



Module 8 - Section 5 - Dowelling and stacking the tiers

Objective: Stack a tiered cake using the correct dowling process.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Correctly dowel a cake
- Ensure that the cake is level
- Successfully transfer and position the cakes to form the stack
- Correctly position the floral decorations

Assessment criteria:

1. Correctly position the dowels
2. Ensure that the cake is level
3. Successfully transfer and position the cakes to form the stack
4. Correctly position the floral decorations

You will Need:

The tools and ingredients required for the completed cake are contained in Section 2 - Ganaching the tiers.

Method:

The method and supporting notes must be read in conjunction with the training video.

- Identify the front of the cake
- Add ribbon to cake drum
- Ensure that the cake is level
- Mark the position of the dowels (10 dowels)
- Cut dowels to size
- Check level once again
- Place royal icing on the cake top, just where the dowels have been placed
- Release the middle tier from the working cake drum
- Place the middle tier on top of the base tier, then gently press down using a cake drum
- Check level once again
- Repeat the dowel insertion process (7 dowels)
- Check level as before
- Release the top tier from the working board
- Place on top of the middle tier
- Check that the cake is level
- Add the peony flower using a posy pick
- Add leaves using micro posy picks
- Add filler flowers

Supporting Notes:

As with all cake decorating or food handling, you must ensure all equipment and surfaces are cleaned thoroughly. Follow all food safety and hygiene procedures and be sure never to cut corners when it comes to these key disciplines.

Place the bottom tier of the wedding cake on a turntable and inspect to decide what will be the front of the cake. The back of the cake is usually where you can hide any little blemishes. It is worth noting at this stage that a cake decorator will look at a cake and only see the blemishes, whereas everyone else looks at the overall design and sees the beauty of the design, which the decorator has now come to take for granted.

It is now time to choose and add the ribbon to the cake. In the video Paul chooses to double up the ribbon with the first, white ribbon, applied to hide the silver trim of the board. An ivory ribbon is then placed on top of the white ribbon to finish. Ribbon colour will of course be decided by the bride, but the white ribbon can be quite stark so best to advise to go for a softer ivory or cream ribbon, against the white cake. It is best to remove the cake from the turntable. The ribbon is stuck down using a non-toxic glue stick, cutting the end at a slight angle, which makes for a neater finish. Another option is to pin the ribbon to the board, however having pins near a cake is probably not a risk worth taking.

Adding the second tier requires the base tier to have supporting dowels. To ensure that the dowels are correctly positioned, using a cake drum or card of the size of the tier to be placed on top, lightly mark around the circumference of the circle, ensuring that it is placed in the middle of the cake.

Although levelling has been checked in the ganaching and covering stages, it must be checked again when the dowels are added. Within the marked area, position two dowels, one at 3 o'clock and the other at 9 o'clock, then insert into the cake. Mark where the top of the dowel meets the cake with a food pen, then retract the dowels. Check the sizes and use them as markers for the remaining dowels. Dowels are then to be positioned at:

- 12 o'clock
- 3 o'clock
- 6 o'clock
- 9 o'clock
- Two in the middle either side of the centre
- Four more, one between 12,3,6,9 o'clock

Paul explains that the last bullet point above is not essential, but the more levelled dowels there are, the more stable the cake will be. This is vital to make sure the cake is stable for transporting and while in place at the venue. Before adding the next tier, add some royal icing to the base tier, just where the dowels have been placed. This helps to position and stick the tiers.

Time now to release the middle tier from the working cake drum. If the cake is stuck or loose, it is best to release from the cake drum using a palette knife. When it comes to lifting the cake you must ensure that your hands do not directly touch the cake. Lift the cake by lifting with a hand at opposite sides, using a paper towel, or something similar, as protection. It is also worth working out the positioning of the next tier before lifting.

Place the middle tier on the prepared base tier, with the decorative fold to the front, then gently press down using a cake drum. Check the level again and adjust as required.

As the top tier is only 4", there is not the space or need for as many dowels as explained above. Using the same marking process as before, position the dowels for the 4" tier at:

- 1 o'clock

- 3 o'clock
- 5 o'clock
- 7 o'clock
- 9 o'clock
- 11 o'clock
- One in the centre

Once the dowels are added, place a cake drum or card one on the dowels then check that the tier is level. If any adjustment is needed, use small pieces of sugarpaste/fondant to achieve the level finish. Repeat the process as before to ensure that the cake is transferred, positioned and level.

The flower that you have spent so much time working on needs to be positioned to its best advantage. Spend time considering the position before adding to the cake. Once the cake is marked it is not easy to change the position.

Once the position has been confirmed, place the wired peony into a posy pick before inserting carefully into the cake. The posy pick prevents contamination from the wires and ensures the cake remains food safe. Add the leaves using the same positioning technique then add the micro posy pick into the cake. Using tweezers, insert the wire into the micro posy pick and pack with a little sugarpaste/fondant if the spray spins.

Finish by adding carefully positioned filler flowers which will soften the design, using glue. Dragees could also be used, but it is all down to personal preferences and most importantly what the customer has ordered.

Remember to always step back and look at the overall effect. It is easily possible to be over fussy or try to add too much. Paul has a rule that he swears by when it comes to wedding cakes - 'if in doubt, miss it out'.

Take pride in your cake and do not let your eyes gravitate to the minor marks or issues that you will notice because you built it from scratch. Can you imagine the builder of a magnificent house would know all the mistakes and blemishes in the build work. However, as with cakes, so long as the property is structurally sound and meets the customer's specification, the customer is not going to notice or care if there are minor details that aren't 100%.

Learn to take a compliment. When someone congratulates you on a lovely cake, do not rush to tell them the problems to divert the accolade. Simply say thank you and enjoy the pleasure of all your hard work.