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Carved Candle Cakes

A unique idea by Laurie Clarke

Cake

Prepare a tiny cake (you can use small cake pans or a pineapple juice can greased and floured very well) OR bake a thin sheet cake and use cutters or pineapple juice cans (with tops and bottoms removed) as cutters. Assembled cake should be 4 to 6" diameter x 4.5" tall with very thin layers of filling and a thin crumbcoat of icing. Ideally cake should be chilled before proceeding. Build directly on a foil-wrapped, food-safe display base, adhering with a little buttercream.



Candle

Simple method: purchase a flickering LED candle and remove enough cake to bury it inside so that "flame" sits just above cake surface. Turn on and place inside before wrapping cake in fondant layers. (cannot be turned off — but tea light is okay to refrigerate and will last at least 3 days).

Rolled Buttercream / Fondant (Recipe Follows)

Create 50/50 RBC/Commercial fondant mixture – a 5" x 4.5" cake will take 2 lbs total (two giant double-handfuls). Quantity should be about *three times* what you would usually use for this size cake. Make more if you're unsure. Divide into five piles (each pile will be about the size of your fist). Color four of these as desired and set aside. For fifth pile, add an equal amount of commercial fondant (this pile will end up being mostly fondant with only a little rolled buttercream and will hold its shape without cracking). This can be left white, if desired. Note: unused rolled buttercream and fondant/buttercream mixture should be refrigerated or frozen for future use, not stored with other "scrap fondant".

Completing Decoration

1. Divide one of the colored balls of fondant/RBC into 5 pieces. Roll "sausages" of icing and apply to the top and sides of the cake. If buttercream is dry/cold use piping gel to attach.
2. Quickly, so "sausages" won't dry out: Flatten balls of colored fondant into 8" discs and sandwich one atop the other. Top layer (mostly fondant) should be extra thick. Avoid using too much shortening or sugar to roll out as this will keep these layers from "bonding". Roll this stack of fondant into a very thick circle. It should be the same size you would usually use to drape the small cake, but 2 to 3 times the usual thickness. (a 5" x 4.5" cake will need a 15" circle)
3. Lightly dampen "sausages" with damp paper towel to create stickiness.
4. Right away cut a small X in the center of the fondant and drape over cake (centering X over "flame"), securing fondant to cake sides and "sausages". Smooth into creases in cake. Trim excess. If necessary, smooth indents and move "excess" fondant to points on cake. Trim with scissors if needed. A few wrinkles near the bottom are fine – carving will cover these up. Trim away excess fondant from the bottom of the cake, taking care not to harm the display base. Clean base gently with damp paper towel.
5. Working rapidly, slice into fondant with razor cutters, utility knives, X-Acto blades or clay tools. Scissors work very well for sharp, clean cuts. Bent manicure scissors are great. Curl pieces away and adhere with fondant glue. If necessary use tissue or plastic wrap to support shape of curls while drying. Refrigerate immediately to set curls and prevent drooping. Once well-chilled cake can be transported and on display for several hours.



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1 cup solid vegetable shortening (Crisco OK, Hi-Ratio Preferred)
1 cup clear corn syrup or glucose (available at cake/craft stores, yields stiffer dough)
1 tsp. colorless butter flavoring
1 tsp. colorless vanilla flavoring
1/2 tsp. popcorn salt (fine salt - optional)
2 pounds powdered sugar + up to 2 cups for rolling out*

Laurie's notes:

Mix together all except sugar. Add in half the sugar and combine. Add in sugar until mixer starts to strain, then make a well with the remaining sugar on the counter. Place dough in the middle of sugar and knead in as much as it needs to lose its stickiness. Ready to use -- or chill for easier rolling.

** on cool days 25% to 50% butter to shortening may be used. Yields a slightly yellow color. Plan on adding a little extra sugar for stiffness.*

Fondant Glue

*1 Tablespoon fondant, broken or snipped into tiny pieces
2 Tsps hot water*

Stir or "mush" together to combine