

WEDDING CAKES

Wedding Cake Tips and Trends

Trying to figure out a way you can have that castle of a confection when your pocketbook can't even afford the moat? Check out these tips to cut corners and still get the cake of your dreams.

Price Per Piece

If you're checking out cakes at traditional bakeries, most charge per piece of cake. After you find out the cost per slice, ask about delivery charges, accessory rentals, or additional charges, too. You'll find most bakeries charge between \$3.00 and \$7.00 per slice, but the really fancy (or famous) cake designers can ask up to \$15.00 per precious piece of their creation.

Time Frame and Deposit

Ask about how soon you need to order, and how much deposit is required at the time of the order.

Surprise Costs

Want a unique decorating twist, want each layer to be a different flavor, or do you want the cakes to be filled with cream or fruit? This usually costs extra, so get the lowdown before you order.

Sheet Cake Backup

Save cash by ordering a smaller showpiece wedding cake, then ask your caterer to cut slices of sheet cakes made of the same stuff in the kitchen to bring out to your guests.

Decorate Yourself

Save lots of money on sugar flowers and marzipan fruits by ordering your wedding cake plain, then adorning it with fresh flowers or rose petals once it shows up at the reception site.

Decorate Separately

You can find sugar flowers, ribbons, dragees, and marzipan at cake decorating and pastry shops. Cut the cost by decorating with these sweet confections yourself once the cake arrives on premises.

Weather Restrictions

Inform your baker about the weather conditions of your wedding. If you're having a beach wedding in July, for example, you will have certain restrictions, because many icings and fillings will melt in the heat.

Baker Who's A Friend

Know anyone who's great in the kitchen? Why not ask them to bake a cake for you? Especially if you're having a small wedding, a homemade cake from talented friend is personal as well as cost-cutting.

Anniversary Cake

Ask your baker about freezing the top layer for your first anniversary. Some have special recipes that freeze better, or she may be able to give you some tips for optimum flavor a year from now!

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Do you want fondant, royal, or buttercream? Will it have dragees, marzipan, or gnache? If you're trying to order your wedding cake and have no idea what your baker is talking about, walk in like a pro armed with your dictionary of wedding cake terms.

Icings

Buttercream:

The traditional icing served on every store-bought birthday cake you've ever had. It's rich and creamy and is easily colored or flavored, and is used for fancy decorations like shells, swags, basketweaves, icing flowers, etc. Since it's made almost entirely of butter (hence the name), buttercream has a tendency to melt in extreme heat, so it's not recommended for outdoor weddings.

Fondant:

Martha Stewart's favorite. This icing looks smooth and stiff and is made with gelatin and corn syrup to give it its helmet-like appearance (it's really very cool looking). It looks the best when decorated with marzipan fruits, gum paste flowers, or a simple ribbon, like Martha likes to do. Although not as tasty as buttercream or ganache, fondant does not need refrigeration, so it's the perfect icing to serve at your beach wedding.

Royal Icing:

A mix of confectioner's sugar and milk or egg whites, royal icing is what the faces of gingerbread men are decorated with. It's white, shiny, and hard, and does not need to be refrigerated. It's used for decorations like dots and latticework.

Ganache:

This chocolate and heavy cream combination is very dark, and the consistency of store-bought chocolate icing. It can be poured over cakes for a glass-like chocolate finish or used as filling (it stands up beautifully between cake layers). Due to the ingredients, however, it's unstable - no heat or humid weather, or the icing will slide right off the cake.

Whipped Cream:

By far the most delicious and by far the most volatile, fresh whipped cream is usually not recommended for wedding cakes because they have to be out of the fridge for so long. If you must, it looks beautiful with fresh flowers and extremely white and fresh -- just keep it in the fridge until the very last second.

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Decorations

Marzipan:

Italian paste made of almonds, sugar and egg whites, molded into flowers and fruits to decorate the cake. They're usually brightly colored and very sugary. Marzipan can also be used as icing.

Gum Paste:

Gelatin, corn starch, and of course sugar make this concoction that produces the world's most realistic, edible fruit and flower decorations. Famous cake designers like Sylvia Weinstock are huge fans of the gum paste. The cool thing is, you can keep decorations off your cake for centuries and they'll never fall apart or decompose. Creepy, but true.

Piping:

Icing decorations like dotted swiss, basketweave, latticework, and shells. Icing comes out of a pastry bag fitted with different tips to create these different looks, which can range from simple polka dots to a layered weave that you'd swear is a wicker basket.

Pulled Sugar:

If you boil sugar, water, and corn syrup it becomes malleable and the most beautiful designs can be created. Roses and bows that have been made from pulled sugar look like silk or satin, they're so smooth and shiny.

Dragees:

Surely you used to beg your mom for these when you were in the baking aisle of the grocery store like I did. These hard little sugar balls are painted with edible gold or silver paint, and they look truly stunning on a big ol' wedding cake.

Be sure to look at lots of different styles of cakes before you go to your baker so you have a pretty good idea of what you want. The more froo-froo you get on your wedding dessert, obviously, the more it will cost, so sometimes the simpler way is better. And, don't forget to ask for a taste test!

This information has been supplied by The Bridal Trading Place

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