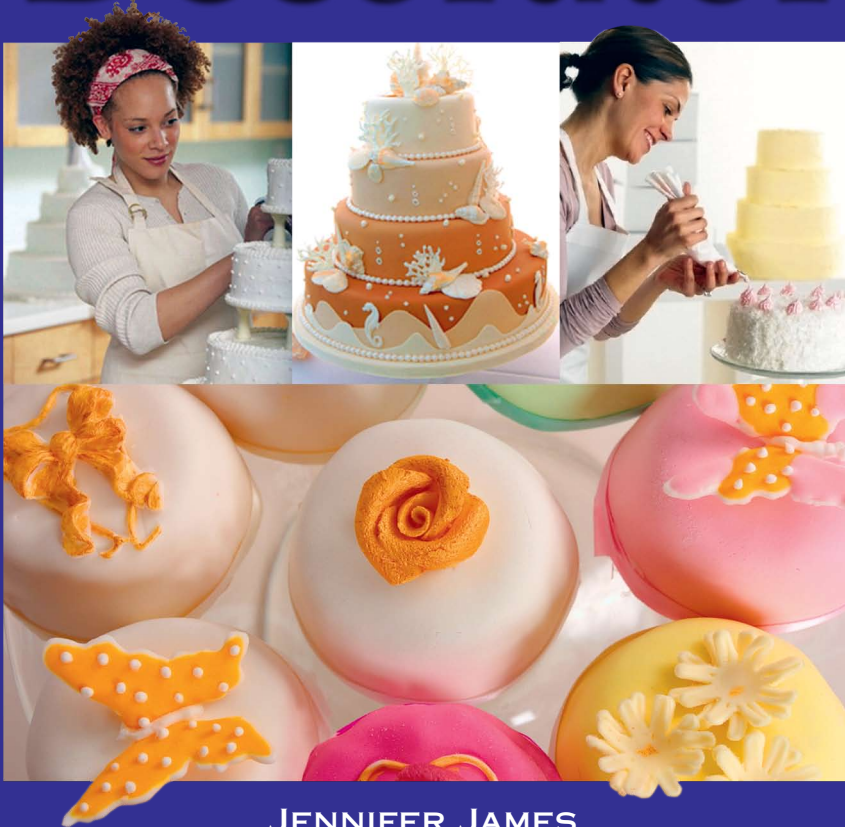


Start your own cake or cupcake business!

FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Cake
Decorator**



JENNIFER JAMES

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1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome to Cake Decorating

Imagine yourself getting up in the peace of the morning, and beginning your day's baking. The aroma from the oven begins to fill the air, and a new day begins. You're starting work on an edible masterpiece — a sugar-art dream stacked five layers high, fondant-covered, oh-so-delicious — and just the latest creation in your cake decorating portfolio.

As a cake decorator, you will bring your imagination's creations to life one at a time, as you bake and decorate eye-catching, mouth-watering cakes for your clients. If you love baking, sugar and sweets, a career as a cake decorator allows you to do what you enjoy most, and get paid for it.

Perhaps you've been complimented in the past on your beautiful birthday cakes, or you simply have a flair for design that needs a new creative outlet. Whatever has led you to this point, welcome to the world of cake decoration. If you want to decorate cakes and cupcakes for a living, this informative guide will give you the tools you need to get started.

1.1.1 A Typical Day

Cake decorators bake and decorate customized cakes for their clients, made to the client's specifications — but with your own creative twist. You will meet with potential new clients all the time, from bubbly brides (and their mothers), to proud parents of a beautiful Sweet 16 daughter, to people who just really know how to celebrate in style.

When you meet with clients, you'll show them your past work for inspiration, or maybe to twig some ideas. They may sample a few pieces of your cake to see what flavors they like best. Then you can start talking details, from budget, to number of people to be served, to the all-important theme and style of the cake. Get a delivery date, address, and a deposit, and you're off to the races! In addition to meeting with clients, cake decorators spent their time:

- Shopping for and ordering supplies and equipment
- Keeping up with cake design trends
- Baking cakes
- Learning and practicing new design techniques
- Making elaborate decorations from fondant or gumpaste
- Decorating with piping tips and buttercream
- Delivering cakes to weddings or other events
- Networking with other celebration professionals
- Marketing to new and past clients

As a professional cake decorator, you may work out of your own home, or you may rent a commercial kitchen for the food creation part of your day. Churches, community centers and other places of gathering often have kitchens available for part-time rental, as do restaurants and bak-

eries in their off-hours. A custom cake business can also be set up as a full-time retail shop, when you think the market is right for it.

1.1.2 The Market for Custom Cakes and Cupcakes

There's never been a better time to start up a cake design business. With the low-carb craze over with, there has been a return to the idea of eating for pleasure, ushered in largely by the popular book *French Women Don't Get Fat*. Single servings and "the personal touch" are in — cupcakes are very popular right now, as are gourmet mini-cakes.

Cake decorators tap into the fact that people love to feel special, and are always looking for something new and unique. Clients who are tired of the supermarket's tired-old sheet cake with a cartoon character are looking for handmade, out-of-the ordinary cakes that truly reflect the theme of the celebration... and when they do, they'll come to you.

Cakes are getting more creative all the time, and the only limitation is your imagination. Three-dimensional designs are in vogue right now, resulting in cakes that look like pillows, animals, handbags, or whatever you can dream up. Contemporary cake towers rising up many feet in the air and can lean every which way, stabilized by mysterious forces known only to the cake decorator (that is, you!) And it doesn't stop there. How about a cake + cupcake combo, with each cupcake sporting a unique design, or personalized for each guest? Floral toppers or edible pearls just might complete an elegant look perfectly. The finishing materials (glazes and dusting powders) available on today's market let you give your cake and decorations a look that is so real, your clients will hardly believe they are made of sugar.

Not only are people looking for custom, creative cakes, they are willing to pay for them too. The average amount spent on a wedding has nearly doubled in the last 20 years, and the average cost of wedding cake is \$543, according to the Bridal Association of America. Prices of artisan cakes for special occasions range from \$3 to \$10 or even more per slice, depending on the complexity of the design.

"My first year of business I had 80+ orders for wedding cakes," recalls Yvonne Zensner, owner of cake design company The Cake Box. "The next year I expanded to include cookies, cupcakes and special occasion orders, and my business more than doubled. I diversified to include

corporate orders, and growth continues to exceed 100% for the current year," she says.

If you're ready to tap into this lucrative and burgeoning market, don't wait any longer. It's time to turn your pipe dreams into piping bags, trade in your overtime for oven mitts, and create a sweet success story, by following the steps and advice in this FabJob guide.

1.1.3 Benefits of this Career

"The best things about decorating cakes for a living are the freedom, the creativity, and the great feeling you get upon delivering a cake for a memorable occasion."

— Nancy Siler, Wilton Enterprises

As a professional cake decorator, you'll create smiles and memories, and provide the elegant centerpieces for family gatherings, celebrations of life, and moments of pleasure and laughter. Making people's lives sweeter is just the beginning — here are some more benefits of this career.

You Can Be Creative

If you want to work with your hands and experience with all five senses, this is the career for you, from smelling the yummy baking, to tasting new flavors of icing or filling, to piping delicate beads or roses on your cakes. No wonder many cake decorators call themselves sugar artists!

"Creative talent and passion are so important," says acclaimed cake decorator Yvonne Zensner. "I was involved in early childhood education, but I wanted to switch careers to something that would challenge my creative outlets. I learned that I had this talent and discovered a passion for the art of designing cakes."

You Can Be Your Own Boss

No more taking orders from anyone else — other than your many customers, of course! When you run your own business, you make the decisions. You can choose to specialize in anything from wedding cakes, to children's birthday cakes, to cupcakes, to cakes shaped like fantasy castles... whatever you most enjoy. As your own boss, you decide

your policies, your prices, and when you're going to take those well-deserved days off.

You Can Let Them Eat Cake

By “them” we mean you, your friends, and your family. You'll be able to practice your new ideas by making cakes for your own family celebrations, or liven up a mid-week meal with some cake “leftovers” you cut off while shaping and creating. You can even save some cash when you give your cakes for wedding and birthday presents. It's great practice, and you'll land additional clients whenever your cakes are seen and admired.

You Can Start Right Now

A cake business can be started simply or part-time if you wish, in many cases right from your own home. If you already bake as a hobby, you may very well have much of the equipment on hand that you will need to get started. You don't need a certificate to call yourself a professional cake decorator, either — you're in business as soon as you are paid for your very first cake. So get ready, because it's just a short while until you find yourself exactly where you want to be: in a lucrative and fun career decorating custom cakes for a living.

1.2 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Cake Decorator* is designed to help you launch your cake design business quickly and easily. It will teach you how to take your natural talents of baking and cake decorating, and turn them into a real way to make money.

Following this brief introduction, Chapter 2 (“*Designing and Decorating Cakes*”) introduces you to the world of custom cake decoration. A summary of cake styles and occasions begins the chapter, followed by a look at successful baking, design and assembly, icing styles and techniques for applying it, and a few sample cake designs.

Chapter 3 (“*Designing and Decorating Cupcakes*”) explains why these little cakes are sweeping the nation, and how you too can profit from their popularity. Special cupcake tools and suppliers are explained,

followed by tips for baking, and cupcake decorating techniques. Four unique cupcake designs are included at the end of the chapter for you to whet your appetite with.

Chapter 4 (*“Developing Your Skills”*) gets you ready to take your cake skills to the professional arena, including resources for boosting your skills by learning on your own as well as taking classes or seminars.

Chapter 5 (*“Starting Your Cake or Cupcake Business”*) provides information to help you decide whether to work from home or open a shop. It includes information about business planning, start-up finance, and choosing a business name. You’ll also find information about other important business matters such as getting licensed to work out of your home or renting a commercial kitchen.

Chapter 6 (*“Setting Up a Retail Shop”*) provides the information needed by cake decorators who want to operate a retail business. It explains how to choose a location and design your store. You will also learn where to get equipment you’ll need for a retail shop.

Chapter 7 (*“Running Your Business”*) gives advice for running a retail shop or home business on a daily basis. You’ll get advice for pricing your cakes, taking orders, hiring staff, and keeping track of finances.

Chapter 8 (*“Getting Clients”*) gives you the tools you need to let everyone know you’re in business. It covers developing a marketing plan, business cards and brochures, a website, and a portfolio of past cakes to wow your clients. Referrals, word-of-mouth, press releases and other cost-effective marketing tactics are also explained in this chapter.

The guide also includes checklists, questionnaires and other helpful tools to get your business started. The information, resources and advice offered on these pages will save you hundreds of hours of research, so that you can start earning money more quickly. You’ll avoid the common pitfalls, and make business decisions like an expert. Get ready, because armed with the knowledge this guide provides, you could be selling your first cake in just a short time from right now.