



# Dixie's Icing

Not too sweet; no greasy aftertaste!



## From Dixie's Kitchen THE SAGA OF BAKING A CAKE

It is my opinion that the best way to ruin a good cake mix is to follow the package directions! Basic package instructions are as follows: Bake at 350° for 30 to 35 minutes, cool 15 minutes, turn out of pan, cool completely before frosting.

Following above instructions, here's the results: There's a large mound in the middle of the cake, usually cracked. The edges are very low, and quite dry. After the 15-minute wait time, the cake is still quite hot, so it's very fragile and breaks when tipped out onto its top. The more you try to save it, the worse it breaks. If you leave it alone until it's cool, it sticks to the surface of whatever you dumped it onto and breaks worse when you try to adjust its placement for icing and decorating.

Did I remember to mention baking in the "real world," where you finally got it out of the oven at midnight after getting home from work, feeding the family, checking on homework, doing the dishes, etc.? Then, to keep the cake from drying out, you want to at least get a coat of icing on it before you go to bed. You're too tired to do anything else (like move) while waiting for the cake to cool (akin to watching paint dry), so you get to work. Since the cake is just barely cooled (because you really want to go to bed), crumbs keep pulling up. Then, the more careful you are and the more you try to fix the problem, the worse it gets. By the time you get to sleep, there's precious little time before you need to start the new day, all perky and happy (??), because you were up so late working on your celebration dessert. I believe most people in the world that are awake at 2:30 AM are cake decorators!

Life is too short to live like that! Here is the way I handle the situation. It's quick and simple. Give it a try. I think it will make cake decorating much more fun while greatly improving the quality of your cakes, but without going to extreme measures by using multiple additives, pan insulation strips, and the like. You will need NONE of that stuff!

Ready? Here goes...

## GENERAL PREPARATION

- Bake cakes at **300°F**, not 350°F as the packaging instructs. A lower temperature will yield a much flatter surface, without cracks, and the edges will be soft and moist. An oven thermometer is essential in determining correct oven temperature, as ovens and dials rarely match.
- Use **cold eggs**, directly from the refrigerator; water should be either refrigerated or iced.
- Reducing the amount of vegetable oil makes for a lighter cake that cuts clean; no gummy, sticky knife!
- Grease bottom and sides of pans with **solid shortening**, then dust with **flour**; or use "**Pan Spread**."

### Pan Spread Recipe

**1/2 cup solid shortening**

**1 cup flour**

**1/2 cup vegetable oil.**

#### Steps:

1. Blend with mixer until smooth. The consistency will be like cake batter.
2. Store mix in the refrigerator until needed.
3. Remove from cold storage approx. 10-15 before use to allow mix to soften.
4. Apply mix to pans.

## CAKE MIX ADJUSTMENTS

My personal favorite brand to use as a starter mix is Duncan Hines®, but all brands will work similarly. More importantly, [Duncan Hines® Classic White Cake Mix](#) weighs **15.25 oz** by volume, but other brands may differ slightly for a similar product.

### White Cake Mix

**3 large egg whites (approx. 1/2 cup)**

**1 cup water**

**1/4 cup flour**

**2 Tablespoons oil**

### Devil's Food and Most Variety Flavors

**3 whole large eggs (2/3 cups)**

**1 cup water**

**1/4 cup flour**

**2 Tablespoons oil**

## BAKING

- Again, **BAKE AT 300°F!** Not 350, like it says on the box. Also, careful not to go under 300°F, or the cake can dehydrate long before it's done.
- **Do not overload the oven!** Leave space between pans and do not let pans touch the oven walls.
- **Do not over bake!** "Done" can be determined by the following:

**TOUCH** - a very slight finger imprint will remain.

**TOOTHPICK** - it will come out clean.

**SMELL** - when the aroma suddenly fills the kitchen, it's done!

#### **Baking Times by Pan Shape & Size:**

**9" x 13"** sheet cake, about **35** minutes

**8" x 12"** sheet cake, about **45** minutes

**8"** layer cake (2 pans), about **30** minutes

**9"** layer cake (2 pans), about **25** minutes

## COOLING

- Allow the cake to cool in the pan. The cooler it is, the firmer it is, making it easier to handle and helps prevent damage.
- If it cools too much before removing from the pan, it can get stuck. In this case, turn on a stove burner and slightly warm the bottom of the pan, but only enough to melt the oil/flour coating. The cake will flip right out!
- If necessary, placing a kitchen towel lightly over the cake will keep it from drying out for a few hours (e.g., until morning).

## ASSEMBLY

- Boards or plates should be **3" to 4" larger** than the cake (e.g., use a 12" board for a 9" cake)
- Trim off very high bumps with a knife; slight ones are O.K.
- Sheet cakes go **top side down**.
- For layer cakes, the first layer should go **top down**, second layer **top up** (bottoms together).

## ICING

- Ice your cakes only when **completely cool**.
- Use a generous amount of icing and never allow the spatula to touch bare cake.

### Steps:

1. Ice the **sides first**, then spread excess icing over top of cake.
2. Use additional icing as necessary to cover the top.
3. Once completely coated, let the cake get **cold throughout**. Either refrigerate for a few hours or put the cake in the freezer until the icing is hard to the touch (approx. 10 - 15 minutes).
4. Once the cake is **cold**, take it out and add a second **thin and smooth** coat of **fresh icing**.
5. To finish off, hold the spatula still while slowly spinning the cake; use a revolving stand for the best results.