



PROFESSIONAL CAKE MAKING

HISTORY OF CAKES

Cakes were very different during the time of Roman Empire than they are today. That time unlike today, cakes were actually thin breads. Cakes were only made on big occasions like weddings. They were desserts made from honey, rich fruits and nuts and were used as sacred objects. These sweet elements were offered to the Gods and crumbled over the bride's head by the groom to bless her with abundance and fertility.

Decorated cakes made their first appearance during the reign of Great Britain's Queen Elizabeth I. That time cakes were decorated with almond paste also known as marzipan and dated back to 1494.

Cakes became popular in London Society in the 17th century, especially Oxfordshire and Banbury cakes which had a high proportion of flour to fat and sugar, ale yeast was used as a raising agent. These cakes used ingredients similar to those of their predecessors, such as dry fruits and spices. Christmas cake or rich fruit cake was actually called plum cake.

In America during the 18th century, rich or dark fruitcakes were not as popular. Pound cakes and plain white cakes were the staples of American cake making, generally prepared as a thin layer with a soft white frosting. A white cake represented purity and an affinity with the bride. A Black cake was a fruitcake, iced in a hard icing (such as royal icing) and more likely to be called a wedding cake.

By 1890, both white and black cakes were commercially successful, with the white cake becoming typical bridal cake and black cake as the groom's cake. This was an American tradition which still pertains in some parts of the country. Bridal cakes today can be white, pound, carrot, spice, German chocolate or cheesecakes but the groom's cake is almost always chocolate, with Red Velvet Cake currently the most popular.



HISTORY OF ICING

More than two centuries ago, icing evolved from simple glaze usually made from concentrated rose water syrup. This syrup was brushed on either a cooled cake or on a cake that just came out of the oven. Cake was then returned to the oven at a low temperature and allowed to dry. As the cake dried, an opaque sheet of white icing formed over it.

From 17th to 19th century, the term icing usually meant that the cake was covered in marzipan. Marzipan was chiefly a celebration food, considered both an artistic tool and a delicious confection. Icing continued to evolve until the mid to late 19th century when royal icing was accepted and art of piping began.

Early stages of sugar paste (rolled fondant) developed around 1558. The recipe included rose water, sugar, lemon juice, egg whites and gum dragon (tragacanth). This particular compound is still used in commercial rolled fondant today.

HISTORY OF PIPING

Piping was developed in the Bordeaux region of France, perhaps by accident during mid-19th century. A French confectioner cut off the pointed end of a paper cornet (known as poke) and filled it with leftover meringue icing. He used it to write his name on his workbench. While the shop owner was displeased initially, he quickly realized it's potential. The poke was later filled with royal icing and then the development of piping began. Soon after technology refined small metal funnels with various shapes were developed by the French and made to fit at the bottom of piping bags.

During the late 19th century, Great Britain, the chief purpose of piping was to elaborate wedding cakes, often for the royal family.

CAKES AND CAKE DECORATION TODAY

In Great Britain today, rich fruitcakes are still used for a variety of celebrations, including birthdays, anniversaries and weddings. These cakes are generally covered in marzipan and iced in royal icing.

The Australians have adopted the English style of cake making, but they use royal icing for piping purpose only and not for covering cakes. Their cakes are first covered in marzipan and then with rolled fondant/ sugar paste.

In South Africa, royal icing and sugar paste are both used as cake icing. This gives the cakes artistic flexibility and speed, as well as options for traditions.

In the U.S., cakes are a combination of many styles with an American flair. Today, the U.S. is responsible for topsy turvy cakes and for cakes that are truly thematic, such as destination wedding designs.