

Icing tips for hot weather:

- Wilton classes suggest using meringue powder in everyday student practice buttercream, but used in this way it has little value. Mainly it is used as a drying and crusting agent so students can smooth their cakes in class with a paper towel (although, with that much sugar, icing will crust anyway, given a little extra time). Wilton meringue powder is perfect for this since it has a lot of cornstarch. Out of meringue powder? Use an equal amount of cornstarch instead -- it'll have the same effect. Do you use this paper towel method? Try the [Melvira Method](#) -- it works even better! With or without meringue powder or cornstarch this recipe is very effective in warm weather. See Wilton's Standard Decorating Icing toward the end of this list. Note: for those of you having issues with the new "trans-fat-free" Crisco the recipe has been updated - finally!!
- When used in an appropriate recipe, meringue powder provides more tiny air bubbles in the icing. This means more icing per batch, less sugar and lighter icing weight. A really great recipe that many decorators use is [Wilton's Snow White Buttercream](#). This is great for warm weather - it makes a medium weight icing, good for icing, borders and flowers, and develops a light crust on the outside and remains soft inside. Use whatever flavor you like in place of the almond -- it's really just there to cut the sugary taste. Flavoring oils are fine to use in buttercream, so check out the selection at [Barbara of Pauline's](#) in San Jose (Sweet Celebrations.US students receive a 10% discount when they register for classes) or your local cake store -- there are many that won't color your icing and it only takes a few drops to flavor an entire batch of icing.
- How warm is too warm? When it's warmer than is comfortable for guests outside your cake will feel it too. Give your cake some extra protection:
 1. Absolutely air-condition your car *before* transport. Even your trunk. Buy dry ice at supermarkets for your trunk if necessary (keep in styro containers with towels wrapped around to prevent tipping). If using dry ice in your car interior you *must* crack the windows a bit for oxygen exchange.
 2. Chill your cakes in your refrigerator before transport. I refrigerate my fondant cakes with no trouble. Test this beforehand instead of biting your nails on the drive over. Condensation *will* form on the outside of the fondant as the cake comes to room temp. It will disappear within 45 minutes if you *do not touch it!* If you're very concerned you may place your cake in a cardboard box before placing in fridge.
 3. Use all-Crisco, or, even better, all hi-ratio cake shortening (available at cake supply stores) and no butter. Add extra butter flavoring and a pinch or two of salt -- most people won't know the difference, but they will notice if the cake sags and falls!
 4. Add up to 1/4 cup cornstarch per 6-cup recipe to help dry the icing and prevent running. Only use this in powdered sugar recipes or it'll feel gritty on your tongue.
 5. Definitely display the cake in the shade or indoors. (Reminder: Black, Red, Violet and Pink all fade quickly in sunlight -- buy No-Fade Purple or Ribbon (No-Fade) Pink color from Barbara's if you're concerned.) If you **MUST** display outside, use a standard 2-to-1 powdered sugar icing (such as [Wilton's Standard Decorating Icing](#), made with all-shortening) or add a layer of fondant. Fondant, once set, doesn't melt -- the buttercream on the inside of it might, but the fondant will stay strong. Don't like the taste of fondant? Try [Satin Ice](#) (available at Barbara's) or another brand. Avoid any fondant wrapped in a shiny foil wrapper (Wilton). Fondant should taste like vanilla and marshmallows, not soap. Fondant can also be flavored with extracts or oils. Lemon, almond or raspberry cut the sweet taste nicely.
 6. Many decorators use Pastry Pride or Flavor Right (non-dairy whipped icings) in hot temperatures with no ill effects. The secret is to decorate cakes the night before and let the topping develop a "crust" before transport. Test this yourself first and ask advice from [Barbara of Pauline's](#)!
 7. Do not use lightweight fillings that break down in heat. Stick with thinner layers of icing, just in case, no whipped cream or custard. Cajeta/Dulce De Leche, chocolate ganache, fruit preserves and buttercream are all great fillings for outdoor cakes. Chocolate ganache is incredibly simple to make. Try this great recipe: <http://www.joyofbaking.com/ganache.html> .
 8. Fresh fruit is fine, but chop it coarsely and embed it in a layer of icing or ganache. Strawberries and chocolate... mmmmm. This can help hold up the cake if icing softens, and chopped fruit is much easier to slice and serve.

9. You might consider trying a firmer cake recipe -- mine is firm, but still very moist and gets rave reviews. It's less sweet than many cakes and you can change the flavorings to suit your guests. For those of you who've received this recipe before, there have been a few small changes -- mostly for chocolate cakes. For other recipes, you can try looking at Wilton.com -- yes, Wilton has finally given us [CAKE RECIPES!!](#) The new site is really interesting. Give it a look!

Half-Scratch Cake Recipe

This is the recipe I use most often for cakes. It's moist and dense and has a firm crumb that works very well for wedding cakes. Note: Recipe has been doubled to yield the most batter per recipe still able to fit in a 4.5 quart mixing bowl. Recipe may be halved. Before beginning, preheat oven to 335 degrees and prepare pans. Grease pans with shortening, add a waxed paper liner, and dust with flour.

For White Cakes:

2 White cake mixes
2 cups all purpose flour
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 tsp salt
2 cups water
2/3 cup milk
2/3 cup oil
8 egg whites
12 oz. by weight (1 1/3 cups) sour cream
1/2 tsp almond extract (optional)
1/2 tsp butter flavoring
1/2 tsp coconut flavoring (optional)
2 tsp clear vanilla flavor

Yield: approx. 11 cups batter

For yellow or Chocolate Cakes:

2 Yellow or Chocolate Mixes (Devil's food mixes yield richer chocolate cakes)
Add 1/2 cup cocoa powder plus 1/4 cup water and 3 T oil and 1/8tsp baking powder (optional - if using chocolate cake mix)
2 cups all purpose flour
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 tsp salt
2 cups water
2/3 cup milk
2/3 cup oil
7 whole eggs (for half-recipes use 3 whole eggs and one egg white)
12 oz. by weight (1 1/3 cups) sour cream
1/2 tsp almond extract (optional)
1/2 tsp butter flavoring
1/2 tsp coconut flavoring (optional)
2 tsp real vanilla flavor
for Chocolate cakes you may also add: 3tsp instant coffee crystals (richer chocolate flavor) and 1/4 tsp cinnamon (interesting "secret" flavor) (optional)

Yield: approx. 12 to 12.5 cups batter

Directions:

Mix together dry ingredients. Measure wet ingredients (except for sour cream) and add all to dry (just like a regular mix). Mix until combined, then add sour cream. Mixture will just about overflow a 4.5 quart bowl -- be gentle with the speed! Mix on medium speed for two minutes. Fill greased and floured pans 1/2 to 2/3 full. Bake as usual for your pans and your oven. Generally speaking, an 8"



round x 2" pan will bake at 335 degrees for approx. 35 to 40 minutes. Cakes are done when wooden skewer or toothpick inserted into center has a few crumbs when pulled out (no wet batter). If cake forms a hard surface on top or "cracks" on top lower the oven temperature 10 to 20 degrees for remainder of cooking time. Cool in pan 20 minutes then invert onto plate and then to wire rack lined with paper towel OR cool until room temp and then remove. Store cakes tightly wrapped in plastic overnight on counter or in refrigerator (chilling in refrigerator makes layers easier to torte/slice/carve).