

GUIDELINES
FOR
CAKE SHOW JUDGING

by

the

INTERNATIONAL CAKE EXPLORATION SOCIÉTÉ

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INTRODUCTION

The following material is offered as a guideline with some simple suggestions to follow. By no means should this brief guideline replace first-hand knowledge obtained through professional classes or training.

It is hoped that every decorator who aspires to become a cake show judge will educate himself/herself to the fullest in every technique. Therefore, it is not recommended that a politician, T.V. or radio personality be used to judge a cake show; rather, a judge should be a trained professional cake decorator.

Local judges are not recommended as they may be familiar with local contestant's work. Names of contestants should not be visible. Judging by number only, is strongly recommended. Follow show rules and regulations as to the use of plastic decorations; some shows allow the use of plastic to carry out the theme, but handmade items are usually preferred. Plastic pillars, ornaments, and plates are allowed on wedding cakes. Dummies or real cake may be used; dummies must be of a design that can be duplicated in cake. Foreign techniques should be true to form as we know them from teachers and books. It is nice to have a category in the show allowing mixing of techniques to allow for artistic development.

There are two systems of judging.

In a point system of judging, the judges must abide by the rules. In the point system, a predetermined number of points are given for neatness, appearance, difficulty of technique, use of color, and creativity, etc. The cake with the highest points is the winner.

In conference judging, each judge evaluating the cakes in a category then coming together, conferring and discussing until a final decision is made.

In both cases, fill out the score sheet with judges' comments worded in such a way as to encourage the contestants. Suggest in a nice, not hurtful way on how they may improve their skills. A judge should allow for travel breakage and judge accordingly.

It is recommended that a prospective judge contact the show director and obtain permission to observe the judging. The apprentice judge may not enter the show he/she is observing, nor confer or express any opinions during the judging. The apprentice is permitted to read the score sheets and comments.

JUDGING CAKE COVERINGS

1. Buttercream Icing/Rolled Buttercream Icing – texture smooth and flawless, not sugary or fatty in appearance. There should be no air bubbles, water spots, or streaks. With real cake, crumbs should not show.
2. Royal Icing – light and smooth, no air bubbles, knife or sanding marks. Snowy white and if colored, no color specks or streaks.
3. Rolled Fondant Icing – should not appear dry, usually matte finish, smooth, free of air bubbles, pin pricks, lumps, hollows, or finger marks, cracks, wrinkles, or tears. Snowy white, no dust or dark lint showing, if colored, free of color streaks or specks. A shine is acceptable but should never have a greasy appearance. Fondant should be trimmed to exact size of cake board, never too short or patched.
4. Poured Fondant Icing – consistency, medium glaze, smooth, no lumps, dries to a shiny glaze, looks transparent but isn't. Cake should be totally covered with no dripping lines on side of cake.
5. Marzipan Icing – smooth, free of tears, lumps, hollows and finger marks, not greasy. Should be mainly almond and not contain an excessive amount of sugar.
6. Rolled coverings should not show water marks. Confectionary sugar or cornstarch used in rolling out should be brushed off.

JUDGING ICING FLOWERS

Piped and molded work should be as fine and as life-like as possible. Select colors carefully, making sure each one blends with the others. All colors should harmonize. In tinting or painting molded work, extreme care should be taken to shade the colors and not streak them. All flowers should be as life-like and as close in coloring to nature as possible.

1. Buttercream or Royal – definite shaped petals with proper form, correct number of petals (i.e. wild rose, violets have 5 petals), coloring and details as close to nature as possible, with appropriate stems, stamen and calyxes.
2. Gumpaste or Cold Porcelain – petals smooth, thin and delicate. No cracks or dried ragged edges and as close to nature as possible. If corn starch is used in molding, it should be brushed away and not visible anywhere. Ready-made stamen are allowed; however, it is preferable they be hand-made where possible. The calyx should be as natural as possible in shape and color. Coloring of the flowers should be natural.

3. Marzipan – basically the same as Gum Paste flowers. Check for greasy appearance from over handling.

4. Wiring of Royal and Gum Paste Flowers – wire should be covered with florist tape as thinly as possible, neatly and smoothly. The wires should be hidden in a corsage or arrangement. Wire should be the correct gauge to support the flower. Wired petals should not show through the petal. Light petals should use white covered wire, leaves can use green covered wire.

5. Arrangements, Corsages, Bouquets – balance of design must be good and flowers in proportion to each other. Arrangements should contain an odd number of flowers – 1, 3, 5, 7, etc., never an even number. Filler flowers are an exception, however, they too should be grouped in 1, 3, 5, etc., to a stem bunch. The final arrangement should not overpower the cake but should be within ½ to 1 inch from the top border. The exception being a cascade or flowers set in the corners of a square cake, or cascading flowers from one tier to the next tier.

6. Leaves – the proper leaf should correspond to the flower; example, a rose leaf with a rose. The coloring should be as natural as possible. A Gum Paste rose leaf has a darker green top with a lighter green back. Care should be taken that the proper size leaf and coloring are used for each flower. Follow nature as closely as possible as to the placement of leaves (i.e. rose leaves should not be attached to the main stem, but come from a secondary stem).

7. If no fault can be seen from any angle on flowers, leaves, etc., judge should not turn them over trying to find uncovered wires, etc.

VARIOUS TECHNIQUES

1. Molded Figures – marzipan, gum paste, pastillage, Mexican paste, cold porcelain, thickened buttercream. Figures should be in proportion (i.e. arms and legs in proportion to the torso), life like in appearance, and coloring. When different figures are used together, they should be in proportion to each other. Should not have drying cracks in the clothing or figures and have seams joined smoothly together. Glue holding arms or joining seams, etc., should not be visible.

2. Flow-Work (color flow, flooding) – 3D – Splay and collars.

3D figures should be built up and not flat. Flowers in colors should not bleed into one another. Flow in can be painted when dry. 3D work must be in perspective with trees or figures in the distance smaller than figures in front. Cake should be topped with a flow in collar (frame).

Collars and Splays – should be thin and smooth, no bumps or lines. Support lines separating collars or splays should not be visible.

3. Filigree, Line and String Work – should be fine, neat, and delicate with no air bubbles showing. Joining should be blended in and not visible. Lace points even in size, should match other filigree pieces used in the design. String work should be uniform in size.
4. Borders – evenly done. Piped shells should be rounded, evenly spaced. Definite ridges, no wiggles or blobs. Stars should be uniform with side borders evenly marked and executed. Preliminary markings should not show. Borders should be in proportion to cake size and other decorations. Rolled and cut borders should be even and neat, not stretched.
5. Cornelli Lace – seen in Australian decorating. Should be piped with a fine writing tube in a continuous movement of small u's and m's. Lines should not cross over or show a definite patters. It should be delicate with the line changing direction every ¼ inch.
6. Sotas – seen in Philippine decorating. Should be piped with # 1 or fine writing tube, pipe curls in V's or C's of icing very close together until area is completely covered.
7. Lost Point – Spider web – seen in Mexican decorating. Lost point is similar to Cornelli. It should not show where it begins or ends. The spider web is straight short connecting lines resembling a web or stained glass window.

CONFECTIONERY PAINTING

Painting is done on all surfaces; buttercream, royal, fondant, gum paste, chocolate, marzipan, and wafer paper. Painting can be done free hand or by transferring patterns onto these surfaces. Patterns should be appropriate to fit with the size of cake or plaque. Air brush technique can be done on the Above surfaces. Paste colors are used thinned with water or any clear high alcohol based flavoring as well as gin or vodka. Finished painting may be outlined but is not always necessary. Transfer lines should never show.

1. Buttercream – Pattern painted in with a brush using paste colors. Painting should be neat and colors harmonized. Colors should not bleed into one another; preliminary marks should be thoroughly covered and never show through. Buttercream painting is done using colored icing and is brushed onto the pattern. Painting should be neat and smooth.

Feather Painting – can be done in buttercream or royal icing. A medium line of icing is brushed towards the centre of the flower or leaf using a barely damp brush. Painting should not show watery marks. The feathering of the icing does not have to be even, as long and short strokes will add character to the painted item.

2. Royal – painting should have clean crisp lines. Colors should harmonize. Painting should have shading and highlights. Deep and bright colors should be used in holiday

cakes such as Halloween, Christmas, etc. Colors should not be streaked, blurry, blotched or smudged.

3. Fondant, Gum Paste and Marzipan – Patterns should be painted within the lines, no feathering or blurring. Painting should have light and dark shading and be highlighted. Plaques or cakes should be neat and clean. Finished painting can be outlined with a fine line either in black or brown.

4. Wafer Paper or Rice Paper – Pattern is traced with pencil or pen. Traced lines should not be streaky or blurry. Wafer paper should be covered with a thin layer of piping-jell. Wafer painted pattern may be cut out and placed on a cake or the whole sheet may be used. Either way, painting should lie flat with no air pockets, wavy bumps, or drying cracks.

5. Chocolate Painting – Done on all the above surfaces using chocolate, cocoa, or baker's squares. Painting should have different shades of chocolate ranging from light to dark with highlights. Painting should be crisp and sharp. Check for feathering, blurry lines or smudges. Transfer lines should not show. Painting should not have white streaks in the chocolate.

7. Spatula Painting – Should be neat, harmonious in color and show good perspective. It (painting) should not be spilled over to side of cake. Cake should not show through.

FOREIGN TECHNIQUES

1. Australian – Coverings can be buttercream, royal, but mostly are rolled fondant. Colors can be used, however, the monochrome color scheme is generally preferred (i.e. pink fondant with pink icing and pink flowers with pink leaves and pink calyxes and stamen). Decorations are fine lace pieces, embroidery, string work, crimper work, ribbon insertion and appliqué. Crimper work should be uniform and resemble a No. 4 piped line with teeth marks barely showing. Extension work should resemble a No. 50 thread and the distance between strings should be the size of a No. 50 thread. String work should be straight, even and not bowed. It should never exceed 1 ½ inches in length. Shelving on side of cakes should be placed ¼ inch from bottom border. Gumpaste hand-molded flowers are preferred although royal or marzipan flowers can be used. Everything on an Australian cake should be fine and delicate.

2. Danish – gives particulars of many varieties of cream bases; styles of decorating used may be fruit coverings, buttercream, and chocolate pieces. Decorating consists of piping stencils, chocolate painting, and models. Flowers, leaves and bows are made from marzipan, caramel, royal icing figure piping and fondant plaques. Tortes are decorated with pieces of chocolate.

3. English – similar to Nirvana, but modified. These cakes usually have a collar and splay that are equal in size. Sides are decorated with simple piping. They may or may not have side panels. Usually the top is a run sugar 3D scene.

4. Lambeth – usually has a bottom bevel. It is an English method, very ornate with fine overpiping and ornate gumpaste work. Covering is marzipan coated with royal icing. The base of all borders should be accurate, usually a # 16 or # 14 zigzag overpiped with a # 16 or 14 straight line, followed straight lines of # 5, # 4, # 3, # 2 and # 1, one on top of the other. The overpiping should be accurate and uniform. Soft pastel colors are preferred with monotone decorating. A stucco finish may be used when icing is in color. Flowers are used in abundance, are piped in royal or can be in marzipan. Petals should be well formed. Pastillage and gumpaste articles should be finely constructed. Lattice cushion work is delicate and neat. There is always more overpiping on a Lambeth cake than any other style.

5. Mexican – decorating is theatrical in design with elegantly dressed gumpaste figurines set into garden, period room settings, or other architectural scenes made of pastillage. The gumpaste people look life-like and show some motion. Makeup, hair, hands and feet should be as natural looking as possible. Furniture and other pastillage pieces as well as gumpaste work should be free of seams, drying cracks or corn starch. Very little border or side work is done on the cake itself. The sugar work is displayed on a drum made of pastillage on a large cake covered with fondant.

6. Nirvana – named after an English cake decorator whose pen name was ‘Nirvana’. The cake is totally encased in run sugar (color flow, flood work) and is usually geometric in design. The flood pieces consist of splays, collars, side panels and risers. Collars and splays differ in size from one another by ¼ inch. It is built in a ‘pyramid’ fashion being larger on the bottom and graduating to a smaller top. Nirvana means perfection, the ultimate. Run sugar pieces should fit accurately and should not have wide spaces or heavy borders to cover up where pieces do not fit.

7. Oriental String Work – covering is royal icing with intricate patterned string work beginning at the center of a cake and going over the edge, dropping to the bottom of the cake. Same pattern repeated in the top half of forming an oval shape pattern. String work should be even and uniform in size. Many different and intricate patterns can be implemented.

8. Philippine – boiled icing covering the cake. Decorating is truly dramatic, with curving borders piped with large piping tip for a sculptured effect. Flowers are used abundantly in sprays, bouquets and fountains. Handmade trims are of wire, icing, ribbon and Styrofoam. A funnel type separator is sometimes used. Cake is abundantly decorated with piped flowers of harmonizing colors. Careful workmanship should be artistically executed, neatly and daintily.

9. South African – a combination of English and Australian methods. Coverings range from buttercream, royal, marzipan and fondant. Within the South African method are two distinct styles: beautifully ornate and elaborate filigree work frequently with large wings, lace pieces and architectural work done with very fine piping tip. There are also the English overpiped scrolls called 'hollow line work'. Gumpaste flower molding has become extremely popular and has in some instances replaced the filigree work. The South African excels in molded flowers, sprays and bouquets, delicately, realistically and perfectly executed. Novelty cakes are covered on buttercream or fondant. Architectural work is also done in pastillage.

10. American – The free and easy method of American cake decorating is a combination of all the other forms of cake decorating. Cakes are usually soft butter-cakes. Cake covering is most often buttercream icing decorated with buttercream borders and displaying flowers executed to perfection. Royal icing flowers as well as gumpaste flowers can be seen displayed on the cakes. A variety of techniques are used. Some are listed as follows: confectionary painting, lace pieces, flow in (color flow, flooding), figure piping, hard forms, molded figures, string work, line on line work, overpiping, piping-jell, marzipan, plus novelty cakes cut and shaped into a variety of forms.

SOME POINTS JUDGES LOOK FOR

1. Neatness, on the cake board, cake covering, in the piping, and/or hand work in molding is important.
2. The cake board should be in proportion usually 3 inches larger than the cake (i.e. an 8 inch cake should have an 11 inch board). The shape of the cake board should correspond to the cake. The board should be covered with greaseproof paper, preferably embossed food safe foil. Board and foil should complement the cake. Silver, glass or plastic trays may be used. Thickness of the base should be in keeping with the weight of the cake. Boards may also be covered with fondant for fondant covered cakes.
3. The cake should be level on top with good straight sides. It should also be a good logical size. A tiered cake should be in proportion graduating sizes as you go up (i.e. 16-12-8).
4. The cake covering should be smooth and as flawless as possible, no cake or dummy showing through. Avoid crumbs in icing.
5. Precision in dividing your cake accurately is a must. Preliminary markings should never show.

6. All piping tip work should be uniform and free of air bubbles. Stars should be equal and uniform in size and have no points on the star centers. All flowers should show definite petals.
7. Hand work should be smooth and free of small drying cracks. The petals should be thin and delicate.
8. Color should be appetizing. Colors should be soft and delicate, the exception being some holiday cakes, children's cakes, etc. Color in icing the cake should remain the same throughout, unless marbling or gradual fading is the design.
9. Originality – ideas copied exactly from books will lose points over original ideas. Build on an idea seen in books. Change it and add your own ideas. Some shows prohibit copyright work from other media.
10. Choose a well balanced design. Larger borders on bottom should graduate up to smaller borders on top. Floral display on top should not overpower the whole cake.
11. Avoid over-decorating. Extend yourself to the fullest, but do not go beyond what you have mastered. Do not use every technique you learned on one cake. It is better to do a technique well than to over-extend yourself to do it badly.
12. Has contestant kept to the assigned theme in his/her division? If category calls for 'Song Title', by all means make sure design depicts a song that is recognizable.
13. Keep true to form in the foreign techniques as we know them from books and classes, unless the rules specify mixing of techniques.

JUDGE'S QUALIFICATIONS

1. A judge should have a good background in cake decorating and related fields.
2. A judge should have good understanding of the division they are judging. Read show rules and regulations carefully as show rules vary. Request clarification of rules, to make sure judges are judging by what entrants were told.
3. A judge should have taken classes in all areas of cake decorating including foreign techniques plus they should constantly read and study books by the professionals in every technique.
4. A judge should have taken at least 1 professional class each year and as many classes and demonstrations as possible.

5. A judge should have been a contestant in cake shows in order to have a clear understanding of what it feels like to be judged. It is helpful to have directed a cake show or been involved in the workings of a cake show.
6. A judge should be able to put himself/herself in the shoes of the contestant in all the different divisions.
7. A judge should be intelligent, honest, tactful, and reliable with a good conscience and strong character to be able to disqualify themselves from any unfamiliar technique.
8. He/she should have done it all; struggled and achieved from basics to professionals and is still out there doing and learning and never stopping. He/she should constantly keep abreast of current trends and new techniques.

JUDGE'S ETIQUETTE

1. Be punctual, courteous, friendly, open-minded and unbiased.
2. Be prepared. Read the rules and regulations thoroughly so as to have a clear understanding of the divisions, categories, and the theme assigned to each.
3. Introduce yourself to the show personnel. If something about the show is not to your liking, do not make a fuss. Give constructive suggestions after the show, if asked.
4. Be extremely careful of your remarks so as not to hurt or discourage a contestant, during as well as after judging. Be careful of hand gestures as well as facial expressions. Some contestants have been turned away from decorating because a judge loudly criticized a cake, not knowing that the contestant was close by.
5. Show professional courtesy to the judges you are judging with. Do not dominate the judging; the other judges have opinions too. Listen, evaluate, then come to a mutual agreement.
6. Dress neatly. Do not have jewelry such as long necklaces or bracelets dangling. Be careful not to damage a contestant's cake. Do not touch or handle a contestant's entry. Look at accompanying sheet if in doubt of method or material.
7. Do not enter a cake into the show you are judging, rather bring your work to display if requested.
8. Disqualify yourself immediately from a category if you recognize someone's cake. Also disqualify yourself if you are unfamiliar with a certain technique.

9. Make constructive comments on the score sheets. Always remember to encourage not discourage contestants. Do not write glib or harsh remarks. Critical comments should not be necessary on a 1st prize cake.
10. Thank the director and show personnel for inviting you to judge their show. Compliment them on having a nice show; they need encouragement too. A short note after the show is greatly appreciated.
11. If you have to cancel judging a show, contact the director immediately and suggest a replacement.
12. Respond yes or no to judging a show in the time requested. If yes, and you disagree with the fee, discuss it with the director. Perhaps you can come to a mutual agreement.
13. Do not repeat another judge's opinion. What was discussed while judging should not be disclosed.
14. Not judging the same show year after year is a suggestion so that the judge does not become too familiar with work of the contestants. Good rule of thumb: judge every other year.
15. Do not judge with a close friend unless you can be objective and express your opinion and listen to his/her opinion too.
16. Do not make any changes in the judging after all score sheets have been turned in, unless all judges confer and agree.
17. Attend the awards ceremony, if at all possible.
18. As a cake show judge, you should make yourself available after the awards ceremony to answer contestant's questions. A judge should have a reason for everything that is judged – both good and bad.
19. A judge should not criticize or discuss another contestant's cake in a derogatory manner to other contestants or to observers. You could be wrong, plus your comments could conflict with other judges' remarks made on the comment sheet.

SAMPLE LETTER TO SEND TO PROSPECTIVE JUDGES

Address

Date

Dear _____,

On (day, month, year), we are having our _____ Annual Cake Decorating Show (Competition), in (city, state, country), at the (place).

It would be an honor to have you as one of our judges. Judging will take place (day, month, year), beginning at (time) until completed. Awards will be presented at (time, day, month, year).

Judging will be based on:

1. Use of tips.
2. Border work.
3. Neatness and precision.
4. Choice and use of color.
5. Creativity and originality.
6. Difficulty of technique and design.
7. General appearance.

Our show is sponsored by the (name of your club) Cake Club, a non-profit organization. We realize expenses are incurred by the judges. Our club has authorized me to offer you \$_____ and \$_____ per mile travel expenses in addition to having you as our guest in our homes. You will also be our guest at a luncheon the day of the show.

If you will be joining us and would like to do a demonstration of your particular specialty, I would be happy to arrange this in our (day, date) program.

We request that you acknowledge this letter by (day, month, year). It is our sincere hope your schedule permitting, the answer will be YES!

In your letter of acceptance, we respectfully request a resume of your credentials, how long you have been decorating, classes taken, classes you teach, etc., so we may print this in our program.

Sincerely yours,

Name

Judging Chairman

Club Name

Phone

CONFERENCE JUDGE'S SCORE SHEET

Division _____ Category _____ Cake Number _____

Place appropriate abbreviation in blank spaces where it applies.

E = Excellent

VG = Very Good

G = Good (needs some improvement)

F = Fair (needs improvement)

1. Use of tips _____
2. Border work _____
3. Neatness and Precision _____
4. Choice and Use of Color _____
5. Creativity and Originality _____
6. Difficulty of Technique and Design _____
7. General Appearance _____
8. Closely Followed Assigned Theme in Category _____

Judge's Additional Comments

Check where applies

1st prize _____

2nd prize _____

3rd prize _____

Honorable Mention _____

Judge's Initials _____

CONFERENCE JUDGE'S SCORE SHEET
FOR FOREIGN TECHNIQUES

Division _____ Category _____ Cake Number _____

Place appropriate abbreviation in blank spaces where it applies.

E = Excellent

VG = Very Good

G = Good (needs some improvement)

F = Fair (needs improvement)

1. Difficulty of Technique _____
2. Precision _____
3. Originality within method _____
4. Is cake true to method _____
5. Overall balance of design _____
6. Proper use of color for desired effect _____
7. Cake covering proper and neat, free of air bubbles, cracks or wrinkles _____
8. Detail _____
9. Overall appearance _____
10. Comment on the following according to method used:
 - A. Execution of hard forms _____
 - B. Figures life-like _____
 - C. Furniture well made _____
 - D. Build-up work neat and even _____
 - E. Flowers life-like and delicate _____
 - F. Piping well done _____
 - G. Extension work even, Lace points spaced properly _____
 - H. Line on line work done neatly, each line touching with no spaces showing _____

Judge's Comments

Check where applies

1st prize _____

2nd prize _____

3rd prize _____

Honorable Mention _____

Judge's Initials _____

POINT SYSTEM JUDGE'S SCORE SHEET

SAMPLE 1

Division _____ Category _____ Cake Number _____

Highest possible score per cake is 30 points. Score will be computed by show committee. The score is based on the following codes:

- 5 – Excellent
- 4 – Very Good
- 3 – Good (needs some improvement)
- 2 – Fair (needs improvement)
- 1 – Poor

Judging	Points
Difficulty of technique	(1 – 5) _____
Use of tips	(1 – 5) _____
Borders, work and neatness	(1 – 5) _____
Color, choice and use	(1 – 5) _____
Creativity (original idea or clever adaptation of Another idea – no points for direct copy)	(1 – 5) _____
General appearance	(1 – 5) _____
Total number of points	_____

Judge's additional comments

Judge's Initials _____

SAMPLE 2

MARKING SHEET FOR SUGAR ART COMPETITION

1. The marking of each of the five criteria set out in Section 2 below is:

- 1 – 2 marks ----- Poor command of skills
- 3 – 4 marks ----- Imperfect understanding of technique and medium
- 5 – 6 marks ----- Reasonable skill – significant flaws
- 7 – 8 marks ----- High level of skill – minor flaws
- 9 – 10 marks ---- Meets the highest standards

Giving a total maximum mark of 50 from each judge. There will be two judges and marks will be added for a total of 100 marks.

2. The following criteria were used to judge the Cakes:

	<u>YOUR MARKS</u>
Creativity (use of techniques)	_____ marks
Balance, proportion and color	_____ marks
Coating quality (texture/evenness/ take-off marks/cracking/air bubbles, etc.)	_____ marks
Finishing quality (piping/line work/ scrollwork/lace work/side design, etc.)	_____ marks
Feature decoration (collars/top piece/ run-outs/flowers, etc.)	_____ marks

Additional Comments

Judge's Initials _____