval Europe when each guest at the wedding was expected to bring a small cake as a gift.

The cakes would be stacked upon one another and if the bride and groom could kiss over the cake tops it was supposedly an omen of good luck. The idea of these stacked cakes eventually became the tiered wedding cake that brides use today all over the world. Wedding cake toppers featuring a bride and groom, or other fun wedding images, are often placed on the top of the wedding cake to personalize it.

Many modern brides are shying away from expensive cakes and are moving towards using cupcakes and small individual cakes like cupcakes to keep their expenses low and to make things more convenient for their guests.

## Traditional Wedding Cakes

What we think of today as a traditional wedding cake, usually a large, tiered white cake with pearls or other decorations and heavy piping featuring a cake topper of a small groom in a tuxedo and a bride in a white dress became popular in the 1950's as a symbol of the start of the new couple's life together. Throughout the centuries, wedding cakes have come in many shapes, forms, and flavors.

Traditional wedding cakes are usually simple and elegant, and evoke images of a classic wedding motif. Sometimes the bride may have the cake decorated in her wedding colors but usually white is the color of choice for a traditional wedding cake.

## The Groom's Cake

Traditional weddings will often also incorporate a groom's cake into the reception to provide an option for guests and to keep up tradition. The groom's cake tradition stems from Victorian times when, instead of the bride and groom cutting the cake together and the whole party enjoying the cake, the wedding cake was broken over the heads of the bride and groom.

That tradition evolved to making two separate cakes for the wedding reception. The groom's cake was created to be the cake that got broken over the heads of the bride and groom while the bride's cake would be sliced and served to guests.

Traditionally the groom's cake is chocolate, and is usually a very dark, rich chocolate that is a nice contrast to the bride's cake, which is usually light and airy. Groom's

cakes are no longer broken over the heads of the bride and groom but a groom's cake is often served in conjunction with the traditional tiered wedding cake.

In the United States, the use of a groom's cake is a regional tradition and in some parts of the country grooms cakes are practically unheard of while in other parts of the country groom's cakes are a requirement at any wedding reception and the cake designers compete with each other to see who can design the most unique groom's cake.

While groom's cakes are not a tradition that is practiced everywhere, for brides who want a traditional wedding, a groom's cake is a must have for the reception. Having a groom's cake is also a nice way for a bride to have a traditional wedding reception but add a unique twist that reflects the personalities of her and her new husband.

## Modern Wedding Cakes

Modern brides and brides that have their own individual style are taking traditional wedding cake designs and traditions and putting their own unique spin on them to create new trends that reflect both a bride's individuality and the traditions of the past. Here are some of the top trends in modern wedding cake design:

### Using Letterpress Designs

Brides are choosing to customize their cakes to mirror the engraving on their invitations, the embroidery on their dresses, even their favorite china pattern. Using modern letterpress designs mimics the old cake decorating methods but gives them a modern twist. Cake decorators can press the designs into rolled fondant icing, cut them out, and arrange them on the cake and then decorate around them.

Letterpress cake decorating is a beautiful way to create a signature wedding cake that is both traditional and modern.

### **Going Back to Basic Colors**

Brides and cake designers are using more believable, natural colors in their creations. Gone are the vivid primary colors that were in fashion in the past few decades. Brides and cake designers are choosing natural hues for decorating, such as using varying shades of red and pink to adorn sugar roses winding up the tiers of white cake with realistic looking leaves and vines curling behind them. Using photographs as a base for cake designs and using the natural colors of the items in the photographs is very trendy. So is going back to soft, delicate colors for the main cake, like off white, sand, pale pink, pale green, and other soft, soothing tones. Decorations are understated and realistic in modern cake decorating trends.

### **Create a Signature Silhouette**

Using colored fondant to create decorating silhouettes is a very popular trend in modern wedding cake decorating. It's all about personalization these days so personalizing a wedding cake with silhouette cutouts of the bride and groom's initials, a signature emblem, a signature flower, or even a symbol of a hobby that the two share or a symbol of how they met are very popular.

One couple who met at a coffee shop had fondant silhouette coffee cups decorating their wedding cake as a fun reminder of where their relationship started. Another couple who met on a blind date at a restaurant had silhouette wine glasses on the wedding cake.

Silhouettes that reflect the theme or location of the wedding are also popular. For a winter wedding, silhouettes of snowflakes would be fun. For a holiday wedding, silhouettes of Christmas trees or gaily wrapped gifts would be different and festive. For a summer wedding, silhouettes of summer flowers or butterflies would be a great way to incorporate the season into the design of the cake.



### **Over the Top Flowers**

In the past, brides went for exactly decorated cakes covered in Lambeth Method piped flowers that were small and delicate, but the modern trend is for Wilton Method over the top sugar paste flowers in exaggerated sizes. So instead of having ten small orchids piped around the sides of the wedding cake, a modern bride might go for one huge orchid on the top of the cake. Proportion and color are the tools used to make the design stand out and be interesting instead of using tons of tiny flowers to create a floral effect.

### **Playing with Shape**

Another trend that modern brides are embracing is playing with shape and proportion. Using a traditional tiered design, a modern bride might add her own twist by having tiers made up of different shapes like having a hexagon shaped tier on the bottom topped by a square tier topped by a circle. Having tiers made in different shapes gives a fun modern twist to the traditional tiered wedding cake.

Even though these trends will probably become outdated fairly quickly since each generation of brides will want to put their own unique stamp on their wedding cakes, it's nice that the trends happening now have found a way to work in traditional wedding cake motifs with modern materials and designs to maintain an element of the past while also embracing the future.

Pricey wedding cake designs are usually very trendy but more traditional wedding cakes can cost much less so there will always be brides who will opt for more traditional and less expensive wedding cakes so that they can stick to a budget for their weddings.

In the past, big extravagant weddings were the norm and it wouldn't be unusual for a bride to spend thousands of dollars on a wedding cake but people are more

financially savvy these days and smaller, more economical weddings are growing in popularity.

With the growing emphasis on keeping weddings affordable, the ultra high end designer wedding cakes will probably give way to smaller, more traditional wedding cakes with maybe a small modern twist here or there.

## Anniversaries

Special cakes are prerequisite for any anniversary party. There are lots of fun ways to make unique and memorable anniversary cakes.

**Go Back in Time** - A memorable and simple way to celebrate a wedding anniversary is to create a replica of the couple's original wedding cake. This should be easy to do if you have access to wedding photos because there should be at least one photo of the cake and the bride and groom with the cake.

Ask family or the happy couple what flavor the cake was and the details about the cake under the guise of asking them about their wedding. They will be delighted and surprised when you give them an exact replica of their wedding cake to celebrate their anniversary. This is especially memorable for couples celebrating many years of marriage.

**Celebrate a life together** – Pick memorable moments, people, or places and recreate them in the Sugarcraft. If the couple spent their honeymoon in Hawaii, create a Pineapple cake with a Hawaiian decorating theme.

If the couple got engaged at a favorite restaurant, create a cake decorated with the sign of that restaurant. If the couple was married at Niagara Falls, create a cake shaped and decorated like a waterfall or showing a scene from Niagara Falls like the Peace Bridge or the Maid of the Mist.

If doing photograph cakes is something you're quite good at, try making a photograph cake of a family portrait, or a portrait of the couple's children and

grandchildren. There are lots of ways that you can bring back pleasant memories for the happy couple.

**Elegance and sophistication-** No matter how long the couple has been married you can't go wrong serving an understated, elegant and sophisticated wedding cake at an anniversary party. A traditional cake decorated with the Lambeth Method scrollwork and maybe some flowers or fresh fruit is the last word in elegance and is great for parties where there may be family, business associates, and other people attending.

Elegant cakes always make a good impression and are very appropriate for anniversary parties. Light cakes go better with champagne, so think of light, airy cake designs that will complement champagne and spirits when you are planning a cake to serve at an anniversary party or for an anniversary dinner.

## Holidays

Fun and festive is the order of the day when you are planning holiday cakes.

Holiday cakes give cake designers a chance to play around with holiday themes and take a little dramatic license, so go crazy with your holiday cakes and see how different and unique you can make your own holiday cakes. Here are some holiday cake ideas to get you started.

**Kid friendly** – If you have kids it's important to keep your cakes kid friendly, meaning that a lot of intricate decoration is probably not a good idea. Using the Wilton methods and the Wilton specialty pans is a fantastic way to make pretty, decorative and unusual holiday cakes that your kids will like too.

A great Halloween kid friendly cake is the Jack O' Lantern cake. Made from two bundt cakes piled on top of one another, this unique cake can be drenched in orange icing and decorated with black piping to look like a real Jack O' Lantern. This is a great cake for school parties because it's interesting and fun and can be sliced into many easy to handle kid size pieces.

For Easter, an easy to make but pretty and kid-friendly cake to make is an Easter basket cake. Make a bundt cake and in the middle place a shallow cup lined with Easter basket grass. Decorate the outside of the bundt with a basket weave pattern. In the center section where the cup is, place candy, colored eggs, or small plastic toys. Create some "handles" from reed straws tied with ribbons and you have a beautiful Easter theme cake.

To make a kid friendly Christmas cake, bake a layer cake and then section it. Stack the layers on top of one another and decorate them all like presents. The present cake is a fun, easy, and colorful cake for the holidays.

**Adult Holiday Cakes-** There are also some unique and fun holiday cakes for adults. For Christmas, an Eggnog cake decorated in Christmas colors is a lot of fun. For Valentine's Day, an exotic chocolate cake made with lots of exotic chocolate and dripping with chocolate icing and fresh strawberries is very romantic. For Halloween, make a devil's food cake in the shape of an actual devil and cover it with red icing.

If you use your imagination and play on some of the traditional holiday themes associated with each holiday, you can come up with your own unique signature cake for each holiday.

If you are really good at holiday cakes you might want to consider opening your own cake decorating business. There are many people who will pay a lot of money to have beautiful holiday cakes because they don't have the time or skill to make their own holiday cakes.

## Graduations

Graduations are all about new beginnings and hope, so graduation cakes should be cheerful and fun; a way to commemorate a student's success as they move forward in life. Making graduation cakes can be a way to send the graduate off to new life adventures with a bang. Here are some fun ideas for making graduation cakes:

**Party hat cakes** – Make graduation an event for everyone with individual party hat cakes. Individual cakes are always a nice party idea because then guests can serve themselves and if someone wants seconds they have their own cake. To add a personal touch, put each person's name on a party hat cake or let guests decorate their own party hat cakes.

**Traditional graduation cakes** – The traditional graduation cakes are, of course, cap and gown cakes, or mortarboard cakes. Why not add a unique spin to a traditional cake and make a cake in the shape of a person and decorate the cake to look like the graduate? Wilton specialty cake pans can make it easy to create an interesting and unique cake that isn't difficult to decorate.

**Diploma cake** – A diploma cake is a fun twist on the idea of traditional graduation cakes. Make a sheet cake and decorate it with an off white frosting to make it look like parchment. Fray the edges with frosting and then use cake decorating tools to replicate the graduate's diploma even down the signatures of the school officials.

**Symbols** – Find out what the traditional symbols are of the subject that person has received a degree in. If it's a high school graduation then make a cake that is decorated to look like a stack of books with a mortarboard and tassel on top in the school colors.

If it's a college degree, decorate the cake with symbols associated with whatever subject the degree is in. For example if the degree is in early childhood education, create a cake with little children on it; if the degree is in science, create a cake with a beaker and a Bunsen burner on it.

Graduation cakes can be a nice opportunity to try out new and different decorating ideas so have fun with the graduation cake you make and try something totally different and unique.



## Wedding and Baby Showers

Wedding and baby showers can be a great way for cake decorators to stretch their cake decorating muscles and come up with some lovely designs that everyone attending the showers will love. It doesn't matter if the shower is traditional or modern; there are hundreds of cute cake decorating ideas to make the shower special.

### Wedding shower cakes

Traditional wedding shower cakes were very feminine and romantic with lots of pink icing, white pearls, ribbons, and other feminine touches. The Lambeth Method is often used to decorate traditional wedding shower cakes and brides that are very feminine will probably enjoy having an old fashioned traditional wedding shower cake.

However, in recent years, many brides wishing to express their own individuality have moved away from serving traditional wedding shower cakes at showers and instead have opted for cakes that are fun and modern and express their own unique artistic sense.

Since many brides and bridesmaids are watching their figures to fit into the gowns for the wedding and other guests may also be on diets, serving individual fancy cupcakes has become a trend for wedding showers. Petit fours are another popular trend for wedding shower cakes.

For brides that like higher end foods, there are a range of gourmet chocolate makers that make simple but elegant cupcakes, petit fours, and individual cakes with exotic ingredients that are perfect for wedding showers.

Vosges, a chocolate company based in Chicago, makes wedding shower favors consisting of exotic truffles in flavors like Hungarian paprika and dark chocolate, curry powder and chocolate, wasabi, ginger and chocolate, chipotle chili pepper and chocolate, and packages four truffles in a cute Asian take out style box.

Serving small sweets like the Vosges boxes not only gives shower guests an exotic treat but also gives them a unique party favor. Brides that favor traditional wedding shower cakes can still offer unique candies, hot chocolates, and other treats as party favors in addition to serving a fun cake.

## Baby Shower Cakes

Baby shower cakes are always fun to do and should keep a very childlike theme. Sometimes the expectant mother will know the sex of the baby and you can create a boy or girl themed cake and sometimes the mother might be waiting to know the sex, in which case neutral cakes that celebrate babies are always a safe bet.

**Gender neutral baby shower cakes** – If no one knows what the sex of the baby will be then you want to create a cake that is gender neutral. You can still make cakes that are fun and interesting without knowing if the baby is a boy or a girl.

**Cradle cakes** are always sweet to make for baby showers. Make a cake in a loaf pan and dig out the center to be the main part of the cradle and then create the

rocking pieces on the side out of frosting. Place a doll in the center with a frosting layette in a gender neutral color like lemon yellow for a glorious baby shower cake.

**Rocking chair cakes** are great for baby showers but should only be done by someone experienced at cake decorating. A rocking chair cake takes a lot of sculpting and fine work but can be truly beautiful when completed.

**Mother and child cakes** are very sweet and are loved by expectant mothers. Use a Wilton cake pan to bake a cake in the shape of a mother holding an infant and then use decorating tools to make it resemble the expectant mother. It will be a wonderful reminder of the joys of motherhood.

**Cartoon theme cakes** are very popular gender neutral cake options. Early childhood characters like the Cat in the Hat, Winnie the Pooh, and the Sesame Street characters are all wonderful additions to baby shower cakes. The cakes can be made in the shape of a beloved childhood icon or decorated to look like the character.

**Teddy bear cakes** are always in fashion with expectant mothers. Is there anything sweeter than a great fuzzy stuffed bear? Whether it's three dimensional or a decorated flat cake, a teddy bear cake will make any expectant mother smile.

There are many other styles of cakes that are gender neutral and can be great for baby showers but the most popular kind of cake for baby showers right now can't be eaten; it's a diaper cake! The one thing that new moms need more than anything else is diapers, and a diaper cake is a cute way of helping the new mom stock up before the little one arrives.

## Baby Shower Cakes for Girls and Boys

If you know that the expectant mother is going to have a little girl, there are some great baby shower cakes that you can make with little girl themes. Some of them are:

**Pink Angels/Blue Angels** – Use a specialty cake pan in an angel shape to create a perfect little angel cake and then decorate it with perfectly pink frosting and little pink candy hearts. Do the same thing in Blue for little boys.

**Pink Booties/Blue Booties** – If you're really ambitious, you can create two round cakes then stack a small layer cake square on top of each one. Use cake decorating tools to create a knit like texture in baby pink frosting and place some pink bows and ribbons on the top of the booties. Make the booties in blue for a boy.

**Pink Bib/Blue Bib** – A bib cake is very easy to do. Make a layer cake and then trim away the edges to make a bib like shape. Use the Wilton cake decorating method to create pink edging and ribbons and frost the whole thing in a cotton candy pink. Substitute blue for pink if making the cake for a boy.

**Flowers** – Flower cakes are always appropriate for expectant mothers of baby girls. Pink flowers like roses or carnations work well for girls. For boys, use sunflowers, daisies, or trees.

You can create an easy layer cake with a photo of a baby infant on it and a sun in one corner and pipe the words "Mommy's Little Sunshine" or something similar on it to make a cute and easy baby shower cake.

**Doll cakes** – Doll cakes are always a hit at baby showers for little girls. You can use the Wilton doll pan to make Barbie style dolls for each person at the party or you can make an infant doll cake resting on a frosting blanket. Doll cakes can be difficult to do if you are not very experienced in creating round cakes, but it can be done if you put enough time and patience into it. Doing a doll cake for a boy is a bit more difficult, but if you are doing an infant doll cake, it can be either a boy or a girl and you can create a blue frosting blanket instead of pink.

Whenever you want to make a highly decorated cake that you haven't made before, it's a good idea to do a "test run" and make a version of the cake well in advance of when you need to make the fancy cake so that you can work out any bugs and make sure you won't make any mistakes on the real one. Think of it as doing a "cake dress rehearsal."

Doing a trial run in advance can save you a lot of stress and panic later on so experts advise that cake bakers and decorators should always practice before attempting to make a cake they have never made or decorated before.

## Common Cake Decorating Supplies

If you are going to be decorating cakes frequently or you want to practice decorating cakes there are some tools and equipment that you should have in your kitchen at all times. If your kitchen is always fully stocked with these supplies then you won't need to worry about running out of supplies at a crucial moment.

- **Disposable pastry bags** – Disposable pastry bags are used for the Lambeth and Australian Method using royal icing and sometimes for the Wilton method. You will go through many, many disposable pastry bags so always keep a good number of them around. Buying in bulk will save money in the long run. Look for businesses that sell wholesale to bakeries and kitchens to get the best deal on bulk orders
- **Revolving cake stand** – In order to properly trim your cake to prepare it for decorating and to decorate the edges of your cake you need a revolving cake stand.
- **Cake mixes** – Most professional bakers and the experts at Wilton recommend Duncan Hines cake mixes. Having a full stock of different types and flavors of cake mixes on hand will make it easy to whip up a cake when necessary or to start over if you make a mistake.
- **Spatulas and trimmers** – You will need flat cake spatulas and trimmers in a variety of sizes to help you get your cakes into exactly the right shape before decorating so stock up when you find sales at home stores or cookware stores.

- **Cake boards** – Cake boards are extra strong corrugated cardboard trays that you can place your cakes on. If you plan on taking your cakes anywhere you will need cake boards to transport them. Keep them on hand in a variety of sizes.
- **Fondant** – You will need lots of fondant when decorating cakes so it's a good idea to always have a lot of it around.
- **Tips and Tubes** – You will need decorating tubes and the accompanying tips for decorating whenever the decorations call for using something finer than a pastry bag. You can buy tubes and tips in large sets, which will give you a wide range of sizes but you should keep 2 of each size on hand in case one gets lost.

## Where to Find Cake Decorating Supplies

There is a wide variety of places that you can look for cake decorating supplies. Some places will always be cheaper than others and it pays to stock up on supplies that you use often like pastry bags when you find some on sale. If you are looking for reliable sources of cake decorating supplies, here are some places you can look:

**Craft stores** – Craft stores will have a large selection of professional cake decorating supplies. Most carry an extensive selection of Wilton cake decorating supplies, cake pans, and other items that would be useful in cake decorating, including royal icing and books and videos on decorating cakes. Many craft stores also have free cake decorating sheets available to customers that give them instructions on how to decorate particular kinds of cakes.

**Cooking supply and restaurant supply stores** – Most of these stores don't sell to the general public, but if you have a tax ID number or a business then you can get great deals on high end professional cake decorating equipment that is used by top bakers and cake decorators around the world. It may be worth registering as a business just to get the discounts available if you are planning on doing a lot of cake decorating.

**The Internet** – The Internet can be a valuable resource for finding professional cake decorating tools and equipment. Although craft stores usually have a decent selection of cake decorating items, what the store carries depends on where the store is and what is popular there.

If you live in an area that is outside of a major city, your local craft store may not carry the supplies you need. Or if you are looking for a very specific tool, the local



craft store might not normally stock that tool. Buying on the Internet can be a fast and easy way to find the tools you're looking for. You can shop online directly from Wilton or other cake decorating supply makers or you can shop on the website of your favorite craft store to get items that your local store may not carry.

**Auction sites** – If you are looking for deals on specific cake decorating tools, you can sometimes find cheap prices by looking on popular auction sites. If you are searching for bulk items, like bulk pastry bags, you can also sometimes get very good deals on auction sites. Be careful about shopping on auction sites, though, and remember that if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Auction sites can also be a great resource for cake pans and molds. If you are looking for a specific type of cake pan or mold you may be able to find it at a deep discount on one of the online auction sites.

## Learning how to Decorate Cakes

Have you always loved to decorate cakes? Do your family and friends love coming to your house for holidays because of your elaborate cakes? Are you the one drafted to make the cakes for weddings, showers, graduations, birthdays, school bake sales, and other functions? If so then you should think about getting some formal cake decorating training.

So where do you start if you want to learn how to decorate cakes, or if you want to expand your cake decorating skills? There are a few options for people who really want to explore the world of Sugarcraft.

The best place to start is to start decorating cakes slowly, learning a bit about the history and the basic cake decorating techniques before plunging into advanced cake decorating techniques.

You can start by getting together with friends to watch TV shows like the Ace of Cakes and other shows that detail some cake decorating techniques. You can also watch videos, read books, and take classes from local craft stores in common cake decorating techniques.

## Cake Decorating Books

There are a lot of cake decorating books that can be found in bookstores and on the Internet, so how do you know which books are high quality and which aren't? Well, you can read book reviews on websites like amazon.com to see what other cake decorators thought of a particular book before you buy it.

You can also join an online cake decorator's community with a community forum. Through the forum, you can find out what other cake decorators thought about a particular book or a book series and get recommendations from experienced cake decorators about choosing the best books for beginning cake decorators.

Or you can check out the book from the local library, since that way if the book isn't helpful it didn't cost you anything. But the library may not have a great selection of books on cake decorating.

It's a good idea to check out the local craft store too. The staff there will be able to tell you which books are good for the level of cake decorating that you're at and you can browse through the books they sell to find one that you like. Buying locally means you won't have to wait for the book to arrive in the mail.

Usually, professional cake decorators recommend Wilton series books for people who want to learn more about cake decorating because the Wilton name is really the premier name in Sugarcraft and cake decorating.

## Cake Decorating Videos

If you are one of the people that learns better through watching something than reading it about then cake decorating videos and DVDs may be a good alternative to books. There are cake decorating videos that illustrate basic techniques like using a pastry bag or shaping your cake and videos for advanced cake decorators on how to use pastry bags, the correct overpiping method, and how to decorate cakes in very advanced ways.

There are also videos available that show users how to create one specific kind of cake. So if you want to make a frog cake for your son's birthday party but don't necessarily want to start practicing the art of Sugarcraft, you can buy a video that shows you step by step how to create a frog cake and that's all.

If you have a TV and DVD player or a laptop or a computer that plays DVDs in your kitchen, using a DVD or video to learn how to decorate a particular cake or how to improve your basic cake decorating techniques can be very useful because you can walk through the steps in your own kitchen as the person on the video demonstrates the techniques.

People who learn better visually can greatly benefit from using videos and DVDs to learn cake decorating methods.

So where can you find high quality DVDs and videos that will teach cake decorating? They're easy to find! Your local craft store should have at least some videos and DVDs that teach cake decorating basics.

The Internet is a great place to find videos and DVDs about cake decorating. Sites like YouTube may even have free video tutorials that you can watch or download

that show you step by step how to create a particular kind of cake. You can also order videos and equipment directly from Wilton or from Amazon or other large multi-media sites.

## Cake Decorating Classes

If you want to become a serious cake decorator or even a cake decorating professional then you may need to invest in taking some cake decorating classes. Many craft stores offer regular Wilton classes in cake decorating.

If your local craft store doesn't offer Wilton cake decorating classes or it is too far away for you to get to classes, check out the continuing education classes offered in your community; often there are Wilton or other cake decorating classes offered through the continuing education program.

Classes are also offered on the Internet through distance learning and online video, so that is a good option for people who may live in remote areas where other types of classes aren't available.

## The Wilton School

The Wilton School in Darien, Illinois offers cake decorating classes for students on site but the Wilton School classes are for serious cake decorating students and those who want to pursue cake decorating as a career and are not really suitable for a hobbyist cake decorator or someone who only wants to learn the basic cake decorating techniques.

In the 80 years that the Wilton School has been offering classes in cake decorating it has acquired a reputation for excellence in the field of cake decorating and many of the students who attend Wilton have ambitions to go on to culinary school and become professional bakers and cake decorators.

The Wilton School of cake decorating also offers some intensive three day workshops that students attend from all over the country to learn advanced techniques of cake decorating or to brush up on their cake decorating skills.

Wilton Method classes are also taught all over the country, although not as intensively as they are at the Wilton School. If you want to pursue a profession in cake decorating, it will really help your skills to take a few of the more than 125 cake decorating classes taught at the Wilton School

Not sure you're ready to jump into cake decorating as a profession? Take a local class in the Wilton Method of cake decorating and see how it goes. If you really love it then you might want to think about attending the Wilton school and if not then you will have learned some great new skills.

## Where to Find Cake Decorating Patterns

Looking for new and innovative patterns that you can use to decorate cakes but not sure where to find them? There are lots of ways to find great new patterns to try out when decorating cakes!

### Books

If you head down to the local craft store or local bookstore you will find hundreds of books that are full of patterns you can use to decorate cakes. There are Wilton School books that have commonly used cake decorating patterns and there are other books that offer cake decorating patterns broken down by subject, like patterns for holiday cakes, patterns for birthday cakes, and so on.

### Magazines

If you don't want to invest a lot of money in a pattern book then check out some culinary magazines. Often, magazines will offer a series of recipes or patterns that readers can use to try at home. Also, if they feature a cake or a cake style in the magazine they will usually give the information about how that cake was made in the credits of the magazine.

### Friends and Family

Spend an afternoon gabbing with your friends and collect their favorite cake decorating patterns and decorating ideas. You can use the ones you want to and you can even compile them in a little cookbook or pattern book of your own and give them to your friends and family as holiday or birthday gifts.



**The Internet** – If you are looking for a great resource to find cake decorating patterns for specific cakes and also for general theme cakes then you can't go wrong on the Internet. There are many communities of cake decorators and bakers where people share their ideas and cake decorating tips for a huge variety of cakes. When you are looking for inspiration or a pattern for a cake for a special occasion, surf the Internet first and you should be able to find a great pattern for free.

**You Own Imagination** – The best resource that you have when it comes to patterns for cake decorating is your own imagination! Dream up some ideas and then sit down with a pencil and paper and plan out how to make them reality. Practice a few times and don't be afraid to get the kitchen dirty. You could come up with a really amazing and totally unique cake decorating pattern that others will want to copy from you.

# Icing

A cake just wouldn't be a cake without icing, but did you know there are many different types of icing? If you are going to become a serious cake decorator, the first thing you need to learn is the different types of icings and what they are used for.

## Types of Icing

### Buttercream Icing

Buttercream icing is widely regarded as the most flavorful and tasty icing. Buttercream icing is made of butter or sometimes margarine combined with confection sugar, flavoring, and some type of liquid. These ingredients are whipped to a custard like consistency, chilled, and whipped more until they achieve the traditional buttercream consistency. Buttercream frosting is used primarily in Wilton Method cake decorating.

### Basic Icing

This is a basic frosting that isn't usually used for fine cake decorating but may be used when you need icing in a hurry. Just combine egg whites and sugar along with flavor like vanilla extract and put in a double boiler. Beat constantly until it reaches 140 degrees. If you want to avoid cooking with eggs, you can use meringue powder instead of egg whites to make this basic, stiff frosting.

## **Whipped Cream Icing**

Whipped cream icing is just confectionary sugar, liquid, vanilla or other flavoring, and heavy whipping cream. To get the best consistency, combine the ingredients in a chilled bowl and whip with a mixer or a chilled whisk. Whipped cream icing needs to be refrigerated to keep its consistency.

## **Royal Icing**

Royal icing is the most commonly used icing and is used heavily in the Lambeth Method of cake decorating and the Australian Method of cake decorating. Royal icing is easy to make out of meringue powder, sifted confectioners' sugar and water and should have the same consistency as pancake batter when finished.

## **Ganaches**

Ganache icing is chocolate and heavy cream melted together and blended. Ganache gives cakes a yummy taste and a beautiful glazed texture. You can also use Ganache to "crumb proof" your cake before applying other frosting or decoration.

## **Glazes**

Glazes are just powdered sugar and liquid. Glazes are used a lot as primers to perfect the cake surface before the rest of the decorations and frostings are applied. Glazes are also good icings for simple cakes that would be overwhelmed by heavy icings.

## Making Sugar Free Icing

Sometimes, in order to accommodate people's dietary restrictions or lifestyle choices, you need to make sugar free cakes or sugar free cake icing. When that need arises, how can you make your favorite icing sugar free or suitable for people with sugar restrictions?

There are a few substitutes that you can use when you need to make your favorite icing sugar free or with less sugar. You can use Splenda, which is a sugar free sweetener that is derived from the sugar cane plant so that it has a lot of the properties that sugar has but it's acceptable for those on reduced sugar or sugar free diets.

You can use other sugar replacements like Sweet N Low, but sometimes the consistency of those sweeteners is very different from sugar and it could change the consistency of your icing, so do a trial run first when using another sugar substitute.

If you need to sweeten a cake but can't use sugar, instead of frosting, use a simple glaze of fruit juice and water. The natural sugar in the fruit juice will give the cake the sweetness that you need and having a little bit of glaze on the cake will be better than having a cake without any frosting. You can also use pureed fruit instead of frosting to dress up and sweeten the cake without using sugar.

Whenever possible, you should find out in advance if anyone that will be eating the cake or attending the party has special dietary concerns so that you can make a special cake that they can enjoy.

Most people who have such restrictions will let you know in advance and will usually offer to bring a dish or a dessert that they can have to make sure their particular needs are met. It's not rude to take them up on their offer to bring their own dessert if you are worried that you might not be able to accommodate their dietary restrictions.

## Cake Icing Tips

The icing tips that you use will be the main tool that you use to create icing decorations so you should know a bit about the different types of cake icing tips that are out there. You should have at least a few tips of each style in your kitchen all the time. There are many manufacturers that sell cake decorating tips in sets so that you can buy a wide range of sizes and styles of tips at the same time.

## The Most Basic Kinds of Cake Icing Tips Are:

- **Drop Flower Tips**

Drop flower tips look very similar to star tips but you can tell the drop flower tips from the star tips because the drop flower tips are larger and the bits on the end bend inward toward the center in a flower shape. Drop flowers are the flowers that lay on the sides of cakes, and the drop flower tip can be used to make a flower border on the top of the cake or to create flowers on the sides of the cake.

- **Round Tips**

Round tips are made in a variety of sizes. Round tips are used for a lot of general purpose Wilton Method cake decorating and are used for writing, making stems, or making flower bases.

- **Rose Tips**

Rose tips also come in several sizes and are used to make vines and the petals of roses and other flowers.

- **Leaf Tips**

Leaf tips are used for making leaves and sometimes flowering vine decorations on a cake.

The Wilton Method of cake decorating is the only type that uses tubes and tips for decorating. Both the Lambeth Method and the Australian Method use pastry bags for decorating because both of those styles use royal icing, which is more liquid like.

The Wilton Method uses Buttercream icing, which is thicker and stiffer so decorators use tubes and tips to decorate with Buttercream.

## Starting a Cake Decorating Business

So now that you've spent time learning about cake decorating and practicing the art of cake decorating, maybe taking some classes, reading some books, and generally building up your skills you want to start your own cake decorating business.

Congratulations! Are you ready to get started?

### *Taking Stock*

Before you get started with your new business, you need to sit down and ask yourself some hard questions. Give yourself some time to really think about the answers to these questions carefully because they will affect your business. You need to clarify what your desires are for this business and how you will make it succeed before anything else. So while the business is still just an idea in your mind, ask yourself these questions:

### *Do I know enough to decorate cakes professionally?*

Be honest with yourself about your skill level. If you're still learning how to decorate cakes really well that's ok, but if that's the case you might want to put off starting the business until you have more experience.

If, on the other hand, you've had formal cake decorating classes and you've been reading every book on cake decorating that has come out in the last few years then you might just be ready to "go pro."

### ***What kinds of cakes do I want to specialize in?***

It's in your best interest to pick one style of cake and specialize in it. When people turn to a pro for cakes, they want to know that the person they are hiring makes those kinds of cakes all day long every day of the year and will be able to give them exactly what they want.

To figure out what type of cake you want to specialize in, think about what kinds of cakes you like to decorate the most. Do you like decorating wedding cakes? Birthday cakes? Holiday cakes? Anniversary Cakes? Pick one area that you think you would like to specialize in, such as Wedding Cakes or Birthday Cakes. You can always branch out from there later on but for now, start small and specialize.

### ***Do I have the time to start a business?***

Starting a small business is a very time consuming process. If you already work full time, or have a family at home, or both then you need to assess how much time you can really devote to starting your new business.

If you don't have enough time in your current schedule, but starting a cake decorating business is really important to you then ask yourself where you could cut back to free up some of your time. Can you take a leave of absence from your job? Can you cut back to part time hours? Can you afford to quit entirely?

If the time constraint comes from family obligations, ask yourself if there is a way to juggle your schedule to give you some time to focus on the business. Can your partner pick up the kids two days a week so you can spend the afternoon working



on the business? Maybe a neighbor could watch the kids in exchange for some cakes or some baking lessons? Is there an activity that the kids could do after school that would give you a few hours to yourself to spend on the business each day?

Get creative when you're thinking about your schedule and you can probably find a way to get the time you need and still fulfill your other obligations.

### ***Do I have the money to start a business?***

You don't need a lot of money to start up a business these days, but you will need some. Sit down with your partner and go over your finances, assets, and liabilities. Figure out where you can cut back to save money and where you can afford to invest in a cake decorating business. Do you qualify for a small business loan? Can family or friends invest in the business to help you get started? Do some research at the library and online to find creative sources of business income.

It might take some time to research your finances and put together a solid financial plan for the business, but it's something you have to do. The reason that so many small businesses fail is lack of financial planning. If you need to, hire a financial professional who can help figure out what you can afford to put into your business and how to get your business off the ground.

Don't give up if it seems like the money isn't there. If you are really dedicated to making cake decorating your profession and starting a business of your own then you can find a way to make it happen. But you have to believe in yourself and in your business potential. Utilize all the resources that you can and don't give up!

## Promoting Your Cake Decorating Business

Part of doing the necessary research and planning before starting your cake decorating business is figuring out how you will promote your new business. You need to have a solid promotion strategy in place before you even begin to make cakes to make sure that there is a market for your wares and that you know how to reach that market.

No doubt you've already considered the usual promotion routes like the newspaper and radio or TV. But you should also consider these other promotional avenues and strategies:

**The Internet** – Nearly everyone is online these days. The Internet is a perfect place to host a portfolio of your work, take orders, and give people information on your business. You can network with others and have access to unlimited promotional opportunities all for free if you're willing to put in the time to take advantage of them.

Thinking of starting a website to take advantage of Internet promotion? Don't bother. Websites are old news. Blogs are the hot things these days. Besides being trendy, blogs have some real advantages for small business owners.

Blog readers like to get up close and personal, so lose the formal business attitude of a website and you can reach a whole new audience. With a blog you can instantly post updates, information, or new photos of your work while making it easy for people to contact you for quotes or jobs. Blogs can bring in big business for small craftspeople like cake decorators.

**Alliances and Partnerships** – Hook up with someone local who sells a product or service that complements yours and work together to drum up business.

For example, if you want to specialize in wedding cakes, get hooked up with a local wedding planner. The wedding planner can recommend you to all her clients, giving you customers, and you will be giving her clients their dream wedding cakes, which will make them happy with her service. You get customers and she gets a reliable service provider. A win/win situation.

If you want to sell holiday cakes then ally yourself with a local café and let people order their holiday cakes from you after eating a piece of cake at the café. The café gets gourmet dessert it can sell and you get orders. Another win/win.

If you put your mind to it and think outside the box, you can find all kinds of opportunities for small business owners to work together to help promote each other's businesses. Think of as many potential alliances as you can to help boost your promotion and marketing strategy.

## Creating a Cake Decorating Blog

It makes a lot of sense to create a cake decorating blog for yourself in order to help build your business, but if you've never blogged before you might not know where to start. Here are some tips you can use to get your blog up and running.

### *Picking a blog host*

There are lots of blog hosts out there. Some are free and some charge a monthly fee after a trial period. Which blog host is right for you depends a lot on what you want to do with your blog. Are you going to use your blog just as a sort of online portfolio or do you want to have the capability to process payments and take orders through your blog? Until your business gets up and running, it's probably best to stick with a basic blog. You can always upgrade later.

### **Free Blog Sites**

There are a number of free blog sites where all you need to do is register an email address and you can set up your own blog. Not all free blog sites are reliable or user friendly so you should stick with a blog from one of these sites:

#### **Blogger – [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com)**

Blogger is one of the most popular free blog hosts. Blogger is easy to use and has a very clear and easy to read help section. Most people who have never used a blog

before like using Blogger because the sign up and set up procedures are very clear and easy and Blogger has tools to help you promote your blog.

There are some downsides to Blogger too. Blogger's templates for the blogs are limited and Blogger's blogs do not allow you to input your own HTML so you can't customize your blog or add things like a shopping cart or photo album.

### **Wordpress – [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)**

Wordpress is very similar to blogger except the language is simpler, the commands are simpler, and the templates are a bit more customizable. Wordpress is a good blog site for people who are really not that familiar with the Web and want a lot of help getting set up because Wordpress offers an extensive help section and a support staff that is easy to reach.

The downside of using Wordpress is that it's not as well known as Blogger. Also, Wordpress doesn't allow any HTML or shopping carts either.

### **Pay Blog Hosts**

If you decide that you want to try one of the pay blog hosts, there are two that are the most popular with business people. Each gives users a trial period to see if they like the service before the monthly charges start.

### **Typepad – [www.Typepad.com](http://www.Typepad.com)**

Typepad is a popular blog site because it offers a huge choice of blog templates and it lets users create their own custom look. Typepad has a lot of features that a regular website would have while still keeping the easy access and posting tools of a blog. Typepad users can also have an unlimited number of blogs with some rate

plans so that if you wanted to branch out and have more than one blog in the future you wouldn't need to pay a second monthly fee.

Typepad fees start around \$4 per month and range to about \$12 for their top of the line plan. Users can create photo albums and multi-media displays as well as customize their navigation bar and add static pages to their blog. So if you wanted to add a single page to your blog that would never change and would always be visible you could do that.

Typepad gives new users a two week trial to try their services but you need to enter a credit card number and billing information up front and then make sure that you cancel before the end of the two weeks if you don't want your card to be charged.

### **Squarespace- [www.squarespace.com](http://www.squarespace.com)**

Squarespace is a blog host site that is very cutting edge and set up to be the first choice of businesses that want to do business through their blogs. Squarespace has a number of design templates ranging from very modern to classic and businesslike. Customers can create their own templates and add their own banners. Squarespace has a great site statistics package and statistics are updated in real time, which no other blog host offers.

Customers have the option to create static pages or any number of other widgets and tools that make the blogs look very professional. Squarespace users can also add blocks of HTML and shopping carts to their pages. The biggest advantage to using Squarespace for business is that users can create their own customized contact forms. So a customer can submit an email to you or place an order directly from the blog, no going through a lot of back and forth emails. And the customer can pay directly through the website too.

Squarespace plans start around \$7 per month and go to about \$20 for personal level blogs. Business plans, which offer more hosting space and other features, start at \$25 a month. Squarespace offers a 30 day free trial with no credit card or billing info required.

## Conclusion

Throughout history, the art of Sugarcrafting or making ornate and elaborately decorated cakes has been prized by people from all walks of life, including royalty. While the tools that are used to decorate the cakes may have changed, the style and skills have not and the same techniques that were used to decorate cakes thousands of years ago are still used today.

Today, the people who practice the fine art of cake decorating can make thousands of dollars designing unique cakes for weddings, showers, birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and other occasions. Professional cake decorators can also become TV stars or popular authors thanks to the power of cable TV stations like the Food Network and TV shows like the Ace of Cakes.

The art of cake decorating isn't just for the professional Sugarcrafter with years of education and experience anymore. The joy of creating elaborate edible works of art is shared by hobbyists and professionals alike and many people take a great deal of pride in the interesting and elaborate cakes that they create from their own imaginations.

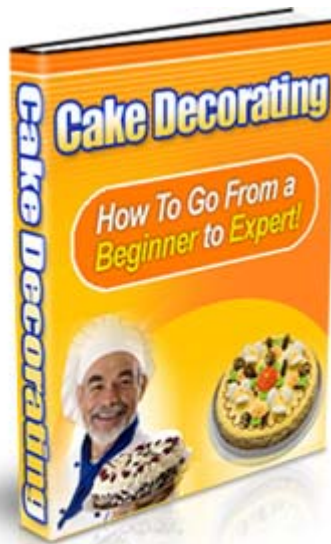
It's easy to find the materials to learn how to create gorgeous and elaborate cakes through videos, books, and classes, and some people who start decorating cakes for the fun of it may find they want to open their own cake decorating business.

If you do want to open your own cake decorating business, the tips in this book will help you figure out what you want your business to be like and how to get started.



Whether you are a cake decorator who decorates for the love of Sugarcrafting or a professional cake decorator looking to make a name for yourself and become one of the top Sugarcrafters in the business, good luck to you as you pursue the art of cake decorating.

**If you like this book try....**



# Cake Decorating

How To Go From a Beginner to Expert!

**Here is what you will learn inside this guide:**

- Where to find classes you can take?
- What these classes will teach you?
- Do I want to turn this into a business?
- Can I take these classes from home?
- If you like being creative then you will love being a cake decorator
- They say cake decorating is a man or woman turning their kitchen into an art studio.
- Cake decorating will bring out all of your creative juices
- You will learn how to draw you designs on paper before working with your medium "icing"
- You will know about the school curriculum before you ever make a phone call to them
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