

## Design Tips for a Great Kids Birthday Cake

by: Stephen Houlihan

These days, you can probably buy just about any style of child's birthday cake already made. But there is nothing like the sense of satisfaction from making that special cake just for your child – after all, they have each birthday only once!

There's also the benefit of being able to control what ingredients are actually used in making the cake. Apart from producing a healthier cake, you can also cater for any allergies that your child or his/her friends may have.

Once you have decided to make the cake yourself, here are some tips to help you:

1. Don't worry if you failed Art 101 dismally. Remember that kids don't expect you to turn out a design worthy of da Vinci. Often they are more interested in the number (and color) of pieces of candy on top of the cake than the actual design itself.
2. In selecting a design for the cake, there are two main options: a specific design (such as a favorite character from a TV program), or a more generic theme (such as a train or an animal). Whichever you choose, remember that it will be much easier if you only cut the cake to the basic shape you want, and use the icing to create the detail of the design. Trying to make the Eiffel Tower out of cut pieces of sponge cake is a definite no-no!
3. The actual cake recipe should be kept simple, such as a basic sponge cake. Remember, the icing and candy decorations will give the cake plenty of flavor, and a plain cake recipe will appeal to a wider range of kids' tastes.
4. Be especially careful to cater for any allergies. Even if you are not aware of any allergies amongst the party attendees, it is best to avoid using any products containing nuts. Read the packages of the cake ingredients carefully.
5. It is best to make the cake the day before the party. Apart from making the day of the party less stressful, you will find that the cake will be easier to cut. If the cake is too fresh, crumbs tend to stick to the icing and can make the cut pieces look pretty messy.
6. When choosing the icing, think about how messy it will be to eat – your friends won't be too pleased with you if their kids end up with permanently-stained clothes from your brightly-colored strawberry icing!
7. When actually making the icing, you may have to tweak the recipe to allow for the weather. For hot climates, you may have to add more icing powder/sugar to thicken it up; for cold days, you don't want the icing to set as hard as rock.
8. If you are going to use an icing decorating bag and tips to draw your design on the cake, have a practice first on a plate. You'll surprise yourself with what you can do!
9. If you are totally artistically challenged, there are many companies who supply ready-made decorations that you can use on the cake. You can even buy a lot of these over the internet, and you can find a list of some major suppliers at [www.cakemagician.com/suppliers.htm](http://www.cakemagician.com/suppliers.htm).

Finally, remember to HAVE FUN when you make the cake! It may seem quite a lot of effort, but the happy smile on your child's face when they see the cake will reward you immensely.

### About The Author

Stephen Houlihan is a father of three children, for whom he has made many cakes over the years. He comes from a family of cake decorators who have won many awards. Further ideas and tips can be found at <http://www.cakemagician.com>.

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