

COMMON

Cake Decorating Problems &

HOW TO AVOID THEM

THE CRUMBLING CAKE

There are a couple of solutions to this problem. Pick one of these to try, or do a combination of both depending on how crumbly your cake is.

Chill your cake (but only for a bit). Pop that puppy in the fridge for about 15 to 20 minutes, or in the freezer for maybe 5 to 10 minutes. You don't want to chill it all the way through, or you'll have problems with air pockets (see below). You only want the outside to firm up just a bit. Most of the time, this trick really helps.

Try just doing a crumb coat first with your icing thinned a bit. Just take a small amount of your buttercream and thin it just slightly with milk and do a very thin coat all over your cake. Now just pop it in the fridge for about 5 to 10 minutes max. Remember, you don't want it to get too cold, because that'll cause issues later. You just want the crumb coat to firm up. Then you can do the outside coat of buttercream.

BUTTERCREAM BLOWOUTS

These air pockets, in my experience, form because of moisture. Now you want your cake moist, of course, so you don't want to be making a dry cake, just because you don't want any blowouts. That's not the fix here. The issue is when moisture gets trapped between the cake and the buttercream. The fix? Well, I've found when you chill your cake completely and then ice it, it traps condensation between your cake and your buttercream.

So in the first problem we talked about (the crumbling cake) I mentioned to chill it for a bit. The trick is if you do chill it, chill it for the minimum amount of time you can get a way with. Now, if you're using a perishable icing or buttercream, you won't have much choice and you'll have to keep it chilled fully.

I've found the problem occurs when it's been chilled or kept in the fridge, then brought out to serve and it sits on the table for awhile. That's when the blow-out occurs. Usually what happens is you decorate your cake, take tons of time smoothing the buttercream and getting it perfect, then you come back the next day to take it to the event and BAM! a huge blow out on the side.

I know what I'm saying is a little controversial and a lot of people disagree and love to decorate and keep their cakes chilled. Do what works best for you, but for me, it has always caused blowouts. It doesn't hurt to try something new though, if you're having trouble with those pesky air pockets.

Another thing to note is you want to make sure your cake layers are leveled, that the tops are flat and that the cake has had time to settle...which we'll talk about below.

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ICING RIDGES

This can happen for several reasons. It's easy to over fill between the layers of cake. Your icing could be a little thin as well. But I've got some tips...

Some people like to use what they call an icing dam. I personally have not had much luck with this method, but some people do. If you want to try it, you'll just take a bit of icing, thicken it up with some confectioners sugar, if you're using American Buttercream, and pipe a line around the cake layer. Next you'll just fill in with your regular buttercream, then stack your cake layer on top. This hasn't completely stopped the ridges for me, so I tend to do something a little different, but it takes a little more time.

What I like to do is layer my cakes like normal (I don't normally use a dam), but I'm very careful not to over-fill between the layers. I'll then add a thin layer of buttercream (like a crumb coat) over the entire cake. I loosely cover it with saran wrap or press-n-seal wrap and let it 'settle'.

I don't chill my cakes because that firms everything up and I want the cake to settle before I do all the decorating. Let it settle for at least an hour minimum...several hours is better, over night is even better. Once it's settled, go back and scrape off any excess that has squeezed out of the sides. Then you can go ahead and coat the whole cake with buttercream and continue decorating. This is what works best for me.

SLIDING & LEANING CAKES

There are a couple of things that can cause this.

The cake layers need to be leveled. You either want to take a long knife or you can use a cake leveler and even off the dome of the cake...even if it's just a small dome. You want each cake layer to be completely flat. This will also help prevent bulges in your buttercream as well. Uneven cake layers will cause all kinds of problems and the whole cake could even move on you while you're trying to ice it.

Also make sure your buttercream isn't too thin. This one is probably fairly obvious, but if your buttercream isn't thick enough, your cake layers are going to slide around on you.

BUTTERCREAM ISN'T SMOOTH

Since smoothing buttercream seems to be a huge issue plus the fact that I've got a ton of tips to help with that, I wrote an entire blog post about it. You can find that here: [How to Get Smooth Buttercream](https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/tips-for-smooth-buttercream/) - <https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/tips-for-smooth-buttercream/>

For even more tips, check out these other blog posts:

[Inexpensive Supplies You Need to Start Decorating Cakes](https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/inexpensive-supplies-to-start-decorating-cakes/) - <https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/inexpensive-supplies-to-start-decorating-cakes/>

[How to Get Moist Cakes](https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/how-to-get-moist-cakes/) - <https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/how-to-get-moist-cakes/>

[How to Get Smooth Buttercream](https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/tips-for-smooth-buttercream/) - <https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/tips-for-smooth-buttercream/>

[25 Insanely Useful Tips for Baking Cakes](https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/insanely-useful-tips-baking-cakes/) - <https://iscreamforbuttercream.com/insanely-useful-tips-baking-cakes/>