



Module 8 - Section 1 - Designing the cake

Objective: To identify and consider all the key points when designing a wedding cake.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Conduct a successful wedding appointment
- Identify the key questions to ask during the appointment
- Understand the significance of setting the ambiance of the consultation room/area to engage the client
- Set sales conversion rates and strategies to improve them
- Identify the key questions required to sketch the wedding cake design

Assessment Criteria:

1. Identify the key objectives of the wedding appointment
2. Identify the key points to consider when designing a wedding cake
3. State the strategy to use to complete the sale of a wedding cake
4. Sketch a wedding cake design
5. Demonstrate an understanding of a wedding cake pricing template
6. Identify the benefits of following up after the appointment

Templates

- Pricing Guide

Pricing Guide Template

CakeFlix		Wedding Cake Pricing Guide						
		4"	6"	8"	10"	12"	14"	
BAND <small>Note for the designer (delete after noted). Each letter relates to the level or difficulty and time to be spent on the cake. Don't fall into the trap of always going for Band C just to make it easier to get the order, you will regret it later.</small>	A	£145	£155	£175	£215	£260	£330	
	B	£135	£145	£165	£195	£235	£280	
	C	£125	£135	£155	£175	£200	£230	
	Z	by Arrangement						
CUTTING CAKE	Fruit		£48	£55	£62	£78	£90	
	Sponge		£28	£35	£42	£58	£70	
PORTIONS	Fruit (1"x1")	Square	4" 16	6" 36	8" 64	10" 100	12" 144	14" 196
		Round	10	30	50	76	114	164
	Other Filling (2"x1")	Square	8	18	32	50	72	98
		Round	5	15	25	38	57	82

NOTES: The three key factors to consider when pricing a wedding cake are, the size of the cake, the time needed to decorate and any extras.

1. Size - work out the cost per tier taking into account the time to take the appointment, stock ordering, admin and overheads.

2. Decorating time - use a lettering guide to give the decorating time of each tier a different category. The example above is for guidance only.

3. Extras - all extras need to be fully costed and charged for. Remember to consider time to source, order and collect these items.

Supporting Notes:

The wedding cake has traditionally been a very important part of a wedding celebration, because the cutting of the cake symbolises the first joint act for the newlyweds.

It is featured in the photographs and often on social media, so it has to be of a high standard and be designed to complement the theme of the wedding. It is difficult to think of an occasion where food is held in such high esteem, than the cake at a wedding.

Note that in this lesson we start to discuss pricing. Pricing is given in £ sterling, however the values given are only as an example. The process in working out pricing will be given in the Intermediate programme, but at this stage just consider the pricing and currency as examples.

Wedding Appointments

Most wedding cakes are designed with the couple/family during a formal appointment. Record every decision on the order form.

The two most crucial things that you want from a wedding appointment are:

- The client to sign the order form and pay a deposit to confirm the order
- A detailed record of what you have agreed to ensure that you can replicate all aspects of the agreed design and deliver the agreed cake, by the agreed time to the agreed venue

Wedding appointments cost the cake designer both time and money. It is therefore very important that the designer maximises their chance to achieve a sale. Keep a record of your wedding appointments, which ones converted to a sale and those that did not. Divide those that did convert to a sale, against the total number of appointments and that will give you your conversion rate. Your business goal should be to continually improve your conversion rate.

To maximise your chance of a sale, the designer should do some homework prior to the appointment. Key questions are:

- Confirm the date and time of the appointment
- Ensure that the client knows that the appointment is scheduled for 45 mins
- Establish how many are coming to the appointment
- Confirm where the wedding is to take place
- Confirm when (date/time) the wedding is to take place
- Approximate number of guests
- Any particular theme to follow

Confirming the appointment saves you wasting vital time in preparation. Confirmation should be sought the day before the appointment, to ensure that everyone is clear on where and when the appointment will take place.

Unless you are charging for the appointment, it is costing you money through the samples and crucial time. Ensure that the client knows that appointment is scheduled for 45mins. This frames the appointment for all parties and allows you to start working on closing the sale after 30mins, or whatever time you decide is comfortable for you.

If possible, there should be a separate designated area/room for consultations, where you can build up the ambience and showcase your premises to underline your high standards of design, hygiene and create an atmosphere which is relaxing. This should facilitate the free and easy discussion of the cake design. Try to hold the consultations at a time to allow you to create the best ambience. Paul suggests early evening /sunset.

Where will the wedding be held?

If you were not able to establish the venue and guest numbers prior to the appointment, then this is the time to ask. The choice of venue and the likely number of guests attending will also give you an indication on budget. However, keep an open mind because sometimes

you will be surprised at the final choice of cake design. Compliment the couple on their choice and express an opinion on how the cake will look at the venue. If you are not familiar with the venue, it is advisable to look it up and offer an informed opinion.

What is the wedding dress like?

When talking about the wedding dress, in keeping with tradition, the groom should be asked to leave the room. Usually the bride will have an image of the dress and from this the designer can gauge a little about the design taste of the client; frilly/sparkly or sleek and classic. This should enable the designer to lead the discussion in a more confident and informed manner. Sometimes the lace pattern from the dress or crystals on the dress can be incorporated into the design.

The colour/style of the bridesmaids' dresses should also be considered for incorporation into the cake design. This will start to paint the picture of the client's dream wedding, allowing the designer to get creative.

Will there be florist flowers?

If the answer is yes, then the designer should find out the type and colour, so that they too can be considered to be incorporated into the cake design.

The cake style

There are a huge variety of styles on the market and it is likely that the bride will have a mood board/photographs/images of designs/themes she likes. If, however, the bride has no ideas and you are starting with a blank canvas, there are plenty of photographs in magazines and on-line which are easy to access. Take copies or notes of the preferred designs and attach them to the order form for future reference.

What shape will the cake be?

The majority of wedding cakes are round, but there are many other shaped tins available for baking and the preferred shape should be decided first of all. However, you may only have round and square tins so you can gently guide the discussions in that direction.

How will the cake be presented?

The trend at the moment is for stacked cakes, but some may be designed for the use of dividers/stands/pillars. Polystyrene dummy cakes can be used to aid visualisation e.g. cake size and depth. After the selection is made, the cake stand should also be drawn into the design on the order form and make sure that it is available.

How many portions will be required from the cake?

Most hosts would allow for a piece of cake for every guest attending the wedding., including the evening reception. Ensure that you know how many portions each cake size and shape will provide. CakeFlix has a free to use online calculator available by clicking the CakeFlix cake portion guide.

What is on-trend?

Trends change, so it is important to know what's currently on-trend. Recent design styles include cakes with sharp edges, two-tone effects, shimmer and ruffles. It is always a good marketing strategy to keep abreast of current trends through recent wedding magazines and check out the opposition in the market.

Sketching the design

It is important that the cake is of a suitably high standard to fit the occasion and that the design is fully understood by all parties involved. To this end, it is vital that you draw out the design, either in sketch form/pencil drawing, or a full scale coloured picture. Do not get concerned at your drawing ability, there are plenty of sketch templates available via a google search. To sketch is to show where the decorations will go, colour of the icing and every design detail that you have agreed during the appointment. If the client chooses to have sugar flowers, ensure that the positioning, colouring and every detail is included in the sketch. If your artistic skills allow, then you can offer to produce a fully coloured and very detailed image. However, this will take extra time and a charge should be considered for this extra service.

The designer does not have to be artistic, but a sketch provides a visual record of the agreed design and ensures that both parties (designer and client) are in agreement. This will save any ambiguity and provides a very clear recall for the designer. There is never a truer saying than in cake design that 'a picture paints a thousand words'.

When all these questions have been answered, it is time to give the client time to digest the large amount of information you have given them. So this is when you introduce the cake sampling session.

Offer cake sampling

Remember to ask how many people are coming to the appointment. This will allow you to prepare the tasting samples. It is good to remember the cost of producing these samples so offer a small varied selection and cut the slices depending on the number coming to the appointment. The designer should always be ready to offer personal recommendations.

This is also a good time to offer champagne to accompany the cake tasting. This will significantly increase your chances of completing a sale. The tasting session can be introduced after the design has been more or less completed and prior to working out the price. It offers an interlude, where the family can discuss the cake, while the designer leaves the room.

Pricing

Most creative designers are reticent about asking for money or closing the sale. However, sales and high conversion rates are very important, so do not be hesitant or tentative. It is advisable to offer three design options, all based upon building the same theme, with three different price tiers:

- Basic - starting price
- Middle - add some extra decorations and a more detailed design
- Top - really go to town with the design and charge accordingly

Most clients will go for the middle option. However, if you have only offered the middle or basic options, you are restricting your chances of the higher sale price. Raise your enthusiasm, creativity and passion as the price goes up. It really does work!

The price of the cake should be worked out in front of the customer. To this end, a price guide should be used. The attached template can be used as the basis of the pricing guide. The attached example is split into the cake size and pricing band, according to the degree of skill/difficulty. Remember to add on the cost of any extras and present the prices confidently in front of the customers for the 3 different options that you have designed, so the customer can see then see how the price has been calculated.

Now is the point to discuss upselling and the addition of extras to the basic original design, for example: adding more flowers to give the wow factor; the addition of side/off cake

designs; adding crystals; placing the cake on a mirror; perhaps changing to a larger cake/use of dummy cakes to save food waste.

In any design process the sketch is key, especially when weddings could be being planned up to three years in advance. Crucially, write the agreed price on the order form and both the designer and client should sign. It should be clear what deposit has been paid and when any remaining balance is due.

What if I do not get a sale?

The wedding appointment is the best chance to complete the sale, however not all appointments will end in a sale. Where the sale is not completed this must be used as a learning opportunity and seek to increase the conversion rate on the next appointment.

As the appointment comes to a close and if you have not secured the sale, ask when it would be appropriate to follow up. The client may ask for time to consider the price/design options, which is the point where you should ask for a deposit 'to secure the date in your diary' and 'you can work out the design at a later date'. If that doesn't work, then ask if it would be okay to call next week to help with any questions. Do not email, it becomes impersonal, easy to ignore and an easy way out where you will not learn anything.

The wedding appointment costs time and money, so if the sale is not secured, at the very least it is important to establish why. Feedback is hugely important, which will help future conversion rates. The designer should not be afraid to ask or afraid of what they find out! Also worth saying that nobody should react to one or two isolated opinions, but if there is a common theme, then maybe worth looking into changing whatever that might be.