

Endorsements/ Ambassador and Affiliate Programs

There are many companies out there who will sponsor you for projects, classes and collaborations.

I'm the brand ambassador for "Renshaw" the world's largest and oldest manufacturer of rolled fondant, gumpaste, marzipan and other bakery related products.

Renshaw sponsors events around the world and many cake shows in the UK and USA feature large installations where incredible sugar artists like Emma Jayne and companies like "Magic Chocolate" do the same with artists like Daniel Dieguez.

There are dozens of companies who can help support you for a cake show cake, competitions and cake-war types of shows, so reach out to them. You may get offered free product for endorsement in a class, online class, etc. Someone like "Sweet Ambs," Amber Speigel is able to do what she does through ads and endorsement on her Facebook page. Endorsements are now not just for athletes! It can be for us all! Use a product, love a product and the company and it's amazing what could potentially happen.

You can approach companies about affiliate programs. I desired to use a "Arkon" mount in my live demonstrations. I contacted them about possibly becoming a brand affiliate. They were delighted and sent me the "Arkon" mount at no charge and a brand affiliate link and embroidered patch. (See video.) The provided link means that anyone ordering from the link that you post will get you a percentage of the sale. I have worked with many companies like this, but remember I'm very well known in our industry and the pastry arena so when I approach a company, I have a track record. When starting out, say you do a video or live demonstration and use a product, mention the product several times and see what the feedback is by tagging the product, the manufacturer, etc. That will send a message and then follow up with them.

About working together. Don't feel shy to reach out and ask if you could work together and inquire if you could get a patch for your chef's jacket or apron. (See video.) I am also an ambassador for "Kitchen Aid" and they supply me with the mixers and pasta attachments I need for my school as well as award prizes for cake shows I'm a part of. (See video.)

I'm also part of the "Culinary Council" for "Nielsen Massey Vanillas."

There are lots of companies like Renshaw, Satin Ice, Sarachino, Magic Colors, Sugar Press that have dozens of ambassadors. And companies like Sugarin that have Sugarin brands that are chosen based on the artists expertise in the sugar arts. Artist like Serdar Yenner has a pastillage, and Karen Portaleo is about to launch a line of paints. These are artists who have a brand rather than say Satin Ice who have dozens of brand ambassadors who support the Satin Ice brand. If you are more specific to a certain technique or medium, you might need to find a smaller company to support you with product. In return, you promote them as your brand of choice.

But remember to be true to yourself and your art! When a company provides you with free product, you must believe in the product. Your students, fans and followers will look to you for advice. Never endorse something you don't like or use. By doing so that is a recipe for failure, and your peers will not respect you.

In my professional life I have represented brands that I no longer am able to endorse. A few years back I was working with a large US pastry distributor promoting and helping to develop a range of rolled fondant / sugar paste, gum paste / flower paste, and colors. We were the first food related company in the world to bring out a trend color each year. This color was usually based on the "Pantone Color of the Year." Now, many fondant companies do this. This organization was focused on the professional pastry chef, hotel and cruise industry. Unfortunately, they were unable to scale-down and provide for the home baker or small business by having products packaged into smaller retail packs. As such, we decided to part ways, but that was only a difference of opinion. Today, I still have a wonderful working business relationship with this company and the many people I worked with there.

Another time I was approached by a company wanting to make my gumpaste and all seemed well until the product became inconsistent. With my name on the package it was a decision to do a cease and desist. Again, it was a mutual agreement and sadly these things do happen. My advice is move on and do not say or post unprofessional things about what has happened for the world to read on social media. It is not being a professional to air your laundry and does not look good to other future prospective companies that may be considering you as an artist to work with them or ask you to create a line with them.

You are an ambassador for yourself and you never know who is reading your posts or observing you at a cake show. You must keep it professional all the time you are in public. Our industry is very small and if you do not do a good job teaching a class or demonstrating at a show other instructors, shop owners and cake show organizers will hear about it. If you burn bridges along the way you will indeed have a short career. And remember to always be respectful to those who traveled the same path and came before you.

Also, most things have been done before, like fashion. Don't post, "I invented this!" until you have done your homework and make sure it's an original method, recipe or concept.

Another little bit of advice is that you cannot be a master of every technique. It's best to concentrate on a single or couple of techniques as you stand a better chance of being picked up by a company looking for an expert in a particular medium or field. For example, if I was bringing out some paint colors for cakes, Emily Hankins is who comes to mind. She is an expert in one medium, that she excels at, and does it to the highest level. Or a company bringing out a modeling paste, Sachiko Windebel is who I would approach to work with as that's what Sachiko does, with incredible ease, as that is her specialty.

I only use 3 mediums gumpaste/ flower paste, rolled fondant /sugar paste and royal icing.

I do not air brush, do sculpted cakes, do figure modeling, work with modeling chocolate and many other techniques. I decided at 16 years old I needed to find a part of cake and pastry that I wanted to excel at and not try to master everything. When someone wants to learn a certain technique, they go to a specialist. Just like a medical general practitioner has an overall knowledge of the medical field but would send you to a specialist when needed for a certain condition.