Judging Advice Sheets

These are the sheets we at “That Takes the Cake! Sugar Arts Show” will provide to judges to give them an idea of what the show would like to see in each category, making rules clear while still giving plenty of leeway for judges to seek excellence based on their unique expertise.

We will also make these viewable by the public so competitors can have a better idea of what the show and judges will be looking for in each category.

Our goal here is to bridge the divide that often occurs between competitors and judges by minimizing confusion and mismatched expectations to better help everyone involved achieve ever greater heights in their sugar artistry.

In that spirit we request that all parties take these points as generalized advice and we remain, as always, open to specific questions as they come up.

Please be sure to consult the full rules here: https://thattakesthecake.org/competition/cake-competition/competition-rules-2019/ Pay particular attention to the Errata section at the bottom for any updates that may not be reflected on these sheets.
Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Sculpted Cake

Definition from the Rules:

Shaped or carved cakes, 2-D or 3-D, or sculptures made of cake. Entries must be real cake. Minimal use of cake substitutes such as rice cereal treats or Styrofoam are allowed for small elements, but the overall majority must be real cake. Internal structures are allowed. Judges may test to see if it is real cake throughout. Any techniques or sugar media may be used. Three in-progress pictures showing the cake carving must be displayed with the entry.

What we're looking for in addition to standard cake decorating judging:

- If no in-progress photos are present, judges should contact the Show Committee/Head Judge to decide a course of action.
- Is it real cake? Judges may conduct minimally invasive tests to determine if the entry is really cake in addition to examining the in-progress photos.
- The quality of the carving: does it look like whatever it's supposed to look like (i.e. do faces look like faces, are proportions correct, etc.), is it done smoothly so the icing on top sits well, are there bulges/sags pushing the outer icing, etc.?
- The quality of the covering: does the icing over the cake enhance the final result, is icing being used to hide poor carving, etc.?
- Is the cake supported or is the carving falling apart internally or externally?
- What challenges have been undertaken: has the competitor gone bigger, bolder, or done particularly difficult carving? Are there a variety of angles, curves, and sizes to demonstrate skill in carving? And if so, have they done it well?

Remember:

- Do not disqualify entries unless they are deemed in such poor taste or in violation of the Code of Conduct and require immediate removal from the show. For all other rule violations, judges may zero out the relevant score section and lower all other scores as deemed necessary, and/or contact the Show Committee for further guidance.
- Please do not write medal placements on comment sheets.
- Please keep all comments constructive.
Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Special Occasion - Novelty Single Tier Cake

Definition from the Rules:

A basic shaped, single tier or sheet cake with a theme such as birthday, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, graduation, wedding, anniversary, etc. Any techniques or sugar media may be used.

What we're looking for in addition to standard cake decorating judging:

• Is it a regular, single tier, i.e. a round, square, rectangle, hexagon, or other similarly standard pan? The cake should not be sculpted. The cake must be a single tier. It can be a tall tier, but only one clear tier. If more than one discernible tier is present or the cake has been sculpted, contact the Show Committee/Head Judge to decide a course of action.
• Is there a clear special occasion being celebrated through thematic elements and/or inscriptions? Note that an inscription isn't required if the theme is otherwise obvious, and also note that non-traditional versions of traditional celebrations are welcome at our show as long as the type of celebration is still clearly communicated.
• Note that for this single tier category, weddings and anniversaries ARE included.
  ○ Also note that in keeping with our area's motto of “Keep Austin Weird”, wedding/anniversary cakes need not be traditional. Traditional cakes are welcome but so are bold colors, the latest on-trend designs, vintage looks, geek chic, goth love, and all manner of romantic partnerships including LGBT.
  ○ Judges shouldn't be asking, “Would a mainstream bride order this?” so much as “Would an Austin area client who ordered this style be thrilled with this on their special day?”

Remember:

• Do not disqualify entries unless they are deemed in such poor taste or in violation of the Code of Conduct and require immediate removal from the show. For all other rule violations, judges may zero out the relevant score section and lower all other scores as deemed necessary, and/or contact the Show Committee for further guidance.
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Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Special Occasion – Novelty Tiered Cake

Definition from the Rules:

Cakes with two or more tiers with a theme such as birthday, Christmas, Valentine's Day, graduation, etc. but NOT Wedding or Anniversary. Tiers can be offset, floating, tilted, or stacked in any way as long as it is clear that there are multiple, distinct levels of cake. Any techniques or sugar media may be used. Internal structures are allowed.

What we're looking for in addition to standard cake decorating judging:

• Two or more distinct tiers.
• Are tiers supported with any internal structure hidden or aesthetically masked?
• Are centered tiers measurably centered, and are offset tiers clearly offset?
• Do the tiers all play together well, all on the same special occasion theme throughout?
• Is there a clear special occasion being celebrated through thematic elements and/or inscriptions? Note that an inscription isn't required if the theme is otherwise obvious, and also note that non-traditional versions of traditional celebrations are welcome at our show as long as the type of celebration is still clearly communicated.
• The special occasion for this category must NOT be a wedding or anniversary.

Remember:

• Do not disqualify entries unless they are deemed in such poor taste or in violation of the Code of Conduct and require immediate removal from the show. For all other rule violations, judges may zero out the relevant score section and lower all other scores as deemed necessary, and/or contact the Show Committee for further guidance.
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Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Wedding Tiered Cake

Definition from the Rules:

Cakes with two or more tiers decorated specifically for weddings or anniversaries. It should clearly be celebrating some kind of union, traditional or otherwise, LGBT included. Tiers can be offset, floating, tilted, or stacked in any way as long as it is clear that there are multiple, distinct levels of cake. Any techniques or sugar media may be used. Internal structures are allowed.

What we're looking for in addition to standard cake decorating judging:

- Two or more distinct tiers.
- Are tiers supported with any internal structure hidden or aesthetically masked?
- Are centered tiers measurably centered, and are offset tiers clearly offset?
- Do the tiers all play together well, all contributing to the wedding/anniversary theme?
- Is this clearly a wedding or anniversary cake communicated through thematic elements and/or inscriptions? Note that an inscription isn't required if the theme is otherwise obvious.
- Also note that in keeping with our area's motto of “Keep Austin Weird”, wedding/anniversary cakes need not be traditional. Traditional cakes are welcome but so are bold colors, the latest on-trend designs, vintage looks, geek chic, goth love, and all manner of romantic partnerships including LGBT.
- Judges shouldn't be asking, “Would a mainstream bride order this?” so much as “Would an Austin area client who ordered this style be thrilled with this on their special day?”

Remember:

- Do not disqualify entries unless they are deemed in such poor taste or in violation of the Code of Conduct and require immediate removal from the show. For all other rule violations, judges may zero out the relevant score section and lower all other scores as deemed necessary, and/or contact the Show Committee for further guidance.
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Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Buttercream Only Cake

Definition from the Rules:

Any single-tier cake (sized at least 6" wide up to the size of the allotted space) with any theme decorated using only buttercream icing. No fondant, non-edible decorations, or other sugar media will be allowed anywhere on the cake or board.

What we're looking for in addition to standard cake decorating judging:

- Is it 100% buttercream, including any board decorations?
- Buttercream can be any style of buttercream such as American, Swiss Meringue, rolled buttercream, etc., as long as it's recognized as buttercream.
- Elements can be piped, spread, or molded in any fashion.
- We're looking for sharp corners, smooth applications unless texture is part of the design, and overall expertise unique to buttercream as a medium.
- Traditional piping techniques are welcome, as are new and novel ways of putting buttercream on a cake.
- The cake must be a single tier. It can be a tall tier, but only one clear tier. If more than one discernible tier is present, contact the Show Committee/Head Judge to decide a course of action.

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Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Special Techniques Not On A Cake

Definition from the Rules:

Entries in this Category include displays of fondant techniques, figures, gumpaste flowers, sugar molding/modeling, color flow, royal icing, Isomalt, chocolate showpieces, etc. Any combination of techniques and media may be used, but it must be presented alone and not as part of a cake. Internal structures are allowed, and non-edible display platters/vases/etc. are also allowed.

What we're looking for in addition to standard sugar arts judging:

- The item should not be on a cake. If it is, contact the Show Committee/Head Judge to determine if it needs to be reclassified or have its score adjusted. Do not judge any cake that is present.
- The pieces should be judged on their own as presented and not imagined on a cake. Do not comment that competitors should have put the item on a cake. Evaluate it for the sugar art that it is.
- Vases, baskets, bowls, or other ways of displaying sugar flowers are all allowed and do not need to be made of edible material, although if they are judges can take that into consideration in terms of additional skill/complexity.
- The variety that comes in this category makes it imperative that pieces be judged individually and not against each other other than by score tallies at the end.

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Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Cookies

Definition from the Rules:

All types of cookies are allowed, including 3-D designs. Any combination of techniques and/or media may be used. Cookies may be iced with any type of icing or not at all. There is no minimum or maximum number. No cake is allowed in this category; if you wish to do a cake/cookie combination, it should go in a cake category. Internal structures and/or presentation platters are allowed.

What we're looking for in addition to standard sugar arts judging:

• The entry should be made entirely of actual cookies, not cake. If cake is present notify the Show Committee/Head Judge to determine if it needs to be reclassified or have its score adjusted.
• This category will attract varying styles that need to be judged separately and not against each other. For instance, the complexity of a 3-D model should not be held against a 2-D set, and a royal-icing decorated set should not be held against an uniced construction.
• Icing is optional on all elements. Do not penalize the lack of icing in and of itself. However, uniced elements may be judged for their relative texture, color, matched pieces, and other aesthetic aspects.
• Dough may be colored before or after baking and any coloring or naturally occurring color from the baking itself should be considered as part of the overall aesthetic.
• Cookie dough comes in many varieties, including rolled, dropped, piped, poured, and spread. Judges should be familiar with these different types to evaluate their complexity and performance as well as general aesthetics.

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Judging Advice Sheet

Category: Cupcakes

Definition from the Rules:

A display of a minimum of 6 cupcakes made from real cake presented on their own and not part of a larger cake. They can be presented as identical or individual, and may be creatively arranged and/or joined but should still be identifiable as separate cupcakes (i.e. not a pull-apart, single-icing top cupcake-cake). A combination of techniques and media may be used. These items will be displayed only and will not be tasted.

What we're looking for in addition to standard cake decorating judging:

• Fewer than 6 discernible cupcakes should be considered an incomplete entry and scores adjusted accordingly.
• The size of the cupcakes can be mini through jumbo, but they must be identifiable as a cupcake.
• Multiple cupcakes can be joined together but should still be discernible as cupcakes, not a cake made of cupcakes. We are not looking for Cupcake Cakes (i.e. icing spread over a series of lined-up cupcakes as a pseudo pre-portioned cake).
• Take the overall presentation into consideration, including any stands, relative positioning, etc. The cupcakes can be upright, upside down, on their sides, mounted on a framework, stacked, or displayed in any way as long as they are clearly still cupcakes.
• Any papers/wraps around the cupcakes should be considered as part of the overall aesthetic, including the final appearance of baked cups (i.e. do they show grease marks or other issues), but papers/wraps are not required by the rules as stated.
• Cupcakes presented as identical should be scored on whether or not that has been achieved. Cupcakes presented as different should be demonstrably different. Either style choice is valid.
• Even though the cupcakes aren’t tasted, we want them to be real cake and properly baked. They may be judged on the appearance of the bake, i.e. are they evenly baked without undue peaks or sinkholes? Leveling is allowed.
• Any type or style of icing is allowed and there is no requirement for a specific amount or style of coverage.

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