

Cake Craft Shop

Dowelling A Cake With Pillars



What you need!

- Dowels
- Pillars
- Pencil or edible ink pen
- Greaseproof paper
- Cake scriber or cocktail stick
- Small hacksaw, sharp knife or heavy duty scissors

Introduction

Using pillars to separate cake tiers is a very traditional way of displaying a wedding cake. Even though stacked cakes have become increasingly popular over recent years, there will always be a place for the more traditional look as pillars not only give dramatic height to a cake but can add a touch of elegance. The space created by the pillars can be left clear showing only the decoration on the cake or can be filled with sugar, silk or fresh flowers.

Until fairly recently in history, a wedding cake would have consisted of rich fruit cakes always covered in royal icing – a combination that could be assembled fairly safely without using dowels. However, fashion changes and nowadays a wedding cake can be made out of sponge cake, chocolate cake or even coffee cake – anything goes really! The royal icing has often been replaced with sugarpaste, a soft icing that is rolled out. These combinations, even a rich fruit cake covered in sugarpaste, will not withstand any weight on top of them and therefore the cakes and pillars need to be supported by dowels.

You can use wooden or plastic dowels as long as they are bought from a cake supplier so that they are food safe, just remember to wash & dry them before use. The number of dowels you use depends on the size & shape of the cake, usually 3 - 4 dowels up to an 8 inch cake, 4 dowels up to a 10 inch and 5 dowels in larger cakes. The preparation and covering of the cakes beforehand is really important as every cake should be completely level.

Step 1

Start with the bottom tier. The easiest way to make sure that the dowels are evenly placed is to use a template cut out of greaseproof paper the same shape and size as the cake. When using 4 dowels fold the template in half and then in half again to create quarter sections. Now open up the template and pencil a mark on each of the 4 creases using the guide below. For 5 dowels mark the centre of the template as well. Making a template for 3 dowels sitting in a triangle is more difficult, so we have drawn the template out for you (see page 4).

This can be used for all sizes of cakes, simply trace it out onto a larger template extending the lines from the centre point. As before, use the guide below to obtain maximum stability.

Guide – Markings For Dowels Using The Distance From The Centre Of The Cake.

6"/15cm cake	2"/5cm from centre
8"/ 20cm cake	2.5"/6.5cm from centre
10"/25.5cm cake	3"/9cm from centre
12"/ 30.5cm cake	3.5"/ 9cm from cake



Handy hint - when marzipanning, covering & dowelling your cakes, use a small spirit level to check everything is level - for hygiene simply sit it on a strip of greaseproof.

Handy hint - draw around the cake tins to make the templates.

Step 2

Place the template centrally onto the cake and with a cake scriber or cocktail stick, prick through the template marking the icing where the dowels are to go.



Step 3

Remove the template and push the dowels firmly into the cake until they stop against the cake board.



Step 4

Now place the pillars on the cake and rest a ruler across 2 of the opposite pillars. Mark a line across the 2 dowels against the ruler and move the ruler to sit across the other 2 pillars. Again mark the dowels and remove the pillars. Carefully remove the dowels by twisting gently upwards and wipe away any cake residue with kitchen paper.



Step 5

Lay the dowels down flat on your kitchen surface next to each other with the markings facing upwards. If the cake is completely level all the marks will run in an even line and the dowels are ready to be cut to size. If the cake is not completely level, the marks will vary slightly in height so take the highest pencil mark and draw a line across all the dowels to this level.



Step 6

One by one place each dowel on a chopping board and with a small hacksaw or sharp serrated knife cut them all to the same height. If using plastic dowels you can use heavy duty scissors to cut or score and snap the dowels but you may have to rub any uneven surface down afterwards with fine sand paper. Just remember to wash and dry the dowels afterwards. Now all the dowels should be the same height which is the depth of the cake plus pillar.



Transporting the cake

For two tier cakes without a tall top decoration, the 'Heavy Duty' cake boxes are ideal but for anything taller we recommend the 'Stacking Box'. This is a sturdy deep box which has an insert to hold the cake in place. They are more expensive but take away the worry of transporting the cake safely. Always place the cake completely flat in the boot of the car packed with cushions to stop any movement.



Handy hint - don't forget to ask for the cake box back!

Step 7

Place pillars back over the dowels.



Step 8

The cake can now be assembled. The cake shown here has not been decorated but we would always recommend decorating the cake first before dowelling.



3 dowels triangle template

