



# getting started

Welcome to Lesson One – Getting Started. It is important to understand all of the skills in this chapter before progressing sequentially through the rest of the book, and a strong grasp of these basics will allow you to get more value out of each lesson and make the most of your time spent in learning this art. This lesson is jam-packed with the practical skills necessary for success—from knowing the right equipment to use to understanding how to ice a cake successfully with everything from buttercream to rolled fondant to royal icing. This chapter also includes essentials, such as covering a cake board with decorative foil and using food colors.

## YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING EQUIPMENT AND INGREDIENTS TO COMPLETE THIS LESSON:

### INGREDIENTS

- 10x confectioner's sugar
- assorted gel or paste food colors
- cake filling of choice
- commercial rolled fondant
- corn syrup
- cornstarch
- Ganache (page 335)
- Marzipan (page 343)
- Meringue Powder Royal Icing (page 347)
- one 6- × 3-in (15.2 × 7.6 cm) crumb-coated or spackled layered cake
- Spackle Paste (page 359)
- Swiss Meringue Buttercream (page 333), Italian Meringue Buttercream (page 336), or Decorator's Buttercream Icing (page 330)
- three 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) round yellow cakes
- two 10-in (25.4 cm) round cakes iced in commercial rolled fondant
- two 6-in (15.2 cm) round cakes iced in commercial rolled fondant

- two 3-layer 8-in (20.32 cm) round cake (already filled) placed on a foil-covered cardboard

### EQUIPMENT

- #2 graphite pencil
- 12-in (30.5 cm) flex pastry bag or disposable plastic pastry bags
- 12-in (30.5 cm) round corkboard or English board
- 6- to 8-in (15.2 to 20.3 cm) lollipop or cookie sticks
- 8- × 3 3-in (20.3 3 × 7.6 cm) round Styrofoam or 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) fruitcake or pound cake, leveled
- 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) square Styrofoam
- 8-in (20.3 cm) and 10-in (25.4 cm) round and square cardboards
- 9-in (22.9 cm) spiked pillars
- adding machine paper or strips of parchment paper
- baking sheet
- bench scraper or side scraper
- cardboard rounds: 6 in (15.2 cm), 8 in (20.3 cm), and 10 in (25.4 cm)
- cooling rack

- couplers
- damp sponge and side towels
- decorative cake foil
- fine and very fine sandpaper
- large rolling pin
- liquid whitener
- long metal smoother
- masking tape
- offset and straight metal spatulas
- pair of plastic smoothers
- pastry brushes (wet and dry)
- piping tips: #18, #20, or #22 star
- plastic wrap
- quart-size plastic containers (heat resistant)
- rounded toothpicks
- silicone spatulas
- ruler
- scissors
- serrated knife (bread knife)
- small, medium, and large metal bowls
- turntable (great, but not essential)
- wooden spoon
- X-acto knife

## EQUIPMENT

Before practicing cake decorating, it is important to be familiar with the equipment used by cake decorators. The right equipment is crucial to getting the best results; you need the right-size cake pan for baking the cake, the right parchment paper for lining the cake pan, and the right metal tip for each type of piped decoration. Having the right tools at the right time pays off both in the early stages of your training and as you move on to more difficult tasks.

The photos below show a variety of essential cake decorating tools. However, these items are by no means all of the equipment you may use in professional cake decorating, and many other tools are shown throughout the book.



Brushes and modeling tools, from top to bottom: 1/4-in (6 mm) flat paint brush, #5 round brush, #1 paint brush, dogbone tool, quilting wheel/veiner tool, cone and serrated tool, trumpet tool, large and small ball tool, angular tweezer, X-acto knife, metal quilting wheel.



Metal tools, counterclockwise from left: Round cookie cutter, lip cutter to cymbidium orchid, diamond-shape cutter, arum/calla lily cutter, small round and fluted cutter, clay gun with discs, small plunger cutters, crimper tools, flat side scrapper, #6 icing nail, stickpins, #1 round tip, #46 basketweave tip, #2 round tip, #0 round tip, #18 star tip, #3 round tip, #104 petal shape tip, #67 leaf tip, icing smoother, large and small calyx cutters.



Plastic cutters and silicone presses, counterclockwise from left: Set of fluted cutters, small fluted cutters, rose petal cutter set, small rose petal cutter, #5 round paint brush, small daisy cutter, medium calyx cutter, tiny ivy leaf cutter, medium-size rose leaf cutter and small rose leaf cutter, bottom and top rose leaf press, bottom and top tulip petal press, top and bottom 5-petal press.



Food colors and ribbons, counterclockwise from left: Color wheel, florist tape, assorted ribbons, assorted petal dusts, assorted gel food colors, pure lemon extract.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** The yellow and white dogbone tool shown in the brushes and modeling tools photo, far left, has several advantages. The “ball” on both ends is used to soften floral petals in gumpaste. But if you use the ball to soften the edge of a leaf in modeling chocolate, the paste will tear. If you use the “neck” of the dogbone tool (the curve just under the large and small ball), you won’t tear the modeling chocolate when trying to soften the edge of chocolate leaves.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Use a little white vegetable fat inside the clay gun shown in the metal tools photo, at left, or knead additional fat into the paste before loading it into the barrel of the gun.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Use a little white vegetable shortening on the silicone presses to prevent gumpaste from sticking to the press shown in the plastic cutters and silicone presses photo above. Clean the small plastic cutters immediately after use—dried gumpaste can be difficult to get out of these small cutters.



Electronic scale, boards, and florist wires, counterclockwise from left: Small ruler, plastic stamens, electronic scale, squeeze bottle, paper cones and triangles, white and green florist wires, adding machine paper, silver and masonite cake boards, small nonstick rolling pin, scissors, and cell pad.

# { NEW SKILL } covering a cake board

## QUICK PREP

8-in (20.3 cm) round cardboard

8-in (20.3 cm) square cardboard

decorative foil

masking tape

X-acto knife

A beautifully covered cake board is essential to cake decorating. Not only does it add to the beauty of the cake but it also provides a platform to which the decorator can add piped or hand-sculptured work, giving the illusion that the cake is larger than it actually is.

Deciding on the type of foil to cover a cake board is essential. If the cake is iced with buttercream, it is important to use a cake foil that is greaseproof. A thin film of plastic is attached to the decorative foil to prevent spoiling the cake foil with the fat or oil from the buttercream.

When covering a cake board, the rule is simple. If the cardboard is round, a round piece of foil is needed. If it is square, a square piece of foil is key. If it is oval, an oval piece of foil is necessary. Never force a large piece of rectangular foil over a round cardboard. Its bulk will not allow the board to lie flat.

## SQUARE CARDBOARD

1. Roll out decorative foil several inches larger than the cardboard. Cut the foil with an X-acto knife and trim it so it is about 2 in (5.1 cm) larger on each side than the square cardboard.
2. Turn the cardboard over so the white side faces the nondecorative side of the foil. Fold the top edge of the foil over the board toward the center and tape it securely with masking tape. Fold the bottom edge of the foil toward the center of the cardboard and tape it securely with masking tape.
3. Turn the board one quarter to the right. Fold the left edge of the foil to the edge of the cardboard. This forms a triangle and will give the board a nicer fit. Crease the fold with your nails. Then, fold the right edge of the fold to the edge of the board, forming a triangle and creasing it with your nails. Then fold the foil to the center of the board and tape securely (just as if you were taping a rectangular package). Do the same on the opposite side of the board and fold the foil to the center of the board and tape securely.
4. Fold the bottom of the foil towards the center of the board and tape securely. Then, fold the top of the foil to the center of the board and take securely. Turn the board one quarter turn. Fold the left edge of the foil to the edge of the board. This forms a triangle and will give the board a nicer fit. Crease the fold with your nails. Then, fold the right edge of the fold to the edge of the board forming a triangle and creasing it with your nails. Then fold the foil to the center of the board and tape securely (just as if you were taping a rectangular package). Do the same on the opposite side of the board and fold the foil to the center of the board and tape securely.

## ROUND CARDBOARD

1. Cut a round piece of decorative foil approximately 2 in (5.1 cm) larger than the round cardboard. Pull the foil from the 12 o'clock position toward the center of the cardboard and tape it securely. Pull the foil from the 6 o'clock position toward the center of the cardboard and tape it securely. Repeat this for the 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock positions, taping each. The board and foil should have perfect tension.

2. Pull and gather the foil completely around the cardboard and tape each gathered section with masking tape. Overlap the taping to make a perfect fit. When the foiled board lies flat, it is complete.

## WORKING WITH COLOR

Mixing and matching food colors is essential in cake design. Often, through experimentation, the designer finds little tricks that are useful for coordinating color schemes.

One way to begin is by mixing colors together, along with liquid whitener. The whitener will develop the color so you can see its true tone. This is excellent practice. Take note of the color combinations you like so you can use them in the future. Once you know the color combination, simply add the color(s) directly to white buttercream, white rolled fondant, or gumpaste to achieve a perfect match.

If your colors are too bright, tone them down with a little violet or brown. If the colors are too dark, add more white icing or a little liquid whitener.

The second and third columns of the color chart below comprise a recommended list of colors for the decorator or pastry chef to purchase at a local supply house. A color swatch chart is also provided as a guide.

To begin, we list the most frequently used combinations and their results.

 Sky Blue	=	 Blue	+	 Violet				
 Moss Green	=	 Green	+	 Brown				
 Lavender	=	 Purple/ Violet	+	 Pink				
 Deep Red	=	 Yellow	+	 Violet	+	 Red		
 Deep Black	=	 Green	+	 Violet	+	 Brown	+	 Black
 Ivory	=	 Yellow	+	 Brown				
 Peach	=	 Yellow	+	 Pink	+	 Orange		
 Pumpkin	=	 Orange	+	 Brown				
 Gold	=	 Brown	+	 Yellow				
 Silver/Gray	=	 Black	+	 White				
 Flesh Tone	=	 Brown	+	 Pink	+	 White		
 Burgundy	=	 Red	+	 Brown				
 Pink	=	 Red	+	 White				
 Blue	=	 Red	+	 Green				
 Green	=	 Yellow	+	 Blue				
 Teal	=	 Blue	+	 Yellow	+	 Green		
 Chartreuse	=	 Yellow	+	 Green				

COLOR(S)	+	COLOR	=	DESIRED COLOR
Royal or Sky Blue		Violet		Sky Blue (real)
Leaf Green		Chocolate Brown		Moss Green
Purple or Violet		Pink		Lavender
Egg Yellow, Violet, and Christmas Red		Super Red		Deep Red*
Forest or Leaf Green, Violet, and Brown		Black		Deep Black**
Lemon Yellow		Warm Brown		Ivory
Lemon Yellow and Soft Pink		Sunset Orange		Peach
Sunset Orange		Warm Brown		Pumpkin
Chocolate Brown		Egg Yellow		Gold
Super Black		Liquid Whitener		Silver Gray
Warm Brown and Pink		Liquid Whitener		Flesh Tone
Super Red		Chocolate Brown		Burgundy
Christmas Red		Liquid Whitener		Pink
Christmas Red		Leaf Green		Blue
Lemon Yellow		Sky Blue		Green
Sky Blue and Yellow		Forest Green		Teal
Lemon Yellow		Leaf Green		Chartreuse

\*Two types of reds are needed to achieve a really deep red color. These red food colors should be used in much larger proportions than the others.

\*\*Use a great deal of black food color to achieve a deep black.

## THE ART OF ICING A CAKE

The actual icing of a cake is the most important task of the cake decorator or pastry chef—as essential as knowing how to make up the icings. A cake that is iced cleanly in buttercream, ganache, rolled fondant, marzipan, or royal icing shows pride and professionalism, and it helps elevate this skill to an art form. A cake that is smoothly iced needs no further decoration to be complete and salable, although skillful decorating can significantly add to its value.

The key to successful cake icing is making sure the cake is level and free of crumbs before putting the icing on it. If the cake is split into several layers, each layer should be as even as possible. Additionally, the cake must be properly structured (or crumb-coated), especially if the layers are filled with jam, preserves, citrus curd, or buttercream.

Choosing the right icing for each cake is also important. This is often the responsibility of the decorator. The choices are constrained by time and environment—by time, if the cake is to be out for several hours before service, and by heat and humidity.

Practice each technique for cake smoothing until you can perform it effortlessly. Without constant practice, it is easy to lose the touch. This is not a skill to neglect.

# { NEW SKILL } assembling a layered cake

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

8 oz (227 g) cake filling of choice

8 oz (227 g) Swiss Meringue Buttercream (page 333) or Italian Meringue Buttercream (page 336)

Simple Syrup (page 342)

two 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) round yellow cakes

### EQUIPMENT

12-in (30.5 cm) flex pastry bag or disposable plastic pastry bag

couplers

damp sponge and side towels

decorative cake foil

masking tape

metal bowls

offset or straight metal spatula

pastry brush

pipng tip: #18 star

rounded toothpicks

ruler

serrated knife (bread knife)

several 8-in (20.3) round cardboards

silicone spatulas

turntable (if available)

two 10-in (25.4 cm) round cardboards

## LEVELING

1. Place an 8-in (20.3 cm) cake on your work surface. A turntable is helpful but not essential. If one is available, place the cake on it.
2. Carefully level the cake. If right-handed, place your left hand on the cake and hold the serrated knife in your right hand. Position the knife at the 3 o'clock position at the right edge of the cake. Move the cake counterclockwise as you lightly saw slivers of the cake. Place the cake slivers in an empty bowl. Continue until the cake is level. If you are left-handed, reverse hands and direction.
3. Place the other 8-in (20.3 cm) cake on the work surface and repeat the process of leveling the cake.

## SPLITTING

For this exercise, you will split two cakes into two layers.

1. Measure the height of the first cake and place toothpicks at the split points. If you are right-handed, place your left hand on the cake and hold the serrated knife at the 3 o'clock position. Move the knife back and forth lightly as you turn the cake counterclockwise, scoring a line in the cake. Continue to score the cake until one circle is completed.





With one hand on the cake, lightly saw the knife back and forth.



Remove the slivers from the top of the cake for a completely leveled cake.

2. Move the knife back and forth with more force to begin severing the cake in half.
3. After sawing completely around the cake, slide an 8-in (20.3 cm) cardboard under the severed layer. This prevents the layer from breaking. Carefully remove the layer and set it aside.
4. Repeat the splitting process with another 8-in (20.3 cm) cake. Once both cakes have been split into two layers, place the layers side by side and compare their height. Carefully cut slivers off the taller layers until all the layers are even.

### PREPARING TO ASSEMBLE THE CAKE LAYERS

1. Tape two 10-in (25.4 cm) cardboard rounds together. Place masking tape at the 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock, 6 o'clock, and 9 o'clock positions. Cover both cardboards in decorative cake foil (see page 4).
2. Place the foil-covered board on a turntable or work surface. Place a dab of buttercream in the center of the board and spread it to cover a circle 7 in (17.8 cm) in diameter—that is, 1 in (2.5 cm) smaller than the diameter of the cake layers.
3. Pick up one of the cake layers on its cardboard round. Hold the cake with the cardboard support in your right hand and use your left hand to turn the cake clockwise. This releases the cake from the cardboard support. Tilt the cake and cardboard at a 45° angle. Stick your right thumb under the cake and bend back the cardboard. Carefully slide the cake off the cardboard and onto the iced board.
4. Adjust the cake to make sure it is in the center of the board, then press the support cake board (the one just used to transfer the cake) firmly on top of the cake layer. This ensures that the cake sticks to the iced board.



After scoring the cake, move the knife back and forth to sever the layer.



Use an offset metal spatula to smooth the filling inside the icing dam.

### DAMMING THE CAKE

This technique allows a soft filling to remain stable between the cake layers without oozing out the sides.

1. Load the pastry bag with 8 oz (227 g) of buttercream and the #18 star tip and a coupler. Starting at the 9 o'clock position (for right-handers) or the 3 o'clock position (for left-handers), pipe a circular border just inside the cake layer, about ¼ inch (6 mm) from the outside edge. Hold the bag at a 45° angle and raise the tip slightly off the surface. Allow the icing to drop as you move the pastry bag counterclockwise. Lower the bag and ease off the pressure when the cake is completely encircled.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Although the filling will add both moisture and flavor to the cake, adding another moisture source is a common practice for extending a cake's shelf life. Simple Syrup (page 342) is often applied, especially to genoise cake layers. Some bakeries use plain water to moisten cake layers. Determining how much liquid is needed depends on the type of cake.

To add moisture to the cake, dip a pastry brush into the cooled simple syrup and brush liberally on dry cakes or lightly on moist cakes.

### FILLING AND ASSEMBLING THE CAKE

Choosing the right filling is important, especially if the icing and smoothing task requires rolled icing. If the cake is going to be eaten within a few days, then a curd made of lemon, lime, pineapple, or passion fruit can be delicious. However, if the cake must last a week or two, a jam or preserve is best, as rolled icing cakes are generally not refrigerated.

1. Place about 4 oz (113 g) of cake filling onto the bottom cake layer. With a small offset metal spatula, spread it evenly out to the dam.
2. Place the second cake layer onto the bottom layer and repeat the procedure for damming and filling.
3. Finally, place the third layer on the cake. Do not dam this layer or place filling on top.
4. Wrap the fourth layer in plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use or share it with a colleague who needs a spare layer.

# { NEW SKILL } crumb-coating and icing a cake

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

2 lbs (907 g) buttercream icing of choice

3-layer 8-in (20.32 cm) round cake (already filled) placed on a foil-covered cardboard

### EQUIPMENT

12-in (30.5 cm) flex pastry bag of disposable plastic pastry bag

metal bowls

offset or straight metal spatula

icing tip: #18 star

quart-size plastic containers (heat resistant)

side towel

## CRUMB-COATING THE CAKE

This technique stabilizes the loose crumbs on the cake. If time permits, refrigerate the cake for 1 hour after crumb-coating to allow the buttercream to set. Often in the industry, time does not permit.

Some decorators don't crumb-coat their cakes. They simply dump a lot of buttercream icing on top of the cake and carefully move the buttercream to the sides with a long offset metal spatula. Then they work back and forth from the top of the cake to the sides to smooth the icing. While this technique requires more skill, in time it can be easily accomplished.

1. Measure 6 oz (170 g) of buttercream icing into a metal bowl. Beat the icing lightly if it has been sitting for more than 1 hour. Dip a metal spatula into the buttercream and load it with icing.
2. Place the spatula with icing at the 9 o'clock position (for right-handers) or the 3 o'clock position (for left-handers). Using the inside of the spatula, begin by spreading the icing back and forth on the side of the cake, keeping the spatula at a 45° angle to the cake. Spread the icing from the top of the cake to the foiled cardboard. Reload the spatula and continue to spread the icing as you move the spatula counterclockwise (for right-handers) and the cake clockwise or move the spatula clockwise (for left-handers) and the cake counterclockwise.
3. Once you have gone around the cake, spread a thin layer of icing on the top of the cake. Use a paddle-type motion as you spread the icing on the top, then smooth the icing by positioning the spatula at the 6 o'clock position. Hold the spatula at a 45° angle. The spatula should be at the very edge of the cake. Carefully move the spatula across the cake in a light motion. Once you pass the center of the cake, carefully ease off the pressure and lift up the spatula before you reach the opposite end of the cake. Turn the cake clockwise as you continue to smooth the icing across the cake. Each time, you should start at the edge of the cake and move the spatula across the cake in a light motion.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** You should still be able to see the cake after the cake has been crumb-coated. You are only applying a thin layer of icing to seal in the crumbs.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** In the photo, the author is using a small offset metal spatula. The choice of using an offset or a straight metal spatula is up to the cake decorator or pastry chef.



When crumb-coating a cake, move the spatula counterclockwise to spread the icing.

### PIPING THE ICING ON THE CAKE

This is one of the easiest ways to ice a cake. By piping the icing onto the cake, all the icing needed to successfully and smoothly ice a cake is there. Now only the excess needs to be carefully removed.

1. Load the pastry bag with the #18 star tip and buttercream icing. First, position the tip and pastry bag at a 90° angle and at the 6 o'clock position. The tip should be at the top edge of the cake. Apply a burst of pressure and lightly drag the tip from the top edge of the cake down to the foiled cardboard. Then apply steady pressure as you drag the tip back up to the top of the cake. Continue piping the icing, moving the tip up and down the cake until the entire cake has been circled.
2. Position the pastry tip on top of the cake at the upper left-hand corner. The pastry bag and tip should be at a 45° angle. Apply a burst of pressure as you lightly drag the tip from the left side of the cake to the right side of the cake. Then drag the tip from the right side of the cake back to the left side. Continue with this back and forth technique (like a long zigzag) until the entire top of the cake is covered. The cake now has all the icing it needs, and the next step is to smooth the cake.

### SMOOTHING THE ICING ON THE CAKE

This is a skill that requires plenty of practice. The more cakes you ice and smooth the better you will become. To begin, heat some water and place it in a large heat-resistant plastic container. You will use the hot water later to heat the spatula.

1. Position the cake on a turntable, if available. Position an offset or straight spatula at a 45° angle to the cake at the 9 o'clock position (for right-handers) or the 3 o'clock position (for left-handers).

Apply light pressure as you move the spatula counterclockwise. Remove the excess icing from the spatula and continue smoothing the cake. Remember that the spatula should be at a 45° angle toward the cake. If the angle is too sharp, you will remove too much icing. Continue to smooth until you have gone completely around the cake. This is the pre-smoothing stage.

2. Position the spatula at the 6 o'clock position and at a 45° angle at the very edge of the cake. Use the same technique as for crumb-coating—that is, carefully move the spatula across the cake in a light motion, easing off the pressure once you pass the center of the cake. Lift the spatula before you reach the opposite side. Turn the cake clockwise as you continue to smooth the icing. Start each pass at the edge of the cake and move the spatula across it in a light motion. The cake is now pre-smoothed.

3. For a final smoothing, dip the spatula in the hot water and dry it off with a side towel. Position the heated spatula flat against the cake at a 90° angle and at the 9 o'clock position (for right-handers) or the 3 o'clock position (for left-handers). Move the spatula counterclockwise and the cake clockwise. Again dip the spatula in hot water and dry it off. Pick up where you left off by placing the spatula flat against the cake. Continue to move the spatula clockwise until the icing is completely smooth around the cake.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** If no turntable is available, place a round cardboard under the foiled cardboard. This round should be 1 or 2 in (2.54 to 5.1 cm) smaller than the foiled cardboard. The round cardboard will act as a turntable.



To pipe icing on the top of the cake, hold the tip at a 45° angle and move it left and right until the entire cake is piped.



Pre-smooth the icing on the sides of the cake by holding the spatula at a 45° angle while moving it around the side of the cake. Remove any excess icing from the spatula.



To pre-smooth the top of the cake, start at the edge and move the spatula at a 45° angle toward the center in a light motion.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** If you are using an offset metal spatula, turn it toward the inside and apply it flat against the cake. This way, it raises the edge of the icing to slightly higher than the top of the cake. This is exactly what you want when you are ready for the final smoothing.

4. To smooth the top of the cake, dip the spatula into the hot water and dry it off with a side towel. Hold the heated spatula at a 45° angle and at the 6 o'clock position. Using the same technique as for crumb-coating the top of the cake, move the spatula in a light motion toward the opposite end of the cake. You want to push the edge of icing that built up from smoothing the sides of the cake. When you reach the center of the cake, slightly ease off the pressure and lift the spatula from the cake. Turn the cake clockwise and pick up where you left off.

5. Continue smoothing until you have gone completely around the cake. You may need to go around the sides and then the top edge again. Never let the spatula touch the cake—it should touch the icing only—to avoid picking up crumbs.

## { NEW SKILL } spackling a cake

### QUICK PREP

16 oz (454 g) buttercream icing of choice (such as Swiss, Italian, or Decorator's (pages 330 to 336)

16 oz (454 g) Spackle Paste (page 359)

3-layer 8-in (20.3 cm) round cake (already filled) placed on a foil-covered cardboard

### EQUIPMENT

8-in (20.3 cm) round or square cardboard

offset or straight metal spatula

plastic wrap

silicone spatula or wooden spoon

I developed the spackling technique because I saw a need to present high-end cakes like those produced in British and Australian sugarcraft. In the United Kingdom and Australia, fruitcake is used as a base. The fruitcake is covered with a layer of marzipan and then with several coatings of royal icing or a layer of rolled fondant. When the cake is cut, the icing is  $\frac{1}{2}$  in (1.3 cm) thick.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Water can be used with the spackle paste instead of buttercream to make spreading the paste easier. Buttercream, of course, adds more delicious flavor to the already flavorful spackle paste.



Spackle the top by starting at the edge and moving the spatula toward the center of the cake.

Cakes like these would not be popular in the United States, as fruitcakes, marzipan, and rolled icings are not considered everyday foods. However, Europeans and many people from the Caribbean who live in the United States would love to eat such a cake. Spackling involves icing a layered cake (of any kind) with a mixture of cake crumbs, cake fillings, and buttercream. The cake is then refrigerated until firm, given a light coating of buttercream icing, and finally covered with a layer of rolled fondant.

With this procedure, the icing is  $\frac{1}{4}$  in (6 mm) thick. The delicious paste improves the taste of the rolled fondant, and the cake exhibits the perfect smoothness seen in British and Australian sugarcraft.

1. Lightly beat the spackle paste with a silicone spatula or wooden spoon. Place 8 oz (228 g) of the spackle paste on a small round or square cardboard along with 4 to 6 oz (114 to 170 g) of buttercream icing. This gives you latitude when spreading the paste, as it is quite thick.
2. Begin by loading some of the paste onto a metal spatula. Start at a 45° angle at the 9 o'clock position (for right-handers) or the 3 o'clock position (for left-handers). Spread the spackle paste on the cake as if you were crumb-coating it. Spread the paste from the top edge of the cake to the foil-covered cardboard. Put a little buttercream on the spatula to help spread the spackle paste.
3. When the cake is completely spackled, apply an additional thin layer of spackle paste to the top of the cake using the same technique.
4. Cover the spackled cake with plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm. You can leave the cake in the refrigerator overnight or up to one week.
5. When ready to cover with rolled fondant, spread a thin layer of buttercream icing over the spackled cake to act as glue for the rolled icing. The cake is now ready to be covered with rolled fondant.



# { NEW SKILL } icing a round cake with rolled fondant

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

2 lbs (907 g) commercial rolled fondant

8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) round cake cut into three layers, filled, and spackled, lightly coated with buttercream, and placed on a foil-covered cardboard

10x confectioner's sugar

cornstarch

gel food colors

### EQUIPMENT

large rolling pin

offset metal spatula, pizza wheel, or X-acto knife

pair of white plastic smoothers

pastry brush

Roul'Pat or Silpat pastry mat

rounded toothpicks or stickpins

solid vegetable shortening



In preparation for transferring rolled fondant to the cake, roll it onto a rolling pin.



Position the fondant between you and the cake and roll it from the rolling pin onto the cake in one quick motion.



Smooth the fondant to the cake by lifting the folds with one hand to relax them and smoothing the fondant to the cake with the other hand.



With the spatula at a 45° angle, press firmly to remove excess fondant about ½ in (1.3 cm) from the bottom edge of the cake while sealing the fondant to the cake.

Nothing looks more exquisite than a cake properly covered in rolled fondant. The cake can be finished with a spray of royal icing flowers, gumpaste flowers, or a spray of hand-shaped chocolate roses. A simple greeting or just an individual's name can also complement the cake. A string of bead piping at the bottom of the cake and a simple thin ribbon tied around it with a tiny ribbon bow says wow! The cake is complete, and the look is perfect.

The one drawback to rolled fondant is its taste. It is a sugary-sweet icing that tastes like doughy marshmallows. Also, fondant, especially commercial brands, sometimes has a slight aftertaste, although you can flavor it with extracts or candy oils. You can also mix in marzipan or white modeling chocolate for a more palatable taste. The ratios are 2 parts rolled fondant to 1 part white modeling chocolate, or 2 parts rolled fondant to 1 part marzipan.

The reason rolled fondant is so popular is its gorgeous, classy look. High-end wedding cakes and special celebration cakes are often adorned with this icing.

1. Begin by kneading the rolled fondant thoroughly. Color it with gel colors, if desired. Kneading the fondant warms it so it can be readily rolled out. If the rolled icing is sticky, sprinkle a little confectioner's sugar or cornstarch on the work surface. Shape the rolled icing into a disk that is 5 or 6 in (12.7 or 15.2 cm) in diameter.
2. Sprinkle the work surface with cornstarch or confectioner's sugar, or a combination of both. You can reduce the amount of sugar or cornstarch by rolling the fondant on a Roul'Pat or Silpat (silicone) pastry mat. Place the disk of rolled fondant in the center. Beginning at the 6 o'clock position, roll out the fondant, starting with light to medium pressure. Roll the rolling pin to the 12 o'clock position. Rotate the fondant disk in small increments. Continue rolling out the paste and rotating the disk so it does not stick to the work surface.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Knead ½ tsp (1 g) of solid vegetable shortening into the rolled icing before rolling it out and covering a cake with it. This reduces cracks on the shoulder of the cake.

3. For an 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) cake, roll the fondant disk to about ¼ in (6 mm) thick and about 16 in (40.6 cm) across. (See the Decorator's Hint on page 20 for more on calculating rolled fondant size.)

4. Use a plastic smoother to smooth over the paste. This also stretches the paste more and it squashes any air bubbles that may arise when rolling out the fondant.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Press hard enough to ensure that the fondant adheres to the cake. Otherwise, air pockets will develop. To remove an air pocket, puncture it with a rounded toothpick or stickpin held at a 45° angle, then gently smooth the fondant with plastic smoothers.



Move plastic smoothers back and forth along the side and top of the cake to iron out any wrinkles or cracks.

5. Position the rolling pin at either the 12 o'clock or 6 o'clock position. Roll the fondant onto the rolling pin, brushing aside any residue of cornstarch or confectioner's sugar with a pastry brush.
6. Place the spackled cake in front of you. If it just came out of the refrigerator, lightly coat the cake with a little buttercream icing. If the cake is just out of the refrigerator but already coated with a thin layer of buttercream, use a pastry brush to brush it with water or a little brandy, liqueur, or rum.
7. Position the rolled fondant next to the cake at the 6 o'clock position. The rolled fondant should start at the edge of the foiled-covered board; otherwise, it will be too short on one side. Transfer the rolled fondant to the cake by unrolling it from the rolling pin and allowing it to drape over the cake. The fondant should be transferred in one quick movement.
8. Once the rolled fondant is positioned on the cake, use a plastic smoother to smooth over the top of the cake. This makes sure that the rolled fondant is adhered to the cake's top.
9. Focus on the folds on the cake. Lift up a fold with one hand to relax it, and use the other hand to smooth the fondant to the cake. Go on to the next fold and repeat the procedure.
10. With an offset metal spatula, pizza wheel, or X-acto knife, cut away the excess fondant at about ½ in (1.3 cm) from the edge of the cake. To do this, place the spatula at the 6 o'clock position just inside the edge of the fondant on the board. Tilt the spatula at a 45° angle. Push the spatula and the fondant toward the edge of the cake and gently press down to cut away the excess fondant. Turn the cake clockwise and continue until the entire cake is done.
11. To complete the edge and seal the fondant to the cake, position the spatula at a 45° angle and the 6 o'clock position at the very bottom edge of the cake. Press the spatula firmly while turning the cake clockwise. This removes excess fondant and seals the fondant to the cake's edge.
12. For a perfect finish, go over the sides and top of the cake with plastic smoothers to eliminate cracks and wrinkles. Position the plastic smoothers at the 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock positions. Apply medium to firm pressure as you move the smoothers back and forth.
13. To soften dryness on the cake's shoulders, apply a little solid vegetable shortening. Rub the shortening into the fondant and then use the center of your writing hand to smooth it. Smooth the shoulders back and forth with your hands until the dryness disappears.

# { NEW SKILL } icing a square cake with rolled fondant

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

2 lbs (907 g) commercial rolled fondant

2 oz (57 g) corn syrup

4 oz (114 g) Meringue Powder Royal Icing (page 347) or Decorator's Buttercream Icing (page 330)

cornstarch or 10x confectioner's sugar

### EQUIPMENT

8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) square Styrofoam

10-in (25.4 cm) foil-covered square cardboard

fine sandpaper

pair of plastic smoothers

pastry brush

rolling pin

Covering a square cake with fondant is trickier than covering a round cake. In fact, covering any odd-shaped cake is tricky. The key is to roll out the fondant a little larger than for a round cake. This gives you more latitude when lifting up the folds and smoothing the fondant.

For this skill, use a square Styrofoam to practice. Prepare the Styrofoam by softening the shoulder's edge with a piece of fine sandpaper. This technique is called beveling. Without beveling, the fondant will tear at the shoulder's edge. On a real cake, the edge of a square cake is not nearly as sharp and does not pose the same problem.

Fold the fine sandpaper into quarters and apply light pressure around the edge of the Styrofoam "cake." If you sand the cake form too hard, it will tear the edge. Once you have gone completely around the cake, glue the cake form to a foil-covered cardboard with a little royal or buttercream icing. Using a pastry brush, brush the entire Styrofoam with a little corn syrup. The corn syrup will help the fondant adhere to the cake form.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Dryness on the shoulders of an iced cake is usually the result of using too much cornstarch or confectioner's sugar when rolling out the fondant, or taking too much time to roll it out. Generally, spend no longer than 3 to 5 minutes to roll out fondant, and then apply it immediately to the crumb-coated or spackled cake. To minimize the drying on the cake's shoulder, rub a little solid vegetable shortening into the cracks.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** You can brush Styrofoam with water instead of corn syrup to help the rolled fondant adhere.

1. Shape the fondant to a 5-in (12.7 cm) square. Sprinkle the work surface with a little cornstarch or confectioner's sugar, or a combination of both. Place the rolled icing at the center of the work surface. To roll out the fondant, place the rolling pin at the 6 o'clock position, apply light to medium pressure, and roll the pin toward the 12 o'clock position. Turn the rolled fondant a quarter-turn and continue rolling out until the fondant is ¼ in (6 mm) thick and 17 to 18 in (43.2 to 46 cm) across.
2. Once the fondant is rolled out, use the plastic smoothers to smooth over the surface to prevent air bubbles, even the surface, and stretch the fondant.



Unroll the rolled fondant from the rolling pin onto the square cake.



Use a plastic smoother to adhere the fondant to the top of the cake.



**DECORATOR'S HINT** To calculate the size of the fondant needed to cover a square cake, add 3 or 4 inches to the height of the left and right sides plus the width of the cake. Thus, the fondant square for an 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) square cake, in inches, would be  $3 \times 2 = 6$  (height of both sides) + 8 (width) + 3 to 4 = 17 to 18 in (43.2 cm to 46 cm) across.

Cup your hand to gently ease the fondant to the corners of the cake.

3. Position the rolling pin at the 12 o'clock position and roll the fondant onto the rolling pin. Place the Styrofoam "cake" in front of you and unroll the fondant onto it. Roll the top of the fondant with the rolling pin to secure it to the cake. Lift the folds with one hand and use the other hand to secure the fondant to the cake.
4. For the cake corners, lift the fondant with one hand. Cup your writing hand and use its shape to gently ease the fondant to the cake. Use gentle pressure when shaping the fondant to the corners; otherwise, you will leave folds.
5. Continue smoothing the fondant to the cake, carefully cupping your hand when securing the fondant to the corners. Once the cake is covered with rolled fondant, cut away the excess fondant and secure the edge to the cake (as you did for the round cake). Smooth the fondant with plastic smoothers.

## { NEW SKILL } covering a cake with ganache

### QUICK PREP

#### INGREDIENTS

1 recipe Ganache (page 335)

6- × 3-in (15.2 × 7.6 cm) round crumb-coated or spackled layered cake

#### EQUIPMENT

6-in (15.2 cm) round cardboard

baking sheet or large metal bowl

cooling rack

small and very large offset metal spatulas

Icing a cake with ganache is a quick and beautiful way to present a cake that looks like shiny rolled fondant. It is beautiful-looking, has a high sheen, and ganache tastes delicious.

1. Position a cooling rack on top of a baking sheet or a large metal bowl. This is used to catch the ganache as it drips off the cake. The excess ganache can be re-used by re-heating it. Place the crumb-coated or spackled cake on a cardboard round of the same diameter. This is to prevent damage when lifting the cake. Slide a large offset metal spatula under the cardboard. Carefully lift the cardboard with the cake onto the cooling rack.
2. Check the ganache to see if it is sufficiently cool and thick enough to be poured onto the cake. Continue to cool the ganache until it reaches spreading consistency.
3. Position the saucepan of cooled ganache over the cake with both hands. Beginning over the center of the cake, start pouring the ganache in a circular motion. Widen the circle and continue to pour as the ganache begins to drip over the sides of the cake. Continue pouring until the entire cake is coated with ganache.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** An alternative technique is to lift the cake and rotate and tilt it to remove excess ganache from the top. This must be done quickly to prevent drips from forming on the sides of the cake.

4. Set down the saucepan and quickly use a small offset metal spatula to spread the ganache. Let the iced cake sit until the ganache stops dripping onto the baking sheet. Carefully transfer the iced cake from the cooling rack to the work surface with a large offset metal spatula. Let the cake cool completely, or place it in the refrigerator to firm the ganache.



To ice a cake with ganache, pour the ganache in the center of the cake in a circular motion.



The ganache will begin to drape over the sides of the cake. Continue until the entire cake is covered.

# { NEW SKILL } royal icing a marzipan cake

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

1 lb (454 g) Meringue Powder Royal Icing (page 347)

2 lbs (907 g or 0.91 kg) Marzipan (page 343)

6 oz (170 g) sieved apricot jam

10x confectioner's sugar

### EQUIPMENT

12-in (30.5 cm) foil-covered round corkboard or English board (these boards are ½ in [1.3 cm] thick)

6-in. (15.2 cm) and 8-in. (20.3 cm) round cardboards

8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) round Styrofoam or 8- × 3-in (20.3 × 7.6 cm) fruitcake or pound cake, leveled

adding machine paper or strips of parchment paper 12 to 14 in. (30 to 35.6 cm) long

side scraper or bench scraper

long metal smoother or long straight metal spatula

masking tape

pastry brush

pizza wheel or X-acto knife

plastic wrap

quilting wheel or rounded toothpick

rolling pin

ruler

small and large offset metal spatulas

turntable

very fine sandpaper

wide offset metal spatula

Covering cakes in royal icing is not customary in the United States. Decorators who have lived in the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, or former British colonies, however, commonly use royal icing and marzipan.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Fruitcakes are never split and filled. Thus, bake fruitcake in a round cake pan, 8 × 3 in (20.3 × 7.6 cm). If using a pound cake for this exercise, bake it in the same size pan and don't split and fill it. You want the cake perfectly intact and one solid mass for this exercise. Gently level the cake so that it has a perfect top and bottom surface.

The royal icing and marzipan technique is typically applied to fruitcake, although any type of cake can be used. The cake is first covered with a layer of marzipan and then with several coats of royal icing. This approach contrasts with that of covering a cake in rolled icing and then decorating it with royal icing.

## COVERING THE CAKE IN MARZIPAN

1. If using fruitcake, fill any holes in the cake with small pieces of marzipan. Use a metal spatula to smooth the marzipan over the holes. If using a pound cake or another firm cake, this step should not be necessary.



**DECORATOR'S HINT** When rolling out marzipan, do not use cornstarch. This would dry out the paste and make it crack. Most U.S. 10x confectioner's sugar contains a 3 percent ratio of cornstarch, used to prevent caking. This small amount is not enough to harm the marzipan or make it brittle. Use confectioner's sugar instead. In certain countries outside of the United States, confectioner's sugar is pure and contains little to no cornstarch.

Carefully unroll the strip of marzipan around the side of the cake. The ends should just come together.



2. When the cake is ready to be iced, roll out 1 lb (454 g) of marzipan on a surface lightly dusted with confectioner's sugar. Roll the paste to  $\frac{1}{4}$  in (6 mm) thick and a diameter about 2 in (5.1 cm) greater than that of the cake. This will allow the entire cake surface to be covered and the excess to be trimmed.

3. Place a cardboard circle that is the same diameter as the cake in the center of the rolled marzipan. Score around the cardboard with a quilting wheel or toothpick. Remove the cardboard circle and brush sieved apricot jam inside the scored circle.

4. Carefully lift the cake onto the marzipan circle, directly on top of the sieved jam. Lightly press down on the cake with cardboard to secure the cake to the marzipan. Cut around the circumference of the cake with an offset spatula. Remove the excess marzipan and wrap it in plastic wrap to be used another time. Reverse the cake onto an 8-in (20.3 cm) round cardboard with the marzipan side now as the top of the cake. Set the cake on a turntable.

5. To ice the sides of the cake in marzipan, measure the height and the circumference of the cake. Make a pattern by taping together strips of parchment paper with masking tape, or use adding machine paper. Roll out another 1 lb (454 g) of marzipan in a strip that is  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) thick and longer and wider than the pattern. Place the pattern on the marzipan and cut with a pizza wheel, X-acto knife, or metal spatula. Remove the excess and wrap in plastic wrap.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** In traditional English-style decorating, the cake is completely encased in marzipan (top, bottom, and sides). However, this does not need to be the case. In the photo above, just the top and sides of the cake are encased in marzipan.

6. Carefully roll up the marzipan like a jelly roll. Brush the sides of the cake with sieved apricot jam and unroll the marzipan around the cake. If the marzipan stretches while unrolling, cut off the excess with an X-acto knife. The ends of the marzipan strip should just meet. Use a smoother to press the marzipan into place and help it adhere to the cake. The cake is now ready to be iced with royal icing.



Paddle the royal icing back and forth around the sides of the cake.



Drag the scraper around the side of the cake to smooth the royal icing while your other hand turns the cake from the top.

### ICING THE CAKE IN ROYAL ICING

1. Royal icing softens when it sits for any length of time. If the icing is too soft, rebeat it using the mixer with the paddle attachment until the consistency forms medium to stiff peaks when the paddle is lifted. Be sure to keep it covered with plastic wrap.
2. Put some royal icing on an offset metal spatula, hold it at the 9 o'clock position and at a 45° angle, and paddle the icing onto the cake in a back-and-forth motion. Continue until you have gone completely around the cake.
3. When ready to smooth the icing, place a round cardboard, 1 to 2 in (2.54 to 5.1 cm) smaller than the diameter of the cake, on top. If right-handed, place your left hand on the cake and vice versa. Turn the cake clockwise as far as you can without moving your hands. Position a side scraper or bench scraper at a 45° angle, as close to the 12 o'clock position as possible. In one continuous movement, turn the cake counterclockwise and drag the scraper to the cake clockwise. Continue until you have completely encircled the cake. Stop turning the cake and gently ease off the pressure on the scraper. This completes the first coat of icing.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Seal the seam by spreading a little royal icing on it with a metal spatula.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Placing a cardboard round on the cake while icing it with royal icing prevents leaving finger marks in the marzipan.

4. To remove the excess from the top edge, hold a metal spatula flat against the top edge of the cake and gently take off the edge of excess icing as you turn the turntable. This first coat must dry for at least 1 hour or until the sides of the cake are dry.

5. Touch the sides of the cake to confirm that the first layer of icing is dry. Load the metal spatula with royal icing and begin spreading the icing on top of the cake. Paddle the icing on the cake in a back-and-forth motion, as you did on the sides. Reload the spatula and continue to paddle the icing onto the cake.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** Take-off lines may form at the points where you begin and end the smoothing of a cake. A little of the icing drags, making it hard to get the surface completely smooth. Icing build-ups occur when the side scraper is not at a 45° angle and some of the icing is not smoothed when dragging the side scraper. This is easily fixed with sandpaper. Build-ups may also develop when a cake is iced with buttercream icing using a metal spatula. However, buttercream never dries enough to be sanded.

6. To smooth the icing on top, place a long smoother or a long metal spatula at the 12 o'clock position and at a 45° angle. Place your hands close together on the smoother and apply even and firm pressure as you pull it toward you. When you reach the end of the cake at the 6 o'clock position, gently pull the smoother toward you to exit the cake. Use a small metal spatula to scrape off the excess icing on the top edge of the cake. Allow the cake to dry for at least 1 hour.

7. Before adding another layer of royal icing to the sides of the cake, use a piece of very fine sandpaper to lightly sand and take off lines or icing build-ups. Using the same technique as before, ice the sides of the cake with royal icing again and smooth it with a side or bench scraper. Remove the excess from the top edge of the cake and let dry at least 1 hour. Repeat the procedure for the top of the cake and let dry for 1 hour or overnight.

8. Add a third layer of royal icing to the side and top of the cake. Carefully use fine sandpaper to sand each layer and ensure the smoothest look. After three layers, check if the marzipan is still visible through the icing. If it is, add another layer of royal icing, or perhaps even two, until the marzipan is no longer visible.



Pull the smoother toward you while applying even pressure.



To smooth the icing on the cake board, drag the scraper around the board while rotating the cake from the top.

## ICING THE CAKE BOARD

Icing a finished board in royal icing extends the size of the cake and adds to its dimension. This technique is not necessary, but the tradition is entrenched.

1. Spread a little royal icing in the center of a foil-covered corkboard or English board and carefully lift the iced marzipan cake onto it. Press the cake lightly with a cardboard round to secure it to the board. Transfer the marzipan cake on the corkboard to a turntable.
2. Place a cardboard round on top of the cake to protect it. Paddle the icing on the board with a metal spatula. Avoid building up icing at the bottom edge of the cake.
3. Place your writing hand on the cake and turn the cake clockwise as far as you can without moving your hands. This is the same technique as for icing the sides of the cake. Position the side or bench scraper close to the 12 o'clock position and at a 45° angle. In a single movement, turn the cake counterclockwise as you drag the side scraper on the cake board. Once around the cake, carefully lift the side scraper, taking care to avoid take-off lines.
4. Use a metal spatula to scrape off any icing build-ups on the edge of the cake board. Let dry for 1 to 2 hours. Lightly sand the cake board with very fine sandpaper before adding the next layer.
5. Repeat the icing process above to add additional layers until the cake board is no longer visible through the icing.

# { NEW SKILL } stacking cake tiers

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

10-in (25.4 cm) round cake iced in commercial rolled fondant and placed on a 14-in (35.6 cm) round foiled-covered board

5 oz (140 g) buttercream icing of choice (pages 330 to 338) or Meringue Powder Royal Icing (page 347)

6-in (15.2 cm) round cake iced in commercial rolled fondant and placed on a 6-in (15.2 cm) round iced support board

### EQUIPMENT

#2 graphite pencil

6-in (15.2 cm) round cardboard circle

rounded toothpicks

ruler

six 6- to 8-in (15.2 to 20.3 cm) lollipop or cookie sticks

small and large offset metal spatulas

X-acto knife



Mark pinpricks around a cardboard the same size as the next tier to guide its placement.



Mark the point on each dowel where the dowel and rolled fondant meet.



Push the dowels back into the cake, making sure they reach the finished board.



Using the pinpricked pattern as a guide, carefully place the top tier cake on the bottom tier. Use your hand under the bottom of the top tier to help support the cake.

Most people marvel when they see a beautifully decorated cake, gorgeously iced and featuring fine pipework and perhaps a spray of piped or hand-shaped flowers. A tiered cake, even a plain one, has a beauty all its own. How can the top cake not crush the bottom one? Even cake tiers separated by plastic pillars can be stunning, especially when the space is filled with a beautiful floral arrangement.

Here you will practice constructing a two-tier cake. The bottom tier is a 10-in (25.4 cm) cake on a 14-in (35.6) foiled-covered finished board and the top tier is a 6-in (15.2 cm) cake attached to an iced support board of the same diameter. Both cake tiers are finished in commercial rolled fondant.

The first step is to anchor the bottom tier. For many years, this was achieved with wooden dowels, which are still used in the States and in many countries. Today, however, many decorators use heavy-duty drinking straws. I myself like using lollipop or cookie sticks. These are made from tightly wrapped paper and are food approved. They are extremely strong but can be easily cut.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** For an off-center top tier, a good spot is 1½ to 2 in (3.8 to 5.1 cm) inside the edge of the bottom tier.

1. Place a cardboard round, the same size as the top tier, on the bottom tier in the spot you plan to set the layer. If you want to center the top tier, place the cardboard in the center of the bottom tier, and if you want the top tier off-center, place the cardboard where you wish the tier to be placed.

2. Use a toothpick to mark holes around the cardboard. You will use these pinpricks as a guide when placing the top tier on the bottom tier. Remove the cardboard to reveal the pinpricked pattern.

3. For a 10-in (25.4 cm) cake, you will need six dowels (lollipop or cookie sticks) to support the top tier (see the guide for doweling on page 32). Place the first dowel in the center of the pinpricked pattern. The dowel should go all the way down to the finished board. Place the five remaining dowels around the centered dowel, about 1 in (2.5 cm) in from the pattern and spaced evenly at one-fifth intervals around the centered dowel.

4. Use a #2 graphite pencil to mark the point on each dowel where it meets the rolled fondant. Remove the dowels one at a time and score each with an X-acto knife at a point slightly lower than the pencil marking, approximately  $\frac{1}{16}$  to  $\frac{1}{8}$  in (1.5 to 3 mm). Break each dowel at the scored line. Replace the dowels inside the cake, making sure each reaches the finished board. The dowels should now be slightly below the level of the rolled icing.

Although the cake may look even, it generally is not. The center point of the cake is the highest point. The point of the cake nearest to the shoulder of the cake is the lowest point. This is typical to all iced cakes. Thus, removing and cutting dowels one at a time is recommended so that you get the correct dowel back in place.

**DECORATOR'S HINT** When the top tier is placed on the bottom tier, it should sink slightly. Otherwise, there will be a large negative space around the bottom of the top tier that will have to be covered with heavily piped borders.

5. Spread a little buttercream or royal icing where the top tier is to be set, inside the pinpricked pattern. Slide a large offset metal spatula under the top tier. Using your hands to help support it, carefully place the cake (still on the cardboard round) on the bottom tier, using the pattern as a guide. Carefully remove the spatula from beneath the top tier. Adjust the tier with your hands. Place a cardboard on the top tier and press lightly to help it adhere to the bottom tier. The tiered cake is complete.

# { NEW SKILL } tiers with columns or pillars

## QUICK PREP

### INGREDIENTS

6-in (15.2 cm) round cake iced in commercial rolled fondant and placed on a finished board

10-in (25.4 cm) round cake iced in commercial rolled fondant and placed on a finished board

### EQUIPMENT

6-in (15.2 cm) round cardboards

pack of 9-in (22.9 cm) spiked pillars (4 or 5 pillars)

rounded toothpicks

Tiers separated by pillars and columns are no longer in fashion, although they are still requested by clients looking for grand effects: staircases, fountains, plastic ushers, bridesmaids, brides, and grooms. Pillared and columned cakes were made popular in the United States in the 1950s to 1980s. They are still used, but not as often as cakes stacked directly on top of each other.

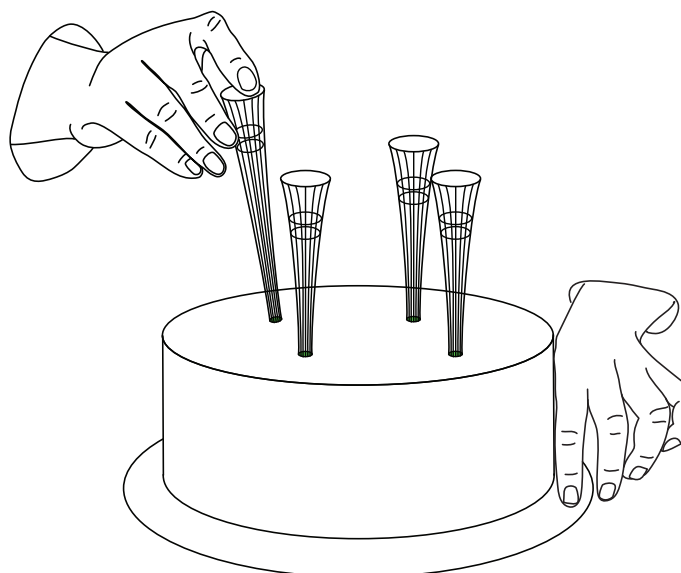
These splashy cakes use plastic separator plates with pins and columns to create a majestic look. This look can be downsized and simulated with a lot less plastic.

Determine the distance wanted between the top and bottom tier. This will dictate the size of the pillars. Spiked pillars are the best choice because the cake can be doweled and still have pillar space between the tiers. With spiked pillars, the procedure is quick and easy. These pillars, narrow at the bottom and square at the top, are available in lengths of 9 to 12 in (22.9 to 30.5 cm) or more. The height of both cake tiers also dictates the size of the pillars to use. Thus, if the bottom tier is 4 in (10.2 cm) high and the pillars are 9 in (22.9 cm) high, that leaves a 5-in (12.7 cm) space between tiers. That may or may not be enough room in which to arrange a floral spray or fountain. If the plan is for something very simple in between the tiers, then the 9-in (22.9 cm) pillars might be just right.

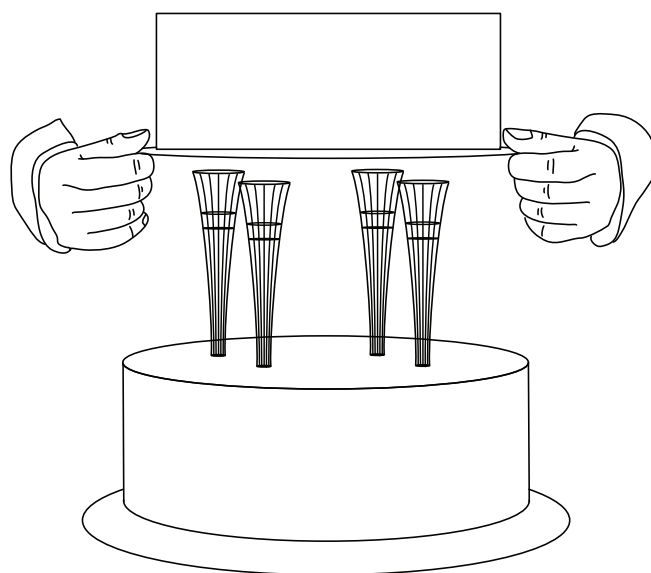
**DECORATOR'S HINT** When transporting a cake to be assembled with pillars and fountains between pillars, you need to do the assembly at the reception site. You don't want to risk your cake tiers falling over during the transport. However, if you are traveling with a stacked-tiered cake of 3 to 5 tiers, the tiers can actually be assembled at home or the pastry shop and carefully delivered to the reception site. Often what decorators will do is leave the center space of each tier without dowels and then hammer in a long sharpened dowel from the top tier to the bottom tier. This ensures that the cake will be protected and stay in place during transportation to the reception site.

1. Place a cardboard on the bottom tier that is the same size as the top tier and score the bottom tier, just as you did to stack tiers on page 29. This is a guide for placing the spiked pillars. It is best to use five spiked pillars to dowel the bottom tier; however, you can get away with four if necessary.
2. Place the spiked pillars about  $\frac{1}{2}$  in (1.3 cm) inside the scored pattern, evenly spaced one-quarter of the distance around the center if using four spiked pillars, or one-fifth of the distance if using five spiked pillars. Push all the pillars into the bottom tier until they reach the finished board. The pillars stay inside the cake.
3. Place the top tier and its finished board directly on top of the pillars. Remember, the pillars are flat on top. Center the cake on the pillars. Your pillared tiered cake is complete. You can place a small- to medium-size floral spray between the tiers, arranging them to hide the pinpricked pattern. This can also be done by adding piped or hand-shaped leaves.





Push the pillars into the cake until they reach the finished board.



Carefully place the top cake tier on its own finished board directly onto the pillars.

## GUIDE FOR DOWELING A CAKE

CAKE DIAMETER	DOWELS NEEDED
4 in (10.2 cm)	3 to 4
6 in (15.2 cm)	5 to 6
8 in (20.3 cm)	7
9 in (22.9 cm)	8
10 in (25.4 cm)	9
12 in (30.5 cm)	11
14 in (35.6 cm)	13
16 in (40.6 cm)	15
18 in (46 cm)	17
20 in (50.8 cm)	19

How many dowels are needed to dowel a cake with a 16-in (40.6 cm) layer, a 12-in (30.5 cm) layer, and a 6-in (15.2 cm) layer? Because the 12-in (30.5 cm) layer is sitting on the 16-in (40.6 cm) layer, it needs support dowels. Because the 6-in (15.2 cm) layer is sitting on the 12-in (30.5 cm) layer, it also needs support dowels. Thus, 11 dowels are needed for the 12-in (30.5 cm) layer and 5 to 6 dowels for the 6-in (15.2 cm) layer. The dowels are all arranged in a circular pattern with one of the dowels in the center of the cake. For larger cakes, you might wish to place 3 to 5 dowels in a circular pattern near the center of the cake and the balance of the dowels in a circular pattern about ½ in (1.3 cm) inside the scored pattern.

## END-OF-LESSON REVIEW

1. Why is it important to cover a cake board with decorative foil?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Compare the technique for covering a round board and a square or rectangular board. Why are different techniques necessary?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What two colors make up moss green?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What two colors make up ivory?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What can you do if your food colors are too bright?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why would a cake be dammed?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Why would a cake be crumb-coated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is it important to level a cake before splitting, filling, and icing? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the importance of spackle paste?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Why is it important to use cardboard rounds or squares to transfer cakes for assembly?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What are the advantages of covering a cake in rolled fondant?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Can rolled fondant be colored?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Why should dowels be placed in the bottom tier of a cake before adding the top tier?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Why is it important to pinprick a pattern on the bottom tier before adding the top tier?  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What is the purpose of using spiked pillars when elevating a cake's top tier from the bottom tier?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PERFORMANCE TEST

Perform the following exercise:

- Cover a round cardboard with decorative foil.

Select and execute two of the following projects:

- Split, fill, crumb-coat, and ice a cake in buttercream icing.
- Cover a cake or Styrofoam in rolled fondant.
- Cover a Styrofoam in marzipan and then ice it with three coats of Meringue Powder Royal Icing (page 347).
- Stack-tier or column-tier a two-tier cake.