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BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CAKE DECORATING



MURDOCH BOOKS

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EQUIPMENT

Using the correct equipment not only helps to give better results, but also makes cake decorating easier. The following is a list of the basic equipment used in cake decoration. You will need specialist items to decorate some of the more elaborate cakes in this book, and these are listed with the instructions for each cake.

Cake boards

These are available in all shapes and sizes from round and square to heart, petal, hexagonal and rectangular. Choose between thin 'cards' and thicker boards or 'drums'.

Cake tins

Round and square tins are widely available in good hardware shops, kitchenware stores and even large supermarkets. Unusual shapes can be bought or hired from specialist cake-decorating shops. (See also Lining tins on page 10.)

Cocktail sticks (toothpicks)

These are useful for dotting tiny amounts of food colouring onto icing (see page 30), and for precise decorative work.

Crimpers

These come in different shapes, e.g. hearts, diamonds, zigzags and scallops, and are used to emboss decorative borders and patterns in sugarpaste (rolled fondant) (see page 32).

Cutters

A vast range of cutters can be found in kitchenware stores and specialist cake-decorating shops. Large biscuit cutters are useful for shaping novelty cakes, while smaller cutters are better suited to more delicate work. Flower cutters come in basic petal



shapes, or are specially shaped for making particular flowers, e.g. orchids and lilies. Blossom 'plunger' cutters make simple flowers and have a wire spring which gently pushes out the flower shape once cut (for advice on how to use these, see pages 84-5).

Decorative scrapers

These are used for creating decorative patterns around the sides or tops of cakes (see page 67).

Dogbone tool

This tool has a large and a small rounded end, and is used for making soft curves on petals for sugar flowers. See photograph under Modelling tools, opposite.

Dusting powders

Powder colours are mostly used to give colour highlights to sugarpaste flowers (see pages 84-5). They are applied with a dry paintbrush.

Tip

See the list on page 111 for suppliers of all types of specialist cake decorating equipment. Many of them supply goods by mail order.

Floristry wire

This is used for wiring flowers together into decorative sprays, and also for looping ribbons into sprays. It is available from cake-decorating shops and florists. Never push wires directly into cakes.

Food colourings

Food colourings are available in a variety of shades from cake-decorating shops and suppliers. Use paste colourings for deep or bright colours and liquid for pale colours. Dusting powder is brushed on to achieve subtle shades.

Icing ruler or straightedge

A smooth, firm ruler is used for flat icing the tops of cakes decorated with royal icing.

Kitchen papers

Plastic food wrap or cling film is useful for tightly wrapping icings to prevent crusts forming. Foil, crumpled or flat, acts as a mould for drying icing decorations. Greaseproof and non-stick papers are used for lining tins and for making paper piping bags and templates. Absorbent kitchen paper can be used to support sugarpaste decorations while they dry.

Leaf veiner

For marking leaf and petal veins, this provides a quick alternative to using the point of a knife.

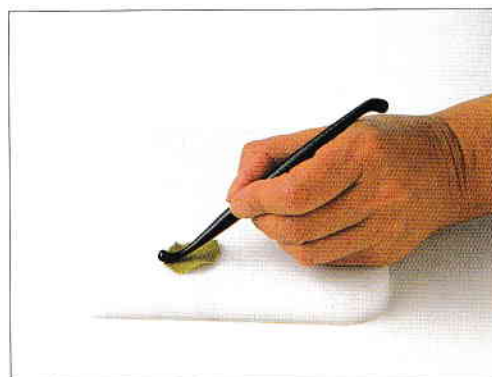
Modelling tools

These come in various shapes and sizes and are useful for making all kinds of models to decorate cakes, from sugarpaste flowers (see pages 84–5) to marzipan fruits (see page 68). They are available from specialist cake-decorating shops.



Frill cutter

This large cutter with a central detachable ring is used for making frilled borders and decorations. For full instructions on making frills, see Sugarpaste Techniques, page 31.



Paintbrushes

Large brushes are used for moistening cakes or boards with water before icing, and for painting large areas of icing. Finer brushes are used for delicate painting, dusting on colour and for dampening icing pieces before securing to a cake.

Tip

Shiny new tins can reflect the heat, producing an uneven bake, so although you should wash tins after use, there is no need to remove the heat and baking marks.

Palette knife

This is useful for spreading or sandwiching cakes with buttercream, cream, chocolate or ganache.

Piping bags

Bought nylon piping bags are best for piping large quantities of whipped cream, buttercream or ganache. Homemade or bought greaseproof paper piping bags are used to pipe royal icing (see page 46).

Piping jelly

This is useful for adding a 'wet look' effect, particularly to water on children's novelty cakes.

Piping tubes (tips)

These range from very fine writing tubes, for delicately piped icing, to large tubes for piping shells, stars, basketwork, leaves and petal shapes. Very large star or plain tubes are available in sizes 5mm–2cm ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ in). These are used with large nylon piping bags to pipe large amounts of whipped cream or meringue.

Ribbon

Lengths of ribbon are frequently used to decorate cakes, either in bows or loops on top of a cake, or tied around the sides. A ribbon attached to the cake board makes an effective finishing touch.

Rolling pin

An ordinary wooden rolling pin is adequate for rolling sugarpaste, although special plastic icing pins give smoother results. A small rolling pin is perfect for delicate work. Textured rolling pins are used to create fabric effects and other embossed patterns.

Sponges

Special sponges, soft and firm, available in various sizes from cake-decorating shops, are used when

shaping or drying flowers. Pieces of sponge are used to support decorations while drying.

Stamens

These are available from specialist cake-decorating shops in a variety of shapes and sizes. They add the finishing touch to relevant flowers.

Sugarpaste gun or sugar shaper

This versatile piece of equipment creates pieces of shaped sugarpaste neatly and easily. A selection of discs provide different effects.



Sugarpaste smoother

A smooth, flat implement for giving a perfect finish to cakes covered with sugarpaste (rolled fondant).

Turntable

A cake turntable makes it much easier to work on a decorated cake.

LINING TINS

A wide variety of tins (pans) is now available for cake baking. Tins are not only designed to be a particular shape and size; consideration is also given to ease of use and how the baked cake will be removed from the tin. Nevertheless you should always make sure that all tins are well prepared beforehand.

Victoria sandwich (shallow) tins

These are usually used in pairs. Place one on a double sheet of greaseproof paper, draw round the base with a pencil, and then cut out the discs of paper just inside the pencil line (to allow for the thickness of the tins). Grease the tins with vegetable fat (shortening) and fit one of the discs of paper into the bottom of each of the tins, then grease the paper to aid easy release of the sponge cakes.



Deep cake tins

Measure the circumference of the cake tin first, using string or a tape measure. Cut a greaseproof paper strip, 5cm (2in) deeper than the tin and 5cm (2in) longer than the measured circumference. Fold up 2.5cm (1in) of the paper along one long edge, press to make a crease in the paper; then



Tip

When making a whisked sponge cake, only the base of the tin needs lining.

unfold. Grease the tin with vegetable fat (shortening) or melted butter. If you are lining a tin with curved sides, snip with scissors along the folded edge up to the crease. This will help you fit the paper neatly around the edge of the tin. For straight-sided tins, you need only snip the folded area when fitting around corners. Fit the strip around the outside of the tin. Place the tin on a piece of greaseproof paper, draw around the base with a pencil, and cut out the shape just inside the pencil line. Fit the shape in the bottom of the tin so that it covers the snipped edges of the side lining paper. Cakes that take a long time to bake, especially rich fruit cakes, need some protection to ensure even baking. Stand the tin on some newspaper, wrap a few layers of brown paper or newspaper around the outside and fix into position with string.

Moulded novelty tins

These cannot be lined with paper, so to ensure that your cake will not stick, first grease well with vegetable fat (shortening), and then dust liberally with plain flour. Knock out any excess flour before filling the tin with mixture.

If you are baking a large quantity of shaped cakes, or bake novelty cakes regularly, then a convenient method is to mix together equal amounts of vegetable fat and flour, and to brush this inside the tins. This mixture can be stored in the refrigerator.

CAKE RECIPES

If possible, always make non-fruit cakes the day before decorating them as they cut better: this is particularly important when shaping novelty cakes. Well wrapped in foil, a whisked sponge can be kept for two days before eating; a Madeira will keep for up to a week. Both should be frozen if kept for longer. Rich fruit cakes store well for several months in a cool, dry place. If liked, drizzle with a little brandy from time to time to improve the flavour.

Tip

When mixing a cake, curdling usually occurs because the ingredients are too cold. Make sure you start with everything at room temperature.

MADEIRA CAKE

- 1 Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F/Gas mark 3). Grease and line the required tin (see pages 10–11).
- 2 Cream the butter or margarine and sugar together first in a bowl, until the mixture is pale and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs. Finally fold in the sifted flour using a large spoon and add any flavouring. Beat for about 2 minutes.
- 3 Turn the mixture into the prepared tin, level the surface then make a dip in the centre. Bake in the oven for the time stated in the chart or until the cake is firm to the touch and a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Leave to cool slightly in the tin, then turn out onto a

wire rack and leave to cool. Wrap the cake tightly in foil until you are ready to cover and decorate it.



MADEIRA CAKE

Round tin	15cm (6in)	18cm (7in)	20cm (8in)	23cm (9in)	25cm (10in)
Square tin	13cm (5in)	15cm (6in)	18cm (7in)	20cm (8in)	23cm (9in)
Butter or margarine, softened	125g (4¼oz/½ cup)	185g (6½oz/¾ cup)	315g (11oz/1½ cups)	440g (1lb/2 cups)	500g (1lb2oz/2¼ cups)
Caster sugar	125g (4¼oz/½ cup)	185g (6½oz/¾ cup)	315g (11oz/1½ cups)	440g (1lb/2 cups)	500g (1lb2oz/2¼ cups)
Eggs	2	3	5	7	8
Self-raising flour	185g (6½oz/1½ cups)	250g (8¾oz/2 cups)	375g (13oz/3¼ cups)	500g (1lb 2oz/4½ cups)	625g (1lb6oz/5½ cups)

FLAVOURINGS

Ground mixed spice	1 tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp	2 tsp	3 tsp
Citrus (grated rind of lemon, orange or lime)	1	2	3	4	5
Chopped mixed nuts	30g (1¼oz/¼ cup)	60g (2¼oz/½ cup)	90g (3¼oz/¾ cup)	125g (4¼oz/1 cup)	155g (5oz/1¼ cups)
Baking time	1–1¼ hours	1¼–1½ hours	1½–1¾ hours	1¾–2 hours	2 hours

Makes one 18cm (7in) sandwich cake

175g (6oz³/₄ cup) butter, softened

175g (6oz³/₄ cup) caster

(superfine) sugar

3 eggs (at room temperature), beaten

175g (6oz/1¹/₂ cups) self-raising flour

1 Grease and line the bases of two 18cm (7in) sandwich tins. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas mark 4).

2 Cream together the butter and sugar until it is light and fluffy. Add the beaten egg in three stages, beating well after each addition. If the mixture starts to curdle, add a spoonful of flour with each addition of egg.

3 Sift the flour onto the mixture, and fold in gently with a large metal tablespoon.

4 Divide the mixture between the prepared tins, and bake in the oven for around 20 minutes or until the tops of the cakes are firm when pressed with your fingertips. The cake should spring back to shape and the fingermarks disappear.

5 Turn the cakes onto a wire rack. Peel off the lining paper and leave to cool. Sandwich with the filling of your choice. For an easy decoration, sift icing sugar through a doiley, as shown below.



GENOESE SPONGE

Makes one 25 x 18cm (10 x 7in) cake

100g (3¹/₂oz/1¹/₂ cup) margarine

160g (5¹/₄oz/1¹/₄ cups) self-raising
sponge flour

185g (6¹/₂oz/1³/₄ cup) caster

(superfine) sugar

pinch of salt

2 eggs, beaten

100ml (3¹/₂fl oz/1¹/₂ cup) milk

1 tbsp glycerine

a few drops of vanilla essence (extract)

1 Grease and line a 25 x 18cm (10 x 7in) deep cake tin. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas mark 4).

2 Put the margarine in the bowl of an electric mixer with the flour, caster (superfine) sugar and salt, and crumble together with your fingertips.

3 In a separate bowl, mix the eggs, milk, glycerine and vanilla together. Mix at slow speed, and add the liquid gradually over 1 minute. Scrape the mixture then beat for 1 minute on medium speed.

4 Transfer to the tin and smooth flat with a palette knife. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden and firm. Turn out onto a wire rack, peel off the lining paper, and leave to cool. Before using, carefully peel off the top cake skin, as below.



VICTORIA SANDWICH VARIATIONS

CHOCOLATE

Replace 1 tbsp
flour with 1 tbsp
cocoa powder
and add 1 tbsp
milk.

COFFEE

Dissolve 1 tsp
instant coffee
granules in 2tsp
boiling water.

Add after
the egg.

ORANGE

Add the grated
rind of 1 orange
with the eggs.

LEMON

Add the grated
rind of 1 lemon
with the eggs.

VANILLA

Beat in 2 tsp
vanilla essence
with the eggs.

LIGHT FRUIT CAKE

1 Mix together the dried fruit, mixed peel, apricots and brandy. Cover and leave for several hours or until absorbed. Preheat the oven to 140°C (275°F/Gas mark 1). Lightly grease the tin and line the base and side, following the instructions on pages 10–11.

2 Beat the butter and sugar until combined. Gradually add the eggs, beating well after each addition. The mixture may look curdled at this stage. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in the sifted flour and spice. Stir in the soaked fruit. Spoon into the tin and smooth the surface. Tap the tin on the work surface to remove any air bubbles in the mixture.

Tip

If you prefer to use cup measures for ingredients, one cup is equivalent to 175g (6oz) of fruit or peel, 225g (8oz) of butter or sugar and 115g (4oz) of flour.



3 Wrap a piece of folded newspaper around the outside of the tin and tie securely with string. Place the tin on several sheets of neatly folded newspaper and bake for the time stated in the chart. Using the chart as a guide, test the cake towards the end of the baking time. A skewer inserted into the centre of the cake should come out clean.

4 After baking, drizzle the cake with a little extra brandy if you like. Cover the cake with non-stick baking paper and foil, then leave it to cool in the tin for at least an hour.

5 When cool, remove from the tin, wrap in cling film and store in an airtight container until ready to decorate.



LIGHT FRUIT CAKE

Round tin	15cm (6in)	18cm (7in)	20cm (8in)	22cm (9in)	25cm (10in)	28cm (11in)	30cm (12in)	
Square tin	12cm (4¾in)	15cm (6in)	18cm (7in)	20cm (8in)	22cm (9in)	25cm (10in)	28cm (11in)	30cm (12in)
Mixed dried fruit	250g (9oz)	440g (15½oz)	500g (1lb 2oz)	750g (1lb 9oz)	1kg (2¼lb)	1.25kg (2¾lb)	1.5kg (3¼lb)	1.75kg (4lb)
Mixed peel	15g (½oz)	30g (1¼oz)	30g (1¼oz)	60g (2¼oz)	90g (3¼oz)	125g (4¼oz)	140g (4¾oz)	150g (5oz)
Dried apricots, chopped	60g (2¼oz)	60g (2¼oz)	125g (4¼oz)	185g (6½oz)	250g (9oz)	315g (11¼oz)	370g (13oz)	435g (15½oz)
Brandy	40ml (1½fl oz)	40ml (1½fl oz)	40ml (1½fl oz)	60ml (2fl oz)	60ml (2fl oz)	80ml (2¾fl oz)	120ml (4fl oz)	160ml (5fl oz)
Butter, softened	160g (5¼oz)	250g (8¾oz)	315g (11¼oz)	440g (15½oz)	525g (1lb 3oz)	625g (1lb 6oz)	880g (1lb 15oz)	1kg (2¼lb)
Light brown or muscovado sugar	160g (5¼oz)	250g (8¾oz)	315g (11¼oz)	440g (15½oz)	525g (1lb 3oz)	625g (1lb 6oz)	880g (1lb 15oz)	1kg (2¼lb)
Eggs	2	4	4	5	6	7	10	11
Plain flour	185g (6½oz)	315g (11¼oz)	375g (13oz)	500g (1lb 2oz)	625g (1lb 6oz)	750g (1lb 10oz)	1kg (2¼lb)	1.2kg (2½lb)
Mixed spice	1tsp	1½tsp	2tsp	3tsp	4tsp	5tsp	6tsp	7tsp
Baking time	2hrs 5mins	2–2¼ hrs	3–3½ hrs	3½–3¾ hrs	4 hrs	4½–4¾ hrs	5–5½ hrs	5¼–5½ hrs

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RICH FRUIT CAKE

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- 1 Preheat the oven to 140°C (275°F/Gas mark 1). Grease and line the required tin (see page 11).
- 2 Cream the butter or margarine and sugar together first, then gradually beat in the eggs and fold in the flour and spice.
- 3 Stir in the mixed dried fruit, cherries and nuts until evenly combined.
- 4 Turn into the prepared tin and level the surface. Bake in the oven for the time stated in the chart or until the cake is firm to the touch and a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin.
- 5 Remove from the tin and wrap tightly in foil until ready to decorate.



Tip

When making cakes in hexagonal or similar shaped tins, use the same quantities of ingredients and baking times as those given for round tins of the same diameter.

RICH FRUIT CAKE

Round tin	15cm (6in)	18cm (7in)	20cm (8in)	23cm (9in)	25cm (10in)	28cm (11in)	30cm (12in)
Square tin	13cm (5in)	15cm (6in)	18cm (7in)	20cm (8in)	23cm (9in)	25cm (10in)	28cm (11in)
Butter or margarine, softened	125g (4¼oz/½ cup)	155g (5oz/¾ cup)	200g (7oz/⅞ cup)	280g (10oz/1¼ cups)	410g (14½oz/1¾ cups)	470g (1lb 1oz/2 cups)	625g (1lb 6oz/2½ cups)
Dark muscovado sugar	125g (4¼oz/¾ cup)	155g (5oz/1 cup)	200g (7oz/1¼ cups)	280g (10oz/1¾ cups)	410g (14½oz/2¼ cups)	470g (1lb 1oz/2¾ cups)	625g (1lb 6oz/4 cups)
Eggs	2	3	3	4	6	8	9
Plain flour	155g (5oz/1¼ cups)	185g (6½oz/1½ cups)	250g (9oz/2¼ cups)	375g (13oz/3¼ cups)	500g (1lb 2oz/4¼ cups)	625g (1lb 6oz/5½ cups)	750g (1lb 10oz/6½ cups)
Ground mixed spice	1tsp	1tsp	1½tsp	2tsp	3tsp	4tsp	6tsp
Mixed dried fruit	440g (15½oz/2½ cups)	625g (1lb 6oz/3¾ cups)	875g (1lb 15oz/5¼ cups)	1.1kg (2¼lb/6¾ cups)	1.5kg (3¼lb/9 cups)	1.8kg (4lb/11¼ cups)	2.25kg (5lb/13½ cups)
Glacé cherries, chopped	60g (2¼oz/½ cup)	60g (2¼oz/½ cup)	90g (3¼oz/½ cup)	100g (3½oz/¾ cup)	155g (5oz/1 cup)	185g (6oz/1 cup)	250g (9oz/1½ cups)
Chopped mixed nuts	30g (1¼oz/¼ cup)	30g (1¼oz/¼ cup)	45g (1¾oz/⅓ cup)	60g (2¼oz/½ cup)	90g (3¼oz/¾ cup)	125g (4¼oz/1 cup)	185g (6½oz/1½ cups)
Baking time	1½–2 hrs	2–2¼ hrs	3–3¼ hrs	3½–3¾ hrs	4 hrs	4½–4¾ hrs	5–5¼ hrs