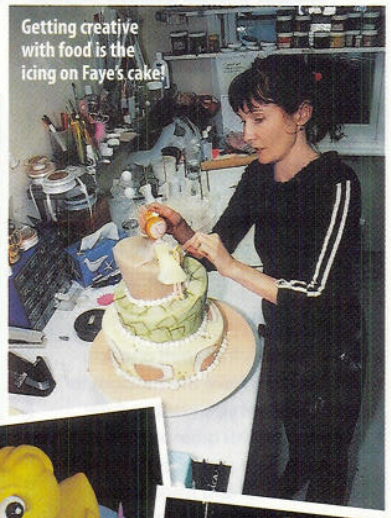
wanna be a...

celeb cake maker

Baking awesome sweets for A-list stars, creating works of art from icing ... it's all just part of the job for Faye Cahill, co-founder of Sydney's Planet Cake.



Getting creative with food is the icing on Faye's cake!

Some of Planet Cake's awesome designs.

You don't often meet a cake decorator. How'd you get into it?

"I'd finished my BA in visual arts and was doing a pastry apprenticeship at Tech, where I met a student who was working as a cake decorator. She was moving interstate so I applied for her job and I got it. I was thrown in the deep end because when I started there were a lot of cakes that were half done and needed finishing – some were worth hundreds of dollars. I worked there for three years and then went out with my partner and set up Planet Cake."

So, you make art from icing sugar?

"Pretty much! The hardest part is making icing look like lace, flowers, little figurines, anything that has to be done in miniature. It takes forever when there are lots of different kinds of flowers. People always want the figurines to look like them – the same hair colour, the same bouquet, the same dress!"

Is it kind of like ripping open a packet cake mix and voila?

"No! The cake is already baked when it comes to me. There's quite a lot of work to get the cake to be the right shape and to get the surfaces straight, then it gets iced and decorated. For the design of the cake, the client comes into the store, we'll sit down with them and ask about their wedding or function, and we'll coordinate the cake to suit that. They might bring in things like their invitation or a bit of lace from their dress, and we'll use that as a starting point."

Who's the most famous person to have bought your cakes?

"I was flown to Brunei to make cakes for the Sultan of Brunei's brother, Prince Jefri. We made cakes for a big celebration for his birthday, and we found out a lot about family traditions in his country – he has four wives and 35 children and the cakes were a gift from all of them. The cakes were lined up in a row from biggest to smallest, with the eldest son giving the biggest one first, then the first wife, then the second son and the second wife, and so on in order of hierarchy."

Who else? C'mon, drop some more celebrity names!

"I made the cake for Jackie O's wedding. It was really beautiful – ivory on ivory – but there were a lot of textured layers. I used different techniques to make the cake look as though it was covered in lace. From a distance it looked quite plain, but up close it was actually quite intricate. I've also made cakes for Dawn Fraser, Bryan Brown, Judy Davis, Colin Friels and for television shows such as *Popstars* and *Saturday Disney*."

Any weird requests?

"The strangest one was for a wedding cake in the shape of a dead draught horse. The bride and groom drank a brand of beer called something like Dead Horse Ale – they were a British couple, so perhaps it was a beer from overseas. So we ended up making an upside-down horse, with his eyes rolled back, his tongue hanging out and his legs sticking up in the air. Apparently some of the older people who were at the reception, such as their grandparents, thought it was a bit strange!"

Your job sounds like heaps of fun ... what's the catch?

"There are a lot of late nights towards the end of the week to make sure the cakes are ready to go wherever they're needed. The time frame you have to create each cake is quite short, so it can get stressful when you're trying to meet all the deadlines. You don't have any leeway with a wedding cake – it has to be there on time."

Do you get to eat cake all day?

"Yes I do! There's always lots of cake around that we can eat. The shop smells amazing and people always comment on it when they walk in, but we're so used to it that we don't notice it anymore."

Any serious cake disasters you can share?

"None that we haven't been able to fix, but there was one cake that was in a car accident. An advertising company ordered a cake to give as a gift to a client – luckily they were able to postpone giving it to them until the next day. We often have people ask if anyone has ever dropped a cake and we say, 'No, that's never happened', but recently someone did! They picked up their cake and had their dog with them – they walked outside, tripped over the dog and dropped the cake! Because it was for first thing the next morning, we did the best overnight repair job we could."

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Check out more Planet Cake creations at **www.planetcake.com.au**. Want more info on cake decorating? Visit the National Food Industry Training Council website at **http://www.nfitc.com.au/napp.html**.

DO I HAVE TO STUDY?

You can learn on the job if you're lucky enough to score an entry-level position. Otherwise, do a course at an institution like TAFE so that you obtain some formal qualifications and experience.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BE A CAKE DECORATOR?

- An interest in art and an artistic flair – it's a creative job, after all!
- A steady hand to create those masterpieces.
- Attention to detail and patience. It takes a while to be able to perfect these kinds of cakes!
- To be very organised.
- The ability to work quickly and to think on your feet. The cakes are perishable and have to be made close to the event.

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