



Module 2 - Section 1 - Variety of Sugarpaste/Fondant brands

Objective: Be able to identify a range of different sugarpastes/fondants and demonstrate/understand how to select them correctly for a given project.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Identify a range of sugarpastes/fondants and their varying qualities
- Select the best sugarpaste/fondant for your specific project
- Demonstrate when to use off-the-shelf coloured sugarpaste/fondant and when to colour the paste to meet design requirements
- Recover sugarpaste/fondant that has gone hard or dry
- Knead sugarpaste/fondant to the correct consistency

Assessment criteria:

1. Identify the different types of sugarpaste/fondant and their uses
2. Understand the ingredients used in sugarpaste/fondant
3. Know when to choose self coloured sugarpaste/fondant
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the sugarpaste/fondant rolling out process
5. Understand how to rescue sugarpaste/fondant that has gone hard and dry

Supporting notes:

Hygiene

Hands should be washed thoroughly prior to handling the sugarpaste/fondant.

Sugarpaste/fondant attracts a lot of small particles and foreign bodies in the air. They stick to the paste and can spoil the finished appearance of the cake, so every effort must be made to ensure that the workroom and its surfaces and tools are spotlessly clean.

The cake, cake board, and any tools to be used should be clean and fully prepared before the sugarpaste/fondant is rolled out, because sugarpaste/fondant must not be exposed to the air for longer than necessary, or it will begin to dry out. This will cause cracking and crazing.

Sugarpaste/Fondant

There are a wide variety of sugarpaste/fondant brands on the market.

The products all vary in content, price, flavour, texture, and characteristics.

All sugarpaste/fondant brands are generally made from the same basic ingredients: icing (powdered) sugar, liquid glucose/corn syrup, palm oil, gums, stabilisers, and preservatives. Recipes vary according to temperatures, humidity, and manufacturer.

It is the gums and glucose/corn syrup that give the sugarpaste/fondant its ability to be rolled out and flexibility. It can be coloured easily and also purchased in a variety of pre-mixed colours and pack sizes.

You can make your own sugarpaste/fondant, but there are so many good quality products on sale, that it is simply a matter of trying some out and choosing the product you find most flexible, has the best taste and fits into your budget requirements. For example, if you are making a wedding cake, you may choose to purchase a sugarpaste/fondant that will give the required degree of flexibility and finish. This tends to be the more expensive brands. However, if you are looking for a quick, easy, finish, then an off-the-shelf coloured sugarpaste/fondant would be the right choice for that cake.

Coloured sugarpaste/fondant will often contain e-numbered ingredients. Regulations surrounding the use of e-numbers in foods varies from country to country, but generally the more vibrant the colour, the more e-numbers are used.

Preparation prior to rolling out of the sugarpaste/fondant

All the design/planning should be completed before starting to prepare the sugarpaste/fondant. Before use, sugarpaste/fondant must be kneaded well to make it malleable (soft), flexible, and easy to roll. Begin kneading the paste by pushing it downwards and then out, using the heels of your hands. Fold the paste in half toward you and press down. Repeat the process until the surface formed on the paste is smooth.

This smooth base is turned up to the surface and is then rolled out using a non-stick rolling pin. The technique is similar to kneading pastry. To prevent the sugarpaste/fondant sticking to the rolling surface, a little icing (powdered) sugar should be sprinkled on the rolling surface. Cornflour should not be used because it contains a natural yeast, which may react with the moisture from the cake and cause a gas to form. This may cause a bulge to form under the cake covering. It is important not to overwork the sugarpaste/fondant because it may become too sticky and this causes difficulty when rolling out the paste.

If you leave rolled sugarpaste out to dry, you will get an elephant skin effect, which is certainly something you want to avoid. As you'll see from the video, elephant skin is not the desired look for a quality finished cake. The more expensive brands tend to have a higher tolerance, so can be left out longer before drying out.

Should your paste dry out or have an elephant skin, the best way to recover it is to add a little vegetable fat. If your paste is rock hard, then you can warm it slightly with a very short burst in the microwave, before adding the vegetable fat.

Storage of sugarpaste/fondant

Sugarpaste/fondant dries out when exposed to the air, so covering and storage is very important. It should be kept in a cool room, covered with polythene, sealed well to exclude air, and in a cardboard box.

Tip: When covering a cake, any leftover pieces of sugarpaste/fondant should be formed into a ball, covered with clingfilm/clear wrap, to exclude air and returned to the storage box.