

## **Fault Line Cake**

This cool effect works really well for so many themes and ideas! I've gone with a pretty vanilla and rainbow sprinkles design, but you can do chocolate with bright sprinkles, or even cool stuff like adding chocolate brownie crumbs to make a cracked earth effect, or sliced fruits, ANYTHING can be stuck into the band of buttercream, then covered over in the thicker layer so it appears as your cake is bursting open to create a fault line revealing the hidden goodness inside. It does take a little time and effort, but it is a simple technique, it's really worth it once you've finished and you can be proud of your creation and whoever you are making this for will be over the moon!

### **Recipe**

Serves: 16-20 small portions

Prep and decorating time: 1 hour plus some chill time

Bake time: 20-25 minutes

### **Equipment needed;**

Stand mixer, electric hand whisk or bowl and wooden spoon

Palette knife/s

Pastry brush

Paint brush

Side scraper (optional)

Cake levelling wire or large breadknife

Piping bag (optional)

Cake turntable (optional)

Cake board a few inches larger to work on/display or cake plate

Tip - To get the cake nice and neat, It helps to place the cake layers on a cake drum the same size as the cakes themselves (8" round in this case) as this will enable you to get a neater crumb coat as it gives you something to work against with your palette knife and side scraper. Ideally use a medium crank handled palette knife, and if you have one (not essential) a side scraper really helps to get a nice flat and smooth icing.

Ingredients

### **For the sponge cakes**

300g soft salted butter, at room temp

2 tsp vanilla bean paste

400g golden caster sugar

8 medium free range eggs

400g self-raising flour with 2 tsp baking powder whisked into it

### **For the buttercream frosting and decoration**

500g soft unsalted butter

2 tsp vanilla bean paste

1kg superfine icing sugar

Fancy sprinkles of your choice

Edible gold or metallic paint (optional)

### **Method**

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees fan.

Grease and line 3 x 8" round cake tins on the base and sides (or repeat in batches as needed if you only have one tin)

In a stand mixer bowl with a paddle beater attachment or large bowl using a hand whisk, (or bowl and wooden spoon and elbow grease) beat the butter, vanilla and sugar on fast speed until really light, pale and creamy. Stop the mixer and scrape the bowl down as needed throughout.

Add the eggs, one at a time and beat until combined on a slow speed. Lastly add the flour in increments of 3, beating very slowly until only just mixed. Do not over beat.

Divide the batter mix equally into each tin (I always weigh mine so they are even) and bake for around 20-25 minutes until the sponges are springy, light golden and cooked in the centre completely.

Leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes, then turn out onto a cooling rack, remove the paper and allow to cool. While the cakes are cooling make your frosting.

Place the butter and vanilla in your stand mixer bowl with the paddle beater or use a bowl with a hand whisk and beat on high until very creamy and smooth, for a minute or so (you can do this by hand if you don't have an electric stand or hand mixer).

Gradually add the icing sugar, about a quarter at a time, beating each addition on slow first so the icing sugar doesn't puff up everywhere, once combined turn to high speed for a minute or so each time

A good tip to ensure your butter cream is creamy and fluffy - add a tablespoon of just boiled water into the bowl with each addition of the sugar, mix it on slow then turn up to high

### **To assemble and decorate**

If your sponges have a little bump from where they have risen, trim this away with a cake leveller or bread knife before stacking and filling, to keep your cakes nice and straight and level.

Place the bottom layer onto your 8" round cake drum, secure with a little frosting and stick this to a slightly larger drum (a 12" is perfect) to aid you moving it in and out of the fridge (not essential but really helpful and makes life easy) or use a stand or plate and spread over a layer of frosting.

Top with a second layer of sponge; make sure it's in line with the one below and repeat with a layer of frosting. Make sure it all looks in line and nice and straight.

Place the last layer on top, invert it so the smooth and flat part, not the trimmed part is uppermost (keeps it neater and less crumbly) and with a palette knife; generously spread some of the frosting all around the sides of the cake first (this allows you to be able to hold the top of the cake still while you work around the cake. Use a gentle pressure against the side of the cake with the palette knife and use a back and forth spreading motion to spread the coating over the sides.

Once the side is covered, spread a nice even layer over the top of the cake

Once the whole cake is covered, clean the palette knife and go around the cake again to smooth off the excess covering, spreading it until you are happy that it's nice and neat. If you have a side scraper, use this to do a final sweep around the sides and top of the cake so that it's really flat and sharp. This is a crumb coat, which is a good base to work on to give a neat finish. Pop this into the fridge to chill and firm up for an hour.

The next step is to create your sprinkle band in the middle, which will be your fault line. You need to create a band of buttercream that is about a third of the cakes depth, going around the middle like a belt, with a gap at the bottom and the

top. This band can be a bit wavy, not straight as the fault line looks better if it is wavy, jagged and random (good news because you don't have to be good at precise decorating, the more messy the better!).

Use a palette knife to apply a thin band around the sponge, then you need to press in your sprinkles into the fresh band of buttercream. It can get messy so, I like to put the cake on the turntable over a very large tray to catch any rogue sprinkles. Pour some sprinkles in your palm, bring this up against the cake, and confidently press this against the cake to secure the sprinkles. Once you've covered over the whole band, place it back in the fridge again to set.

To complete the cake, take it out of the fridge, use a clean pastry brush just to check there are no loose sprinkles that might come off into your second layer of buttercream. Having a cake turntable is really helpful to get this looking neat, if you don't have one you can put your cake board on top of a dinner plate or something to spin the cake on, I like to put it on a tea towel to help me spin it around.

To create the thick coat of buttercream that will encase the sprinkles band, first of all do the bottom. Use a palette knife and load on a ring of frosting in blobs around the base that goes slightly over the bottom of the band of sprinkles.

This can be a thick coating, about 5mm is good as you want to create the illusion of the cracked fault line behind this thicker coat. Once its all loaded around the bottom, clean the palette knife, and then hold this vertically against the edge of the cake, with the end of the palette knife resting on the working board or cake plate, and go around the side to smooth over the buttercream blobs and create a thick smooth coating that slightly covers the bottom of the band. You can also use a side scraper for this if you have one.

To do the same at the top, apply a generous thick amount of frosting around the top edge that will come over the top and cover slightly over the top edge of the buttercream band. Once you've got plenty on the cake, hold the palette knife vertically up against the cake, and sweep around to smooth off this top part of thick coating.

The cake is almost done you can see the fault line around the side, lastly we need to cover the top, so add some more frosting to the top of the cake, and using a backwards and forwards motion, push the buttercream over the top of the cake with a palette knife, spinning on the turntable until the top is covered thinly. You will see the top edge of the fault line now has a little lip of buttercream where the top has pushed onto the side, so simply clean the palette knife, and do one more sweep around to make the side straight and push the buttercream back upwards.

Leave the top a little jagged as this reflects the jagged crack effect on the side. If you want to add some metallic detail (optional) chill the cake again for 30 minutes, then use a little metallic food paint to paint inside the edges where the buttercream is covering over the fault line band of sprinkles, and along the jagged top edge.

