

4 WAYS TO LEVEL A CAKE

Why level your cake? Well, cakes don't bake flat. In general, most often they rise in the centre creating a dome on top. Levelling is the process of slicing the top off the cake so that it has a flat surface.

Levelling your cake has a few purposes. Firstly, it creates a more professional look, as well as an easier surface for decorating and secondly a flat surface makes it easier for stacking of layers—they will not wobble when stacked.

Remember you need to allow a just cooked cake to cool for a minimum of an hour before levelling. Trying to do it before the cake has cooled will most likely lead to a messy result – crumbs everywhere and an uneven, jagged cut. Once your cake has cooled, here are 4 ways you can level it.

OPTION ONE:

Use a Serrated Knife

This is the most basic method of levelling a cake. First, place your cake on a board or flat surface, dome-side up. Move the knife back and forth in a gentle sawing motion to remove the dome. Some find that placing the cake on a rotating cake stand and rotating while you cut is easier than keeping the cake static. Either way, try to keep the knife as level as possible as you cut.

Pros: Most cost effective as you need minimal equipment and it is easy to do.

Cons: High level of possibility that the cake will be uneven if you don't have a steady hand or an eye for level.

OPTION TWO:

Use Toothpicks

Use toothpicks and a ruler to mark level points around the cake (by pushing the toothpicks about half way into the cake at the height you want). Then use your serrated knife and cut from toothpick to toothpick.

Pros: Cost effective as you need minimal equipment and it is easy to do.

Cons: There is still a possibility that your cake will level unevenly if you don't have a steady hand

OPTION THREE:

Pan Rim Method

Of course, one of the easiest ways to level your cake is to bake your cake high over the cake rim (using extra batter) then use the top rim of your pan to cut the dome off giving you a perfect edge.

The problem is that most standard cake recipes will give you the exact recipe that allows your cake to bake up to or just below the cake rim. However even though your cake does not bake over the rim, you can still use the rim to cut the dome off.

Find a saucer or small bowl that if placed in the bottom of your cake tin will bring your cake past the rim of the cake tin.

Place the item in your cake tin and then place your cake on top of the item - now your cake is high enough that you can use your pan rim to cut the dome off.

Pros: Cost effective as you need minimal equipment and it is easy to do.

Cons: This can work well if you only have 1 cake to level, however, if you have different sized cakes to level it can be difficult to find 1 item that is a consistent height that will fit in all tin sizes.

OPTION FOUR - MY PREFERRED OPTION:

Use a Cake Leveller

Place your cake on a cake board or bench. Adjust the ends of the cutting wire / steel to your desired height (there are notches along the sides). Keeping the legs flat on the work surface, gently draw the cutter into the cake using a gentle sawing motion. Continue until it comes out on the other end, the dome should slice off nice and evenly.

Pros: Easy to use, consistent results.

Cons: Difficult item to store in your kitchen, it is more expensive than a serrated knife and is a single purpose tool. However if you are like me and do not have a steady hand I found that it was a worthwhile expense.

