

HOW TO BUTTERCREAM AND COVER YOUR CAKE WITH FONDANT

How do you cover a cake with fondant that's perfectly smooth, without wrinkles or air bubbles? The flexibility of fondant is your secret weapon. Just follow my instructions for the right ways to knead, roll out and lift the fondant, and you will find covering a cake is easy.

I remember quite clearly that my first couple of attempts at covering cakes with fondant were not entirely successful, I ended up with folds at the bottom of my cake – practice makes perfect they say – I still have times when it does not always covers as well as I would like – this is when a perfectly placed flower or decoration covers the spot!

The following steps show how I cover my cakes with fondant. I do not use ganache as I find it messy and it contains dairy. However if you do want a perfect base to start on, ganache produces a slightly flatter surface than buttercream to work on.

STEP 1

Level your cake with whatever method you prefer.

You then need to select a cardboard cake board to place under your cake – the board should be slightly smaller than your cake – it is used to support your cake and makes it easier to move around , so you do not want it sticking out from under your cake. In this photo the cake is a 6 inch cake – the board was slightly too large so I made is smaller by cutting off the edges with scissors.

Cover your board with some buttercream – this will ensure that your cake sticks to the board.



STEP 2

Place the buttercream side of the cake board on the cut side of your cake – this means the bottom of your cake becomes the top – giving you a nice flat surface to work on.



STEP 3

This next step helps me to stop the folds at the bottom of my cake. I place my cake on a small flat bowl – this helps to lift the cake off the bench and makes it easier to apply the buttercream, then when I put the fondant over the cake it allows the drop of the fondant to go past the bottom of the cake and I don't get the folding.

I notice that many people use a turntable or just ice directly on the bench but it just does not work for me. Since I have been lifting my cakes just slightly off the bench I have been getting much better results. You don't want it to be too high otherwise your fondant may stretch too much and tear. This bowl I am using is about 3cm high.

Start to cover the sides of your cake with your buttercream.



STEP 4

Once your sides are covered use your palette knife to scrape off the excess fondant and smooth your buttercream.



STEP 5

Once you have completed your sides then cover the top, using your palette knife to smooth edges and sharpen corners. If you have time it is best to then put your cake in the fridge to firm for about 30 minutes.



STEP 6

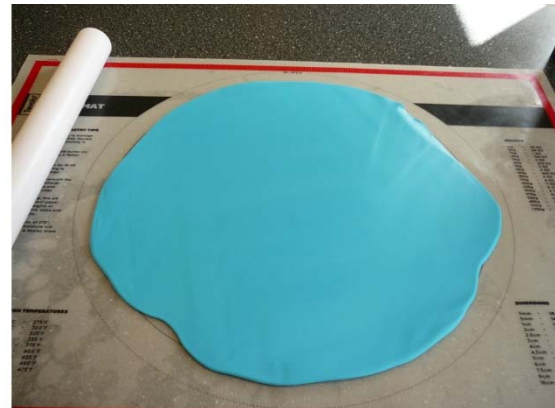
Measure your cake – add together the diameter of the cake plus 2 x height of the sides. This will give you the width that you need to roll your fondant out to. Make sure you add about 4 cm to the measurement as you want your fondant to be larger than your cake so you have a skirt at the bottom.



STEP 7

Make sure your work surface is clean and free of any crumbs. I use a non-stick rolling mat so I do not need to dust – however if you are rolling out on a different surface dust liberally with cornflour or icing sugar. Knead your fondant for a couple of minutes to soften. Just remember that kneading icing is not like kneading dough. If you keep pummelling it will stick to the board and become unmanageable - treat your icing a bit like play dough, keep folding it in until it is smooth, warm and pliable but does not stick to the bench. The more you soften your fondant the less chance you will have of getting tears in it when you put onto your cake.

Roll out your fondant to the required size.



STEP 8

With your cake close to your fondant, lift your fondant with your rolling pin and place over the cake.



STEP 9

Use your hand to carefully smooth the top of the cake and remove any air bubbles from under the fondant. Be sure that you do not have any jewellery on that might leave marks, and avoid using your fingernails, as fondant is easily marked and some scratches are hard to repair.

Start from one side and gently pull the fondant out with one hand, spreading the excess fondant, as you slide the other hand down the side and smooth it out in a downward motion.



STEP 10

Turn the cake and repeat this process again and again. You may have to make several passes over the cake, very gently pulling the excess fondant out and down, and then using your hand to smooth the fondant onto the cake. This is the key to smooth sides, but it is a little tricky and one that requires some practice.

You will notice that some folds will form at the bottom of your cake but remember that because you have your cake elevated on the small dish you will be cutting the excess fondant off.



STEP 11

Now that your cake is covered, if you notice any air bubbles, use a small sharp pin to prick a hole in the bubble and smooth it out. Use a sharp knife, place it under your cake board, and trim the excess fondant from the bottom of the cake.



STEP 12

Lift your cake off the dish and place on some non-stick baking paper. Using your fondant smoothers start at the top and then work on the sides, gently smoothing them until you are happy with the result.



With your cake on the baking paper it is easier to manoeuvre and lift, you can place the cake on your large cake board or place on top of another cake etc. It is ready to have additional fondant or buttercream decorations and borders added.

Do not refrigerate your cake, as fondant readily absorbs moisture, and it becomes sticky and wet when removed from a refrigerator.