Before we go further, attention must be paid to the cake itself. Traditionally, a wedding cake comprises a rich fruit cake covered with almond paste or marzipan and coated with royal icing. It is possible to use royal icing on a light fruit cake, Madeira, or sponge cake, but marzipan or almond paste will still be required prior to icing. A rich fruit cake, and should be made several weeks in advance.

If you use a sponge cake it will have to be made, decorated and consumed quite quickly as the cake will not keep fresh for long. In my opinion, a rich fruit cake is the ideal base when using royal icing.

Most people who have an interest in cake decorating have already found that they have a talent for baking cakes. Therefore, if you already have your own recipe, use it. For those who would like a recipe, the one I use is shown at the end of this chapter.

**Depth or Thickness of Cake**

When making a cake, particular attention must be paid to the depth or thickness. If, for instance, you are making a 25 cm (10 in.) diameter cake and intend the finished cake to be 8 cm (3 in.) deep, then the cake alone must be much less than this to allow for the paste. How much paste you apply is for the individual to decide. The amount of mixture per tin suggested in my previous book was less than I now use and the marzipan was much thicker.

The thickness of icing can be discounted; even allowing for several coats, it will not be more than 5 mm (1/4 in.).

Individuals vary on how deep they think a cake should be. I do not like tall cakes, and consider a 20 cm (8 in.) diameter cake that is 7 cm (2 3/4 in.) deep when coated to be correctly proportioned. Obviously, larger cakes should be thicker — about 7.5 cm (3 in.) deep for a 28 cm (11 in.) diameter cake and smaller cakes much less. For example, the 10 cm (4 in.) diameter cake in Fig. 37 is 5 cm (2 in.) deep.

When assessing the depth of wedding cakes it is acceptable for all the cakes to be the same thickness, because when a wedding cake is assembled it is seen as a single cake. I prefer the tiers of a wedding cake to be graduated however; the thickest being at the bottom, the thinnest at the top, and the difference in thickness between neighbouring tiers to be uniform throughout. This gives the cake a balanced look.

**Cake Tins**

These are available in many different shapes and sizes (Fig. 4), starting at 10 cm (4 in.) in diameter. I prefer a tin not to have a loose base and I avoid buying a square tin that has rounded corners.

![Fig. 4. Cake tins.](image-url)
Never be tempted to over-fill a cake tin, even if you find that the amount of mixture is only slightly too much. Put left over mixture to one side and bake a small cake with it. The cake does not have to be baked immediately and mixture will keep, covered, in a cool place until the following day if necessary. A small cake makes an excellent ‘sample’ for someone who has not previously tasted your mixture. Small cakes also make ideal gifts for people who live alone.

**Lining a Cake Tin**

I do not fully-line a cake tin because I find a piece of greaseproof paper, placed in the base of the tin, is adequate. To do this, place the tin on a sheet of greaseproof paper; draw around it with a pencil and cut out, slightly inside the pencil line. This should fit the base of the cake tin perfectly. As I always bake fruit cakes at a low temperature, I find complete lining of the tin to be unnecessary. Large cakes (28 cm (11 in.) diameter and upwards) may require insulation in order to ensure that the outside does not become burnt before the inside is fully cooked. A simple way of overcoming this problem is to wrap brown paper around the outside of the tin prior to baking. To do this, make a band of brown paper, double thickness, about 5 cm (2 in.) more than the height of the tin. This is placed around the tin and secured with either string or staples (Fig. 5). This band may be removed during the last hour of baking.

**Storing the Cake**

Fruit cake should be left in the tin until it is cold. To ensure easy removal, draw a palette knife along the side of the cake tin. Turn out onto a clean surface and remove the greaseproof paper from the bottom of the cake. Wrap the cake in greaseproof paper and seal with tape (Fig. 6). Wrap again in foil and store on a shelf or in a cupboard until required.

**Recipe**

The following is the recipe I use for making a 20 cm (8 in.) diameter round cake.

**Ingredients**

- 225 g (8 oz) plain flour
- Half teaspoonful ground cinammon
- Half teaspoonful ground mixed spice
- Half teaspoonful ground mace
- 225 g (8 oz) butter
- 225 g (8 oz) dark soft brown sugar
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- The grated rind of one lemon
- 225 g (8 oz) currants
- 225 g (8 oz) sultanas
- 225 g (8 oz) seedless raisins
- 100 g (4 oz) glace cherries, halved
- 100 g (4 oz) mixed chopped peel
- 50 g (2 oz) nibbed almonds
- 2–3 tablespoonful brandy

The above ingredients equal one mix in Table 1.