

Here comes the bride, file folder bulging with fabric swatches, brochures, magazine clippings, guest lists, etc. She usually has a "To Do" list longer than the groom's face as he weighs the girl of his dreams against the nightmare of her spending!

Gone are the days when brides order three square cakes and if they didn't like fruitcake, they were out of luck. Whether it's a casual backyard affair for a few friends and family, or a formal function for five hundred guests, our customers are assured of the same friendly assistance in finding the perfect cake to complement their wedding style and budget.

With decades of experience behind us, we are also just as happy to advise our many customers who choose to make the wedding cake themselves. Our store is a complete resource centre for do-it-yourself decorators—from total beginners to our experienced "been there, done that" regulars. That old saying that there is nothing new under the sun does not apply here. New products and books arriving regularly and innovative techniques are being taught by our talented instructors.

Our aim in this issue has been not only to cheer on the nervous novice to take that leap and just do it, but to provide some tips on the process of planning to delivering the Wedding Cake.

SUGAR SOLUTIONS

Regardless of your decorating experience, the steps to making a successful wedding cake follow a certain sequence.

PLANNING: The first step is to meet with the bride and groom to discuss design, flavour of the cake, filling and icing, number of servings required, delivery or pickup arrangements, stand rental and cost (if it is not a gift).

Established decorators have usually put together a portfolio of cakes they have done. Beginners will have to rely on magazines and books for the time being, as most brides do need to see pictures. A variety of styles is very helpful, e.g. traditional or contemporary, simple or elaborate, pillared or stacked, etc.

If the cake is not a gift, cost will be a factor in the discussion. If the bride has her heart set on a large, elaborate structure, but does not need that many servings, Styrofoam dummies for part of the design would be an option. Conversely, supplementary sheet cakes can be suggested to the couple who are quite content to have a modest cake, but do need lots of servings. This is an economical solution.

A nice touch at this initial meeting is to offer sample(s) of your cake for them to try. These pieces can be kept in your freezer and individually wrapped.

A simple contract should be drawn up if this is a business arrangement. We really cannot stress strongly enough the importance of this often neglected procedure. All pertinent information as to design, colours, size, flavours, deposit, date of final payment and cancellation fee (if any) will help to eliminate any misunderstandings later on. It should, of course, be signed by the bride and/or groom.

If you focus totally on pleasing the couple, this consultation should be a happy experience for everyone.

BAKING: Unless the cake is a fruit or a pound cake, we recommend baking two 1.5 inch layers for each tier. If there are many cakes to be baked, they can always be made weeks in advance and frozen, but this is not necessary in most cases. Cakes can be baked several days ahead, “crumb-coated” and held either in the fridge or at room temperature, depending on the spoilage factor of the filling. If your baking skills are minimal, it is advisable to select simple recipes for now. As you gain experience, more challenging recipes can be added to your repertoire.

ASSEMBLY AND DECORATION: Any flowers will have been made in advance (always make more than you think you will need). Make sure items such as pillars, boards, separator plates and cake topper, if required, are on hand well before you begin.

There are two very important pieces of advice we strongly urge you to follow:

- (a) Make sure cakes are level! Whether pillared or stacked, if the cakes are not level, the higher you go the more crooked it will become. The most intricate decorating in the world will not compensate for a cake that resembles the Leaning Tower of Pisa! Do not proceed with decorating until it has been corrected.
- (b) Do not be tempted to smother the poor cake in decorations. Frills, swirls, garlands and borders on top of borders are often so prevalent, hardly an inch of cake shows. We, decorators are all guilty of showing off on occasions, and there are times when it is appropriate. However, you are not working on a Christmas tree! This is probably the biggest temptation facing a wedding cake decorator, but please resist. Less is often more. Your design should also be consistent throughout all tiers. Always keep in mind what was agreed upon with the bride. Your job is to please her, not indulge yourself. Finally, experienced decorators often “wing it” and get away with it; this is not a good idea for beginners.

DELIVERY: The trunk of a car or a van is the safest, most level place for a cake in transit. Laps and backseats are a definite no-no! It is always a good idea to call ahead to the reception site to ascertain when the cake can be set up. Leave yourself lots of time; most weddings take place on Saturday afternoons when weekend traffic is at its craziest. Try to take a picture of your cake after you set it up, not only for our portfolio, but to prove that you left it in perfect condition. Accidents do happen.

In conclusion, most die-hard decorators will agree that there is nothing that compares with the sense of exhilaration and pride when the cake is complete and we can stand back and admire our creation. Hence, a bit of enthusiasm to help those who are lacking in confidence. We know you can do it! So, whether it's strictly a hobby for you, or a profit-making venture, we at McCall's are always delighted to help you produce your dream cake.

The bridal couples who visit McCall's comes to us because of our reputation as experts in the field of wedding cakes. We pride ourselves on customer service, quality products and knowledgeable staff, which has stood the test of time.

Happy Piping!

McCall's