

# Basic Cake Decorating

## CHAPTER THREE: DECORATING THE CAKE

### *What You'll Need*



Icing comb, piping bag, star tip, twist tie, offset spatula, peeler

We'll show you four different ways to finish a layer cake. They're all simple to do, and you can mix and match any of the techniques for sides and tops that you see here.

### **USING A CAKE COMB TO PINSTRIPE THE SIDES, AND A STAR TIP TO MAKE ROSETTES**

Put the cake on a lazy Susan or decorating turntable, if you have one. Place a generous pile of frosting on top of the cake.



*Line the edges of the cake circle with strips of parchment paper to keep the turntable clean.*



*Spread the frosting with an offset spatula, making the top flat and letting the excess hang over the sides.*



*Use the extra frosting from the edges to cover the sides of the cake.*

Once the top and sides are covered, hold the spatula in one place while you spin the cake in a slow continuous motion against it. This will smooth out the frosting. Don't let a small gap or wrinkle make you crazy; if you don't make the edge perfectly smooth you can hide any flaws with your finishing technique. Sweep any buildup from the top edge with your spatula after you've smoothed the sides.

Now you're ready for your finish decoration. At this point you can remove the parchment paper and transfer your cake to its presentation plate, if you like.



*Gently tug the parchment out from under the cake layer before applying your final decorations.*



*Now we'll finish the sides. To use a cake comb, place it on the side of the cake, resting its point lightly on the turntable. Turn the cake slowly in one smooth motion, to create a pinstripe effect.*



*Next, we'll put a star tip inside a disposable pastry bag and fill it with frosting. A tall, narrow glass or container is helpful with this. Snip the end of the pastry bag; insert a star tip. Fold the top of the bag over your hand or your helper container, and fill 2/3 full with frosting.*



*Use a twist tie or alligator clip to close the back of the bag. This will keep frosting from backing up over your hand when you squeeze the bag.*



*Hold the bag upright. Squeeze gently as you move the tip in a small circle. Release the pressure on the bag, and pick it straight up. Continue making rosettes all the way around the top edge of the cake. Make one more rosette in the center of the cake.*



*Place a raspberry in the center of each, and a circle of raspberries in the center of the cake.*



*Your cake is now ready to serve!*

### Piping a border on smooth sides, and filling the top with chocolate curls.

This cake is filled with vanilla frosting flecked with chocolate shavings. The outside of the cake will reflect the flavors to be found on the inside.

After smoothing the finish layer of frosting over the top and sides of the cake, remove the parchment strips and transfer the cake to its serving plate. Using the star tip, pipe a shell border around the base of the cake. To do this, place the tip 1/4-inch above the edge of the cake. Squeeze gently. Pull up slightly as you move about an inch around the cake's edge. Release the pressure as you move back down toward the plate. This will taper the frosting into a shell shape. Repeat the motion, overlapping each shell slightly until you've gone all the way around the cake.



*Squeeze the bag gently as you pull up slightly and move about an inch around the base of the cake. Release the pressure as you move back down toward the plate. Repeat the motion, starting each new shell over the tail of the previous one.*



*Repeat the process around the top edge of the cake.*

Now the top can be filled with chocolate curls, sprinkles, chopped nuts, or whatever else you can think of. To make chocolate curls, wrap a block of chocolate with a paper towel to keep it from melting in your hand. Scrape it with a peeler to make a pile of curls over a bowl or a piece of parchment paper.



*Hold the chocolate with plastic wrap or a paper towel in your hand, and peel curls off the edge with your other hand.*



*Transfer the curls to the top of the cake with a spoon until you've filled the inside of the shell border.*



*Place some decorative chocolate pieces on top, if you have them. Your cake is ready!*

### **Dotted sides, pool of melted ganache on top**

This yellow cake is finished with chocolate frosting. We'll give the sides a simple dotted look, and add to the chocolate quotient by pouring a pool of chocolate ganache on top.

After coating the top and sides with a second layer of frosting over the crumb coat, we've fitted a pastry bag with a small star tip. We'll hold the pastry bag perpendicular to the side of the cake, and pipe a series of small stars all around the edge, in rows about an inch apart.



*Hold the pastry bag perpendicular to the side of the cake, and squeeze gently without moving the tip. Release the pressure on the bag, and pull away from the cake to leave a small star.*



*Pipe a series of stars that touch each other all around the top edge of the cake.*

After decorating the sides of the cake, we'll pipe a border all the way around the top. This border will contain the lukewarm ganache when we pour it on top of the cake. Place the cake in the freezer for at least 30 minutes to firmly set the frosting while you prepare the ganache.

### Prepare the chocolate ganache

Heat 1/2 cup of heavy cream to a simmer, and pour it over 4 ounces of chopped semisweet or bittersweet chocolate. Stir until the ganache is completely smooth, with no lumps.



*Pour the hot cream over the chocolate. When you first begin to mix, it will look quite grainy and freckled.*



*Just keep stirring, and you'll see the ganache begin to smooth out and become glossy.*

Set the ganache aside to cool until it's just barely lukewarm, but still liquid. Once the cake's frosting border is well chilled and set (touch one of the stars lightly with your fingers; if it doesn't give, it's ready), pour the ganache directly into the center of the top of the cake. Keep pouring in the same spot, and allow the chocolate to flow out to fill the entire top. If necessary, pick up the cake and tilt it gently to help it fill in all of the space.



*Pour the chocolate into the center of the cake's top surface; let it flow out from there to fill the entire top.*



*Tilt the cake to help the chocolate flow evenly over the top.*

### Ribbed sides, basket-weave top

Our last cake features a simple ribbing around the sides, and a basket-weave piped design on top. We'll start, once again, with a crumb-coated cake.



*We've crumb coated and chilled this cake; the parchment has been removed. It's resting on a cardboard cake circle.*



*Put some icing on the back of your offset spatula. Hold the blade straight up and down, and rock it from side to side as you work around the cake, leaving ribs of frosting behind the blade as you go.*

After frosting the side of the cake all the way around, we're decorating the bottom with some chocolate cake crumbs. You can also use chopped nuts or chocolate sprinkles. Use a spatula to help you pick up the cake and, holding the cake in one hand, put a handful of crumbs (or nuts or sprinkles) in the other. Working over a bowl, gently press the crumbs into the soft frosting at the base of the cake. Go all the way around the cake's base.

Return the cake to its turntable, and set up a pastry bag with a small star tip. Squeeze a continuous line of figure 8's from one side of the top to the other. Repeat, placing another line of figure 8's next to the first. Continue piping lines of figure 8's until the entire top of the cake is covered.



*Gently press cake crumbs or other garnish into the frosting at the base of the cake about half an inch up the sides.*



*Using continuous gentle pressure, move the tip of the pastry bag in a figure 8 pattern, repeating as you move toward yourself. Make a series of figure 8 stripes until the top is covered.*



*After the top of the cake is entirely covered, the effect will look like a basket weave.*