

making your own wedding cake

You can save a substantial amount of money by making your own wedding cake. Bakeries typically price wedding cakes by the slice, and the cakes range in price from \$1.50 to \$6.00 per slice for relatively standard cakes. Any extras you add — liquors, nuts, fillings, marzipan — also add to the cost. Handmade specialties like sugar paste flowers can easily increase the price exponentially up to \$10.00 to \$15.00 per slice. Costs rise even more for couture cakes from top-tier bakers like Sylvia Weinstock, who create masterpieces from flour, sugar, and butter.

Follow our tricks of the trade in this chapter to create your own fabulous cake or shave costs when hiring a professional baker. For less than \$150, you can end up with a cake that serves 75 guests, tastes moist and delicious, and looks beautiful as well.

The cakes in this book are made with packaged cake mixes. Cake mixes have been around since 1947 and have been so thoroughly tested that they are pretty foolproof. If you love baking cakes from scratch then more power to you! We have included a recipe for Basic Yellow Butter Cake on page xxx. But you will find that making a cake from scratch is definitely not helping you save time, effort, or money. However, we do suggest you make a tasty buttercream frosting from scratch. We give you an easy, no-cook recipe that tastes divine and makes these cakes both delicious and memorable.

Read through this chapter and the individual recipe you want to make before shopping to make sure you have all the equipment, refrigerator and freezer space, and time that you'll need to create a beautiful wedding cake.

DECORATING IDEAS

Resist the impulse to over-decorate. Remember: this is a wedding cake, not a parade float, which cakes often end up resembling if too many decorations are added. Look at wedding cake photos in bridal magazines and cookbooks. Find simple designs that appeal to you. A good rule to remember: Less is more!



Mix different sizes of decorations to match with your theme. For example, if you're planning a vineyard-inspired reception, use fresh grapes. Clusters of tiny red champagne grapes, medium-sized green grapes, and a few large, dark purple grapes look stunning together. Add some grape leaves and tendrils or other greenery for contrast, et voila! — you have a beautiful cake to match your reception theme.

Fresh Flowers, Greenery, and Herbs

Keep fresh flowers and other greenery in water and, preferably, keep them refrigerated until you are ready to use them. Always place fresh flowers on your cake at the last moment. Also, it may seem obvious, but you should avoid toxic and poisonous plants.

Stay away from anything that wilts quickly. Test your choices before you decide to use them. Cut a stem or leaf and leave it out for eight hours. Does it still look quite fresh, or is it shriveled and brown? Consider using a flower spike to keep the blossoms fresh. A flower spike is a hollow plastic spike that holds water. You place the stems into the plastic holder and push the spike into the cake. This will lengthen the life of delicate flowers and keep the stems away from the cake.

If you're less confident in your flower decorating abilities, order a small nosegay from a florist to use as a cake topper. A nosegay (literally, a pleasant-smelling item for keeping the "nose gay") is a small, tightly packed bouquet. If you have separated cake tiers, order nosegays in graduated sizes to top each tier.

Fresh flowers

The blossoms of such flowers as roses, pansies, johnny-jump-ups, nasturtiums, lilacs, honeysuckle, geraniums, and violets make lovely embellishments to any wedding cake. Also consider using fuchsias, daylilies, cymbidium orchids, chrysanthemum, calendula, orange blossoms, and marigolds.

Herbs

Flowering herbs look beautiful on wedding cakes and add a certain outdoorsy, garden look to your décor, while being wilt-resistant. Rosemary and lavender have beautiful foliage and flowers, as does lemon verbena. Use only the pretty blue flower of the borage plant, as the greenery is not attractive. Fresh bay leaves look beautiful in their natural green color or gilded with luster dust.

luster dust

Luster dust is a fine, edible powder, similar in look to shimmering eye shadow. It comes in many colors, but some of the best colors for wedding cakes include gold, silver, or pearlized white. You can paint the dust directly onto dried fruit, whole nuts, or decorations with a small, soft paintbrush for a gilded, sparkly look.

