

HOW TO FROST A LAYER CAKE

Frosting a layer cake may seem intimidating, but it's actually fun! There is something innately beautiful about the imperfection of a home-made cake, so I never sweat it too much. I love how every frosted cake looks a little different, making them truly custom creations. With a few simple guidelines, you'll be topping those layers with confidence and style in no time.

It's best if your cake layers are as level as possible; this helps stabilize the cake and prevent the layers from sliding around, allowing you to frost more easily and uniformly. To level layers, once they're baked and cooled, use a serrated knife to slice off any rounded, domed tops; save those trimmings for snacking, or for my Cupcake Truffles (page 106).

A **revolving cake stand**—essentially a lazy Susan on a pedestal—is a handy tool for frosting, allowing you to rotate the cake as you frost and giving you 360-degree access to your cake at any time.

A **crumb coat** is a thin layer of frosting that picks up and traps any crumbs on the surface of the cake, preventing them from adulterating the appearance and texture of your frosted cake. Here's how to do it: Once you've frosted between the layers, dollop about ½ cup frosting in the center of the top layer of your cake. Using an offset spatula and working outward, spread the frosting out and onto the sides of the cake, covering as evenly and completely as possible (remember, this is just a thin layer that does not have to look perfect, since no one will ever see it!). Pop the coated cake in the freezer for 15 to 20 minutes, remove, and proceed with frosting.

To **fully frost your cake**, dollop fresh (preferably just-made), room-temperature frosting in the center of the cake (again, this gives you maximum spreading control in any direction). (If your frosting has been chilled, bring it to room temperature for at least 1 hour, then beat it at medium speed until creamy, 1 minute, making sure not to incorporate too much air into the frosting.) Using your offset spatula, move the frosting outward, rotating the cake stand when necessary to help facilitate spreading. Don't press too hard against the cake, but apply enough pressure to move that frosting. Use the spatula to create pretty peaks and waves.

