

Title:

Decorating Kids Birthday Cakes - The Basic Essentials

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Summary:

When I first started baking and decorating my kids birthday cakes, the variety of decorating tools I could buy seemed endless. And there was so much advice out there on cake decorating! It was a whole new world to me. Still, I reined in my impulsive nature to buy everything I thought I needed, and purchased some basic tools. It is these basics which have 'stood by me' in my quest for decorating those colourful creations my kids ask for each year on their birthdays.

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Article Body:

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In addition to these ideas, I've added some helpful suggestions for decorating your child's next birthday cake - some of which were given to me freely from others whilst a few goodies were borne from my own mistakes...

Cake Decorating Equipment:

You don't necessarily need elaborate equipment but you will need some basic supplies. You can purchase most of the following supplies at specialty baking shops or even your local supermarket. They are indispensable for baking and decorating any birthday cake your child might dream up.

Rubber Spatulas:

It's good to have a set of assorted sizes that are made of flexible rubber.

They're the best tool for scraping frosting from the sides of bowls.

Metal Spatulas:

Have at least one large and one small angled spatula for spreading and smoothing frosting. Avoid your cake crumbling by using a small metal spatula to gently ice the cake with a very thin layer of frosting before adding the 'real' layer. This process is called 'crumb coating'.

Piping Bags:

Reusable 8", 12" and 18" bags with plastic coating on the inside for easy cleaning. Clear plastic disposable zip-lock bags are great for small jobs.

Coupling Nozzles:

These nozzles are essential because they allow you to change your tips according to the design. They can also act as a very large round writing tip for piping figures.

Gel, Powder or Paste Food colouring:

These are preferable to liquid food colouring because they are more concentrated and will not thin down the frosting.

Tips:

1. Have all ingredients at room temperature.
2. Use an electric mixer when beating the cake mixture. You've more chance of eliminating bumps in the pre-cooked cake mixture.
3. Wire Cake Racks are essential for cooling and inverting cakes.
4. Trim baked cake so it sits flat. Use the smooth base as the top of the finished cake and decorate with icing.
5. To stop crumbling, bake the cake the day before you need to decorate it and put it in the freezer.
6. Decorate while still cold.
7. Cake boards are quite cheap to pick up from cake decorating shops. Or you can

cover a large piece of cardboard (cut from a box) with coloured foil.

8. Butter Cream Icing is great for decorating cakes. The only thing I have found with butter cream icing is that when you add colouring, a pastel colour is the only colour it will go to. This is because of the fat in the butter. If you want a darker colour, you have three options: Use plain icing sugar and water then add colouring; replace the butter in the butter cream icing recipe with vegetable shortening or; add black coloured powder to your icing mixture - it will deepen the colour.

9. Cut strips of waxed paper to slip underneath the edges of your unfrosted cake. When finished, you can pull them away and you won't smear the cake board.