

Making a Durable Fake Cake

By Jim Scott - March 23, 2019

The script for *Bingo: The Winning Musical* by Helitzman, Reid, and Holcenberg describes a bingo hall with, among other things, "a table piled high with cakes". Not far into Act I, this action occurs:

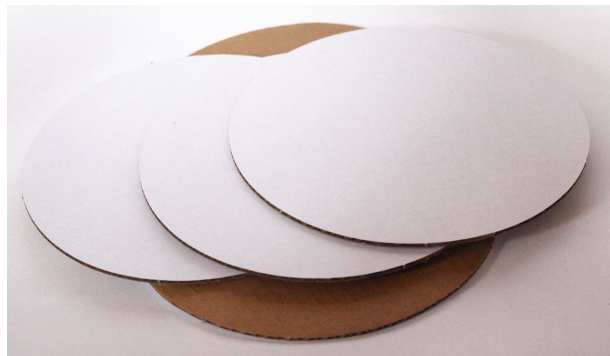
PATSY and HONEY are standing in front of the cake table stage right onstage. In one swift move they bundle up the cakes with the table cloth and exit stage right.

We decided to have three cakes, eight inches in diameter, and about four inches high. They would have to look like real cakes, but would need to be durable enough to take some buffeting in each performance.

Each cake requires the following materials and tools, as described later in the text:

- About 12 eight-inch cake circles (see first illustration)
- A strip of flexible poster board, about four inches wide and a little over 25" long
- Elmer's Glue or similar
- Two tubes of cheap white caulk (\$1 each at Dollar Tree)
- Food coloring
- Caulk gun
- Pastry spatula (see second illustration, with caulk gun)
- Square-ended putty knife (not too wide)
- Disposable cake decorating bag
- Borders tip of your choice

"Cake circles" can be purchased in any store that sells tools and materials for baking cakes. Most large hobby stores sell them. Each cake begins as a stack of 10-12 eight-inch cake circles glued on top of one another. Elmer's Glue works well. The resulting cylinder should be as nearly perfectly vertical as possible, with no slant, and no individual cake circles sticking out.



Once that glue has dried, cut a piece of flexible poster board to wrap around the outside of the cake circle cylinder. The width of this piece should be the same as the height of the stack of cake circles, about four inches, and the length should be the same as the circumference of the stack; $8" \times \pi =$ a little more than 25". Apply glue (Elmer's again) to the entire area of one side of this strip of poster board, then wrap the strip tightly around the stack (glue side in) and tape the ends together, holding it tightly in place while the glue dries.

Next comes the icing. Buy some cheap white caulk, in the cylindrical tubes that go into a caulk gun. Buy two tubes of caulk per cake. You'll also need a pastry spatula, as shown here.



Begin by icing the top of the cake. Using the caulk gun, spread a quantity of caulk across the top, then smooth it out with the pastry spatula. There should be enough irregularity to make it look like real icing. Allow the caulk to dry and harden overnight.

Next ice the side of the cake, the cylindrical outer surface. You'll probably need to turn the cake on its side and do one-third of the side at a time, allowing each to dry overnight.

Then I recommend repeating these steps to put a second layer of icing all over.

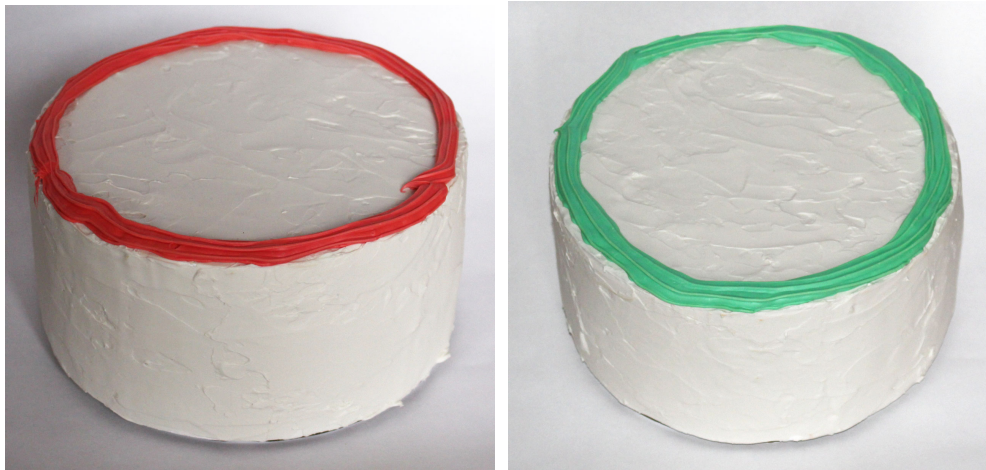
Finally, you should add some trim to the outside edge of the top surface, using colored caulk. This requires a set of disposable cake decorating bags, and at least one borders tip. You don't need a collar to attach the tip to the bag; just push the tip down into the bottom end of the bag to get an idea of how much to cut off of the bag. Then push the tip partly through the hole, so that the bottom 1/8" of the tip protrudes, and the rest of the tip fits tightly and securely within the bag.



To color your white caulk, use regular food color. To trim one cake, you'll need about five ounces of caulk, about the size of a wide-mouthed single-serving Chobani yogurt container. Squeeze some caulk into the yogurt container, enough to cover the bottom. Add a couple of drops of food color, then stir with the spatula or putty knife. Continue adding caulk and food color until you've put in a total of about ten drops of food color, and the container is nearly full. The caulk should have uniform color throughout.

Using the pastry spatula and a square-ended putty knife (not the wide kind), transfer the colored caulk into the wide, open end of the decorating bag. It sounds messy, but it's not

too difficult. Squeeze the caulk in the bag down toward the tip, then carefully apply it to the top circumference of the cake. Do not allow it to hang over the edge, or it will sag.



Once everything is dry, you might want to glue one more un-iced cake circle to the bottom.

The same store that sold the cake circles will also sell fold-it-yourself cake boxes. An eight-inch diameter cake needs a ten-inch cake box. A four-inch high cake should fit easily.

