

WANT TO UP YOUR CAKE SKILLS?

Here are Baker Girl Lou's Top Decorating Tips

KEEP EVERYTHING CLEAN

Regularly wiping down the bench, your utensils and the cake board between each step/fondant colour will make a HUGE difference to the look of your finished cake.

Wipe away all crumbs on the bench and silver board before icing. After icing, clean any mess from the silver board with a dry paper towel and polish up the board. Clean the bench and move the extra butter icing/spatula well away from the fondant. Clean the rolling pin/knife/cutters between fondant colours to avoid colour transfer and dirtying the fondant. Polish the board with a paper towel again when you are finished.

BUTTER ICING

USE BUTTER NOT MARGARINE OR SPREADS IF AT ALL POSSIBLE

Butter just holds it's structure better, it's as simple as that. It is less likely to split when adding colouring and less likely to melt once iced. Your butter needs to be soft. Don't microwave to soften you'll destroy the structure, if you forgot to leave the butter out to soften just cut into tiny square and beat until creamy before adding the icing mixture.

COLOUR YOUR ICING BEFORE ADDING MORE MILK

We intentionally make your butter icing very thick at the start. This is because different colours require different quantities of food colouring to get the correct colour. Red may need half of the bottle and therefore is unlikely to need any more milk afterward. Peach requires only a tiny amount of red and therefore will probably need a little extra milk to soften at the end. For this reason, if your kit requires two colours of icing you may find after colouring one bowl needs more milk and the other doesn't.

TEST YOUR BUTTER ICING CONSISTENCY

If you are worried that your icing is too thick but scared to add more milk in case you make it too runny, test a patch. The icing should glide onto the cake and stick easily but it should not look runny or wet. It should be easy to create texture on the surface and little peaks that hold and don't collapse. If your icing doesn't stick add more milk one teaspoon at a time and test again.

HOW TO AVOID CRUMBS IN THE ICING

The trick to avoiding crumbs is to make sure you always have lots of icing between the spatula and the cake. So that you are gliding the icing over the cake not spreading it like butter. Start by piling half of the bowl of icing in the middle of the cake. Now spread the pile towards the edges of the cake in a gentle motion. The icing should be just on the edge of the cake. Now Add another big dollop of icing to the spatula and start working around the sides of the cake, catching the overlapping icing from the top. If you get crumbs in the spatula or cake, clean off the spatula and use a knife to remove the crumbs from the cake, then continue icing. Cover the entire cake in a thick layer of icing, once all the cake is covered now remove any excess and sharpen up the shape using a butter knife..

FINISHING THE SURFACE OF YOUR ICING

Trying to achieve a smooth surface is difficult and trying to make it perfect means any crumbs or dips in the icing stand out more. I recommend you intentionally keep the surface with a little texture to hide any flaws. If you really want a smooth surface, wait until the icing has dried a little and lay a sheet of baking paper on top of the cake, move a fondant spreader or rolling pin gently over the surface in a circular motion. Be careful not to drag the icing. Peel back the baking paper. For cakes with Hair or animals, shape the surface of the icing to show the shapes. For example, hair will have long lines and perhaps a separate fringe section. A Horse will have a rounded muzzle and straight ears.

USING FONDANT

PREPARING YOUR FONDANT

Fondant will feel different depending on the temperature of the environment where it has been stored and if it got cold or hot while being shipped. If your fondant feels cold kneading the fondant will very quickly reactivate the elasticity and make it flexible and ready for use. This is also a great way to blend out any small colour variations if necessary. If your fondant is too warm you can cool it down a little in the fridge and you can also blend in a tiny amount of icing sugar to firm up if entirely necessary.

Once you open the packets of fondant they will slowly start to dry out over time so it's a great idea to store your opened fondant in a ziplock bag while you work, especially if your cake has lots of details to create over a few hours or you want to cut out some of the shapes in advance and others when you are assembling the cake. Leftover fondant can be stored in a ziplock bag and then in an airtight container for a few days to use for another project. But will dry out over time.

DON'T ROLL IT OUT TOO THINLY

You can often have more than one bag of the same fondant colour in your kit. Read through the instructions and work out how many templates you need to cut from that colour of fondant. That will give you an idea of how thick the fondant should be when you roll it out. If the thickness is not specified on the recipe card, the general rule of thumb is 3-4 mm thick. This will make it easy enough to pick up without deforming the shape and sit on the surface of the butter icing not sink into it and get covered in icing. You will often be asked to keep fondant very thick to give a 3D effect, especially for wheels and facial features like noses or googly eyes.

SMOOTH THE EDGES OF YOUR SHAPES

When cutting out your fondant templates (especially small templates) the edge of the fondant will look rough and have tiny little cracks, to give a neat professional finish, run your finger lightly round the edge of the fondant to remove any roughness. You can lift small pieces into the palm of your hand to make this easier if you prefer. Other things that will help are, using a FLAT EDGED knife (not serrated) and kneading the fondant well so it's soft for rolling.

HAND ROLL FOR A MORE 3D LOOK

We often ask you to hand roll balls and sausages. Especially for facial features and outlines that we want to have a great 3D effect. Little shapes are almost impossible to cut out without tearing the fondant so that's why we ask you to hand form them. We also love the 3D look or hand-rolled eyes and noses, it gives the character a more realistic look. These shapes may be shown on your template, but they are only to be used as a size guide and will have a note to hand roll. It's almost impossible to cut out a small oval eye neatly without making the shape look rough and miss shaped so it's best to hand-roll as advised on the recipe card.

MOST IMPORTANTLY

Baking a birthday cake for loved ones is a wonderful thing to do. Pouring love into a home-made cake far outweighs perfection or expensive 3-Tiered Masterpieces by Cake Decorators. So cut yourself some slack, enjoy the process, and be proud of your creations when you share them with family and in the private Facebook group. Your kids don't see the imperfections, all they see is a cake made with love.

No posting comments like "It's not perfect but, it doesn't look like the picture but... " you are enough just as you are and so is your finished cake

