



Module 6 - Section 3 - Royal Icing covering

Objective: Neatly apply royal icing to a covered rich fruit cake.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Create an easy to cut royal iced coating
- Remove air bubbles, before applying the royal icing to the cake
- Recognise the royal icing consistencies required for each layer
- Demonstrate the royal icing covering process
- Finish the cake with a smooth a layer of royal icing

Assessment criteria:

1. Correctly alter the royal icing consistency to provide a softer surface finish
2. Identify the process of removing air bubbles, before applying a royal icing layer
3. Identify the royal icing consistencies required for each layer of royal icing
4. Identify the correct royal icing covering process
5. Produce a royal iced cake with a smooth finish

You will Need:

Tools and ingredients for the whole Module are listed in Lesson 1.

Method:

- Ensure the work surface and tools are clean and free from bacteria and fats
- Add two teaspoons of glycerine to 1kg of stiff peak royal icing
- Paddle out enough royal icing to cover the top of the cake on the work surface
- Apply the royal icing to the top of the cake and spread evenly
- Level off to a smooth finish using a metal ruler
- Scrape off the excess at the edges of the cake
- Leave to dry for a minimum of 6 hours
- Paddle out enough royal icing to cover the sides of the cake
- Apply a coating to the sides of the cake, then smooth off using a side scraper
- Remove the top edge lip, then leave to dry for 6 hours
- Add a little water until a soft peak consistency is achieved
- Repeat the process above, ensuring a smooth finish
- This process should be repeated until the icing is smooth enough for a neat final coat
- The final coat is applied using a soft peak to run-out consistency
- Repeat the covering process as for the previous layers
- Ensure that the surface is as smooth as it possibly can be
- Cover the cake drum
- Once the cake drum icing is dry the decoration can begin

Supporting Notes:

Covering a cake in royal icing is a time consuming process, but when done well will give a sharp, neat finish. Unlike sugarpaste/fondant cakes, which can be covered straight away, a royal iced cake first requires the marzipan layer to dry. Once the cake has been left overnight the royal icing cover can begin. Be prepared for some long drying times with two to five coats needed for some cakes, which will all be explained later.

As with all cake decorating, ensure that the work surface and tools are thoroughly cleaned before starting. Bacteria and fats will react with royal icing, so it is especially important to ensure that everything is spotlessly clean.

Stiff peak royal icing in its pure form will set solid. This can lead to amusement as the bride and groom try the first cut of a solidly iced cake. It is also very difficult to eat when it's so hard. To make the royal icing a little softer and easier to cut, a small amount of glycerine can be added to the mix. It is recommended that you add one teaspoon of glycerine to 500g of royal icing. This ensures that the royal icing will set firmly, but the couple will be able to cut through the icing without too many problems.

Royal icing with added glycerine is normally only used for coating cakes and gives the cake covering a crumbing or powdering action when cutting. Royal icing with glycerine in should not be used for delicate string work, runout pieces, off pieces etc., due to the action of the glycerine. The glycerine will continue to attract moisture to the icing, even when it appears totally dry. It therefore weakens the structure of anything that is not fully supported by the surface of the cake.

Most paste or gel colours have glycerin or glycerides as an ingredient, so any royal icing coloured with these types of colour would become weaker. However, if you are making pastel colours the danger is minimal. There are some brands that claim not to have glycerine or glycerides in them, however, unless you carefully read every label it is better to avoid them to be sure.

An 8" round cake will require 800g-1kg of stiff peak royal icing. Ensure the cake has been stuck down to the centre of the board, which can be done using some royal icing.

Start by placing enough royal icing to cover the top of the cake onto the work surface. Paddle the royal icing out to remove any air bubbles. Stiff peak royal icing will likely have more air bubbles than the soft peak or run-out mixes, so it might take a bit of work. Once the air bubbles have been removed, spread evenly to the top of the cake. Keep spreading and paddling the royal icing to remove any further air bubbles, ensuring that the spread is even and completely covers the top of the cake.

Scrape the surface using a long metal ruler to achieve a flat, smooth coating on top of the cake. Using a side scraper, remove any excess from the sides of the cake. This should then be left to air dry for at least 6 hours, but preferably overnight. Any sharp edges can be shaved off using a small sharp knife, to ensure that the lip is removed from the edge.

As the royal icing will have been sitting for a while, soften it up with a slow, gentle mix. Repeat the spread and paddling process with the royal icing for the sides of the cake. Apply a thick layer to the sides, paddling back and forward again to remove any unwanted air bubbles. Scrape the side of the cake to achieve a smooth, flat, finish. It is important to hold the scraper at an angle and that the cake moves slowly on a turntable while the cake is static. Paul demonstrates the process clearly in the accompanying video.

The sides should be as close to 90 degrees as possible, which can be checked by holding the sharp edge of the scraper to form a 90 degree angle against the cake drum. This provides the opportunity to check and correct any issues. Covering the sides will create a lip on the top edge of the cake, which should be removed using a palette knife to form a neat edge finish. It is important to scrape towards the centre of the cake and away from the soft

edge. This will avoid damaging the newly applied icing. The cake should be left for another minimum of 6 hours. Paul explains in the video that due to the humidity, he had to leave the cake overnight on top of the 6 hours he had already given, just for the royal icing to set.

Royal icing can be coloured as explained in lesson 1. Paul uses a liquid colour and adds a little water to achieve the soft peak consistency for the second layer. It is then just a case of repeating the process of paddling the royal icing back and forward to release any air bubbles for the second layer. Then apply the royal icing to the top of the cake as before, but with it now being a soft peak consistency the royal icing will be a little smoother. Scrape off the top layer using a long metal ruler, being careful not to touch the layer below. As before, remove the excess overhang with a palette knife. As more layers are added, it is even more important to achieve a smooth finish. The smoother the finish, the fewer the layers that are needed. Leave the cake for at least 6 hours, or until the second layer on top has set.

Repeat the process of trimming the sharp edge, then paddle out some more royal icing for the sides of the cake. It is important to take time to ensure a smooth finish and that all the air bubbles have been removed. If the layer is not smooth, scrape off the top lip and apply royal icing to the sides and smooth again. Once a smooth finish has been achieved, again scrape off the top lip to achieve a sharp edge, then leave to set.

The third coat can be the final coat so it is best to go for a royal icing consistency softer than soft peak, but not quite run-out consistency. The royal icing should still form a peak, but it should fall fairly quickly. The softer the consistency, the less likely there are to be air bubbles. The third layer of royal icing can be applied straight on to the top of the cake but, if at all concerned, paddle out on the work surface first.

It is exactly the same process as for the previous layers, but each added layer must be smoother than the one before. Paul opts to use three covering layers, so the third is his final layer. This must be very smooth and it is important not to rush things. Keep smoothing and checking and re-doing where necessary, but it is important that the final finish is as smooth and neat as possible. The drying time becomes a little less as we move from stiff to a soft peak to run-out consistency, but it will still need at least 4 hours before the final layer to cover the sides of the cake.

Once the final layer has dried, carry out a final check and scrape off any excess to make the finish as smooth as possible. To finish the cake, apply a layer of soft peak to run-out consistency to the cake drum. As before, paddle the royal icing to remove air bubbles, then apply to the cake drum. Starting where the side join mark is, scrape the royal icing to leave behind a smooth covered finish. This will leave a thin trim on the side of the cake, that can be scraped off using a sharp knife. The edge of the cake drum should also be trimmed, leaving a neatly iced cake.