

4-H Cake Decorating Tips for Success at Fair

- FOLLOW THE RULES!!!! (Simple is Better...leave the fun and experimenting for decorating at home!)
- Cake Board: covered by foil, neatly taped underneath, at least 3/8 in thick, 1 ½ in all the way around the cake for space for carrying it.
- If you choose a square you must have a square board; if you choose a round cake you must use a round board; whatever shape you choose you must have a cake board that represents the same shape.
- To adhere the board to your cake dummy or pan: I have always used a touch of icing on the rim of the pan, and a dollop of icing that I press level with the foam. The icing should hold it in place. I have also heard that moms have hot glued the form or the cake pan to the board. The glue can be scraped off of the pan; however, the foam is much harder to deal with afterwards.
- Base Frost the cake 1-3 days before the fair or longer. This allows the base to be dry, so that if you make a mistake you could pick it off easily and replace your decoration.
- Beginners: If you do not want to focus on a smooth base frosting; apply icing with a spoon and make it rough (white icing for snow, blue for water, green for grass).
- Smooth Frosting: You can achieve smooth frosting by allowing the icing to set until not sticky anymore and then apply a paper towel-rub VERY gently to work out ridges. Another technique that decorators like to use is a wet knife. You need to be sure the knife is not too wet or your icing will run (especially colored icing...it could bleed your color).
- If you are choosing dark or bright colors, you MUST allow for a dry work environment (no humidity), but really you should allow dry time in between colors touching. For example: You are making a flower or a star filled pattern. Make the base of you flower, let dry for a day or a few hours; and then put your dot or center the next day. A pattern would require filling in the object one color at a time, and then adding your face or details the next day. Allow for time, or do not be surprised about bleeding or running of colors.
- Start early....there is no reason that if you foresee that your schedule is crazy busy two weeks before fair that you could start and finish your cake three weeks before fair so that all you have to do is turn your cake in! Granted that you DO NOT use milk in you frosting...substitute water for milk.
- Sugar molds: make the sugar the consistency of sand for beach castle making. Use liquid color not paste. Make your color consistent. Make multiple molds so that you can choose the best one for your fair cake.
- Royal vs. Buttercream: The royal will get rock solid, sometimes so quick that your decorating is not complete. They do recommend this in the books; however, I never used royal icing until I was advanced. This is your call; buttercream is completely fine...you must be careful during decorating and transport! The buttercream will get tough or maybe even hard with time....BUT humidity plays a role in this and it may never get as hard as royal. This is YOUR call...it is up to you!
- Remember to be consistent with size on your borders and with your star filled patterns.
- Do not over think this project, the judge wants to see the skills. The rest is always nice, and will help overall...BUT most importantly....the skills!!!!!!
- DO NOT FORGET THE SKILLS SHEET needed when you deliver your cake. Found on the website!