

# The icing on the cake

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The wedding cake — you've dreamed about it since you were a little girl and you know what you want. Or maybe you've been busy building a career and just haven't had a lot of time to think about it. Either way, a wedding cake designer is just what you need.

About six to ten months before the wedding day, the bride should contact the designer for a consultation. Some brides go into the consultation knowing exactly what they want, while some brides don't have a clue. "I've had brides who have found pictures of cakes that they want to duplicate," says Theresa Finnerty, owner of Designer Cakes & Cookies. Because deciding on a wedding cake design can be overwhelming to the bride, Finnerty suggests that brides check out bridal magazines to get ideas.

But it's not necessary to know the design you want when you first consult with your designer. According to Finnerty, when the bride first consults with her designer, all she needs to know is the wedding date, the approximate number of guests and the color scheme of the wedding.

## **Hiring a wedding cake designer**

Some bakeries have a staff of designers. So when you consult with a wedding cake designer, make certain that you are speaking with the person who will actually be designing your cake to make sure that your instructions are understood completely.

Some wedding cake designers will come to the bride's home for a consultation. Others will require a visit to their shop. Be sure to try several samples to help you decide. And remember — designing your wedding cake should be fun!

Since the price of the cake is based on many different elements, be sure to shop around for the best taste, artistic ability, professional service and cost. Many designers will charge a small fee for a consultation, but usually that is built into the cost of the cake when the bride signs the contract.

## **The contract**

Ordinarily, when the bride consults with the cake designer, a contract is drawn up. A deposit of about 25 percent to 50 percent will secure the date of the wedding and the balance may be due about two weeks prior to the delivery date.

The bride should inquire about delivery charges, serving charges and deposits on equipment. For instance, the deposit for renting the tiers for a floating cake can cost between \$100 and \$200.

Signing a contract with a cake designer doesn't mean that the wedding cake cannot be changed. The contract guarantees the wedding date but details such as flavor, design, and the amount of cake may possibly be changed up to two or three weeks before the wedding day (with a possible adjustment in price.)

## **Costs**

The cost of the wedding cake is determined by two factors; the number of servings and the design.

When calculating the number of servings, some brides do not include the top tier. Traditionally, the top tier of the wedding cake is the anniversary cake. It can be boxed and frozen for a year and shared by the bride and groom on their first wedding anniversary.

The cost, per serving, of wedding cake can start at around \$1.65 and can go as high as your pockets are deep. A rule of thumb — spend the amount you would on dessert when you go out to dinner.

Because of the time-consuming details, intricate design work and artistry involved in creating wedding cakes, expect to pay two to five times more than you would for a regular sheet cake.

Keep in mind that some special designs take more time to produce and will make your cake more expensive. Some examples of special designs include: lacework, basket weave, lattice and fleur-de-lis.

## **New ideas**

Popular new designs include fresh flowers, fruits, pearl accents and ribbons. Fall colors are attractive in flowers and

decorations, but it is not recommended to use dark colors on wedding cakes. In addition, some brides are choosing to decorate with gold, silver or bronze ribbons.

Rolled fondant is often used to today's wedding cakes because it is very versatile and allows the decorator to create more intricate designs. Just about any flavor of cake is available to today's bride. Some contemporary choices are white almond cake with raspberry filling or a French vanilla with strawberry filling.

## **Traditional cakes**

A traditional wedding cake evokes images of elaborate swirls and flowers made of butter cream icing. Designs on traditional cakes include pillars, fountains, garland borders, ruffles and butter cream flowers.

## **Contemporary cakes**

Today's trends call for a more simplistic approach to design; when it comes to contemporary wedding cake decorations, less is more. Contemporary designs include floating tiers, fresh or silk flowers, fancy lace work, gift box cake and embroidery and fruit designs. Fruit decorations can be made of fresh fruit or they can be created out of sugar paste.

But don't let these categories stifle your creativity. A myriad of lovely cakes can be created using a combination of traditional and contemporary elements.

## **Cake icing**

Butter cream icing is the delicious icing that is spread on the cake with a knife. Flowers can also be fashioned out of butter cream icing. This creamy, traditional type of icing is less expensive and very popular.

Rolled fondant is more versatile, although it costs a bit more. It's rolled flat and can be cut to different sizes and shapes. For example, the gift box cake is made of several stacked cakes covered with rolled fondant and decorated to resemble a pile of beautifully wrapped gifts. The rolled fondant can be combined with flowers and fruits made of sugar paste, which

are also more expensive than the butter cream icing.

## **Cakes and flowers**

Fresh flowers are popular wedding cake decorations. Roses are the most popular flowers for cakes because they are safe and come in a variety of colors that make it easy to coordinate the cake with the color scheme of the wedding. Lilies, irises and gardenias are also beautiful choices.

If a bride chooses to use fresh flowers on her cake, the cake designer will coordinate with the bride's florist. They will arrange a time to meet at the reception to assemble the cake.

If the bride chooses to decorate with silk flowers, the cake decorator can arrange the flowers on the cake.

## **The topper**

The topper is the decoration on the top of the wedding cake. It can be a bride and groom (something that can be kept as a remembrance), a floral bouquet or any special memento or family heirloom. Just about anything can be (and has been) used to top a wedding cake.

## **The groom's cake**

An option that is becoming more and more popular is the groom's cake. It often reflects a special interest or sport that the groom enjoys. The groom's cake is not meant to look like the wedding cake, so it's generally not a white cake. Popular flavors for the groom's cake are chocolate, spice and carrot. The groom's cake is often on a side table instead of being placed next to the wedding cake — or it can be eaten at the rehearsal dinner.

Columbus cake designer Theresa Finnerty is a member of I.C.E.S., the International Cake Exploration Society. She offers competitively priced wedding cakes (made fresh, never frozen), special occasion cakes and children's cakes. She can be reached by calling 614-882-5694.