

Birch Cake Tutorial By: Jennifer Dontz



1. The first step is to fill and ice the cake. I like to take a ribbon and put it around the cake so I know about how long my side fondant piece will have to be. I use this ribbon method a lot, especially when making side ribbons. I just place the piece of ribbon on my table and then have a good idea how long the piece needs to be.



2. Roll out some “cut section” paste. This will go on the top of each layer. To color this paste I used Chefmaster brown, golden yellow and a speck of black. I took an old Wilton pan and used that as my template to cut the top circle. It’s a little larger than the cake when doing this. But, it’s not a bad idea to just make a circle $\frac{1}{2}$ ” larger than your cake. Then you know you will have enough paste. Cut out your circle and place it on top the cake. Trim the excess around the edge. Depending on how long it takes you to do the next step, you may want to texture this right away. See below how to do that.



3. I start out with a thick “worm” shape of dough and roll it out. This needs to be a bit thick since the details in the mat can be a little deep. Mine was around $\frac{3}{16}$ ”. Then sprinkle the fondant with a little powdered sugar or lightly dust with cornstarch. We are doing this so the mat doesn’t stick or the fondant doesn’t stick to itself when we roll it up. Starting at one end, take the mat and impress it into the fondant, making sure to apply nice even pressure to all parts of the mat. I rotated the mat each time I placed it on the fondant so I would get different texture from piece to piece and not all exactly the same pattern the entire way down the piece of fondant.



4. When you are pressing on the mat to imprint the design, try to avoid the very edges. If you do get a line, like in the left upper photo, just take your finger and it should smooth out, like the right photo. (You can see the line/area under my finger disappeared) See the AWESOME detail in this mat! And, it’s the real deal... made from a real birch log. Super happy with this!



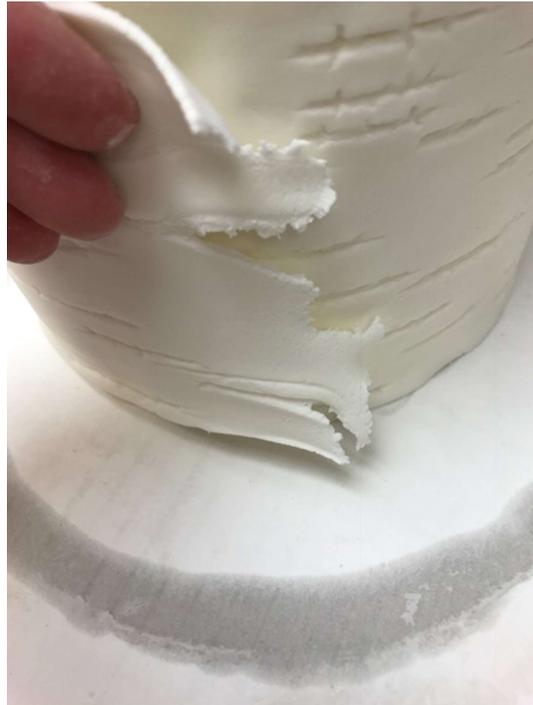
5. Keep going down the entire length of your fondant. Then, taking a piece of paper the height of your cake, cut your final piece out of your long strip. Place the paper and cut, move the paper along, and cut again until the entire long piece is the correct height. You may make it just a bit taller than your layer and you can then trim, but it's easier to make it the correct height to begin with.



6. If you see a spot that you want to fill in with detail, simple take the mat and bend it a bit, and push on the back adding a particular slash where you want it. Since you already dusted the surface, you should be good to roll it up. Take a cel stick or similar object and start rolling, gently on to the pin. The texture should be on the inside of the roll.



7. Taking a damp paintbrush, dampen the icing before adding the side fondant.



8. Apply the side fondant all the way around pressing to the cake gently and working the paste/pin around the cake. A soft sponge works good to press it gently to the cake. When you get to the back and the fondant ends, rip it gently to thin and create a "peeling" look. If you want, you can apply a few panels using this method and have several peeling areas. This is not uncommon on a birch tree. Curl the peeled areas back. The thinner you rip them, the better it will look.



9. Place cake on turntable and taking the wire brush, texture the top fondant going in circles around the outside, so it looks like growth rings. Sugar Delites/Robert Hayne's sells this tool available on our website. The name is wire veining tool. Add some slashes going sideways here and there. Have fun with it! It will look like chain saw marks.



10. If you have to put your cake together first, before coloring, I would recommend putting plastic around the bottom and upper ledges. It's messy 😊 If you can put your layers together AFTER coloring, that is best. Trust me 😊 For the black slash dust color, I mixed CK black with TSA brown dust. I found that dusting them first, gave the best overall look for filling in all those juicy spider veins on the sides of the slashes. Just use a small brush and fill in the centers. Then I took a very small, flat brush and knocking most of the dust off, go over the slash gently holding the brush flat to the cake. This will catch those spider veins. If you want them darker, you can add vodka and go over some of the details with a tiny brush, especially the deep groove. I like the spider veins to be lighter than the groove. Try this ahead on a scrap piece of fondant so you are comfortable with it before doing on the cake. But make sure you catch those spider veins, that is the beauty of this mat.



11. I then lightened the black mix up and using a flat brush, just brush very faint highlights of gray on the cake here and there adding shadows of gray.



12. The real piece of birch also has very light tan highlights so I mixed white, flesh tone and brown to get a light tan. Brush it here and there on the cake. Make sure it's very light. As suggested before, have a scrap piece of fondant to test on. I also brushed this mix on the cut edges. Using the flat brush go against the grain. This will make the dust catch on your texture marks. If it's not dark enough, add a speck more of the brown and a speck of black. You want the slash marks to be highlighted with color. Add more brown/black mix to do the very outer ring area of the cut edge. Take most of the color off your brush. You always can go darker but going lighter, well, that's hard 😊 The outer ring should be darker. Feather the darker ring inward on your cut edge.



13. The bride and groom wanted a heart on the cake with their initials. I did add this before coloring but it really wouldn't matter if you did it after. I just got a heart template from the internet and cut it out of paper. Hold it against the cake and trace around with a pin. I then took a piece of wire and kind of jumbled it up at the end (left pic). I wanted to make a "branding iron" wire. So I lit the candle and heated up the wire and burned the pattern into the fondant. You have to heat the wire each time you imprint. Practice ☺ I then dusted over this with some of the black mixture and really liked the look. Take most of the dust off the brush to keep it light.



14. I added vodka to my black slash mixture and using a stiff brush or toothbrush, dip it in the mixture, dap off on paper towel and brush your finger against the brush to make tiny black dots on the cake. Practice first! I also made some knots by poking the fondant in and making an indent. Depending on what type of fondant you use, you might want to make your indents right away after you've applied the fondant, so the outer layer doesn't dry too much. Then painted it and feathered it out. I also added some mossy green highlights using the stiff brush by just dabbing it on. As fun as it is to "fling" I wanted the moss in a more controlled area. I'm not sure what kind of brush this is, but look at Michael's. I'm sure one would be available there. For the moss color I used KopyKake airbrush color, 2 drops of orange to 1 drop of green.





I was very please how their topper matched the cake! I didn't see it until setup day. The chocolate pinecones are made using our pinecone mold set, sold at Sugar Delites. MOL214 is the item number. Birch Mat is MOL858

If you have any questions at all, I'm happy to try and answer them. Jennifer@SugarDelites.com

