

7 Questions You Absolutely Need To Have Answered Before Starting A Cake Business



I'm Lorelie and I have been in the cake business since 1985. My experiences range from starting my own home based business and independent contracting with caterers to managing a full fledged cake and pastry department for a banquet hall making hundreds of wedding cakes and desserts.

#1-Can I sell cakes from my home?

The answer is it depends where you live.

The Cottage food Industry is making a comeback as more people choose to Work from Home. It may be legal in your town and you may or may not be required to build a separate area in your home with commercial equipment.

[Bringing Home The Baking](#) is a helpful book with tips and advice for starting a licensed home based baking business.

I would suggest reaching out to a local bakery or business with a commercial kitchen to rent part time or to work for temporarily. This is a great way to test the waters, learn the ropes and make lifelong business connections.

#2 What equipment will I need ?



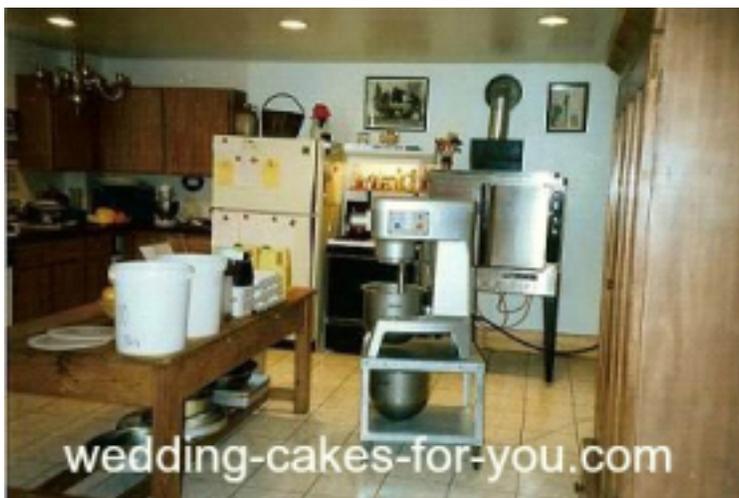
When starting a home based business you will probably want to start small and use your existing kitchen equipment. You can bake a wedding cake in a regular oven as long as the pans fit inside of it.

Most ovens have two or three racks. You can fit one large pan (14 or 16 inch) or two to three smaller pans per rack (6, 8, or 10 inch) It may not be the most efficient way, but most

likely you will start with just a few cakes a week and when the time is right you can upgrade.

If you do not already have a standing mixer buy a 5 quart Kitchen Aid. I started with a 4 quart (a wedding gift from a friend pictured above on the left) and got by just fine with that one in the beginning by making small batches. An extra Kitchen Aid bowl is helpful too and will save you time.

NOTE: The red Kitchenaid (pictured above on the right) is the newest addition to my home kitchen and has a slightly larger 5 quart bowl than the older white model.



PICTURE: My semi professional home kitchen in the 1990's When not in use the mixer could be rolled into the closet.

Upgrading to larger equipment

The first upgrade I recommend if you have some capital to work with is a commercial size mixer (at least a 20 quart) The one in the photo above is a Berkel brand mixer and is on a rolling stand. The rolling stand has space underneath for an extra bowl and beaters. Keep your Kitchen Aid for smaller

projects when you upgrade.

NOTE: I sold the commercial oven in this photo above when I started working at a Banquet facility and moved from this particular home. Luckily I kept my large mixer and I currently use it alongside a normal everyday oven. I find that making a large batch of cake batter and having filled pans waiting in line works great. This brings us to the upgrade of your oven which is the next logical step as you begin to make several wedding or large cakes per week. A convection oven is the best in my opinion. (shown above behind the mixer)

NOTE: As you can see we had to have a contractor come and make a hole in our wall so that the hot air could escape through the vent. The oven in the photo above that was in my home kitchen in the early 1990's is a Blodgett and a very well known respected brand. You can bake many cakes at once and quickly in a convection oven. The air is blown about and circulates around the pans. Your cakes will bake up beautifully and in less time. It is a baker's dream come true.

When I was ready to purchase the heavy equipment I was fortunate to find a local home based baker who was going out of business. She sold me her convection oven, a couple of cooling racks, the 20 quart mixer, pans and a hanging rack for my beaters and paddles for \$1500.00 (a very low price

considering the size and quality of the equipment)

I recommend searching the internet, craigslist etc. and finding a great deal on used equipment.

Refrigeration

You will need at least one extra refrigerator/freezer for storing butter, eggs and cakes. I had a spare or two at various points in my home based career. People are always giving away old refrigerators and I took advantage of that. **Cooling**

Racks



Cooling racks (pictured above left) are VERY useful. They usually have wheels so they can be moved around the work area. Besides using racks for cooling cakes and other pastries, they can be useful to store things on when not in use.

NOTE: I used to store parchment paper, cake rounds, pre-cut cake pan liners, doilies, cake decorating tips, pastry bags and so forth on a few of the trays.

Work Table

I had and still have a wonderful wooden antique work table that doubles as a dining table. It's beautiful and functional. A metal work table is ideal though as it is easier to clean and usually has a storage area underneath. My work table also has wooden slats that double as a storage area and a big roomy drawer at one end for all of my cake frosting spatulas.

Dishwashing System or Sinks

You will need a dishwashing system whether you do your pans by hand or automatically. If you clean your pans by hand you will most likely be required to have a double sink, one for washing and one for rinsing in a sanitizing solution, and a separate hand washing sink.

Cake Pans and Tins

Pans of all sorts will be needed. Start with a few and add to the collection as you go. You will find out along the way what you need to order. They are not terribly expensive and because they will last a lifetime used pans are fine.

For your wedding cakes I recommend starting with a purchase of 2 each of these sizes (16x2 14x2 10x2 and 6 x2) inch pans to start with and large sheet pans for extra cutting cakes. 9,10 and 12 inch pans are typical birthday cake sizes.

NOTE:There are many smaller items that you will need as

well. I am covering the large items here. Here is a link to my supplies page at [Wedding Cakes For You Amazon Store](#) where you will see some of the smaller items needed.

#3-How Much Do I Charge For Custom Cakes?



How much to charge for a specialty cake largely depends on where you live and how much people are willing to pay. If you live in the heart of a large city you would most likely charge more for your cakes than if you are living in the outskirts.

Visit bakeries in your area and see what they are charging. (This is where being an insider working hands on in will really help you.)

Decide how much your time is worth first. (hourly) I will use

\$15.00 for this example. Figure out the cost of the ingredients and materials. (if you buy in quantity you can cut the costs significantly) The real cost is your time.(for this example I will say the ingredients add up to \$20.00) and the cake is a 10 inch custom with flowers and writing.

Times that number by 2 =(\$40.00) then add the hourly on top of that. Let's say it took 3 hours. =\$45 Now add up the \$40 and the \$45 to equal \$85. This is a general example. Obviously the more skilled and efficient you become the more profits you will see.

When it comes to specialty cakes your customers may need to be educated on the quality of the work and ingredients that they will be receiving from you versus the corner bakery. Remember your cakes will be way above average and personalized so you can charge more.

#4-How Much Do I Charge For Wedding Cakes?



Prices vary considerably depending on where you live, wedding cake design, type of decoration and wedding cake flavor choice. The prices can range from \$2.50 per slice to \$10.00 or more. Some people charge by the cake and not by the slice.

NOTE: When first starting my business in 1985 I charged at the lower end and worked my way up. I now charge between \$7.00 - \$10.00 per slice. I always give extra cake just in case and so that the kitchen staff gets a taste. The more people that taste your cakes the better.

You can do **VERY** well selling wedding cakes. It is well worth learning and adding them to your repertoire . If you don't have experience with constructing one it is time to learn this much sought after skill NOW. I can help you with that. :-)

People expect to pay a higher price for such a specialized creation and you deserve to be compensated for it. Making and delivering wedding cakes is exciting but can be quite stressful unless you know a few key tricks of the trade. If you want to start creating gorgeous wedding cakes with less stress start with my [Wedding Cake Guide](#).

#5-How should I market my cake business?

If you are selling wedding cakes and all occasion cakes then you will want to split your marketing into two categories.

Let's start with wedding cakes

Places to promote include but are not limited

to:

- Caterers
- Banquet Halls
- Bridal Shows

- Restaurants who also do events
- Churches
- Bridal Dress Shops
- Florists
- Wedding Bands/Musicians

A great place to start is a visit to these places with business cards, photos and boxed samples of your cakes. Your wedding cake cards should have all of your contact information, phone number, website, Facebook page or whatever Social websites you use consistently.

List Your Wedding Business

Get a listing in a few major online directories such as Wedding Wire or The Knot to attract brides for your wedding cakes. You can have your own page at Wedding Wire for free and ask your clients to say a few words after they return from their honeymoon. They have a rating system and if you get enough brides and grooms to review your business you will have a special badge to add to your site. People like to see those kinds of awards.

Win an Award

Sign up for contests if there are any in your area. Winning an award can help you to stand out.

NOTE: I was encouraged to enter a wedding cake decorating contest at the Connecticut Chefs Association in my State. I

really didn't expect to win but I actually did win a First place ribbon in the advanced category and as an added bonus I also received the Directors Choice Award. Wow! I didn't see that coming. Needless to say I am an award winning cake decorator now :-)) I may do more in the future just to keep on my toes and hopefully garner another award.

Promoting your all occasion cakes

Promoting your all occasion cakes is similar to your wedding cakes except that you will want to promote to a different group or places. Box up your samples and visit:

- Corporations
- Local Business's
- Kids Party Places
- Restaurants
- Any place that promotes parties
- Schools

List Your Cake Business

Just like your wedding cake business you will want to be listed in a few directories. Party related ones would be perfect.

Socialize

For both sets of customers social sites such as facebook are

a fantastic way to make connections and promote your business. Ask your friends and family to join your business page and build from there.

Get a Website

People will take you more seriously if you have a website they will see that you mean business (literally). You can also use your website as a place for people to see your prices and flavor choices.

Google Ads

Once you have a website you can place inexpensive click ads through Google to drive people to your site. This can be very helpful as you will be facing some competition with other bakeries and people in your area.

Start a Newsletter

Begin building a list of potential customers right away by asking your site visitors to sign up for your newsletter. When they sign up let them know how much you appreciate them by offering an exclusive deal when they join just like I did when you subscribed to my newsletter.

#6-Do I need a business plan?

You will need one if you are looking for financial help from a bank to get started. It is always a good idea regardless of

whether you will be asking a bank for a loan or not, to write down everything you can think of.

Start by writing a rough outline, even if you are not sure where to begin. You have to start somewhere and you will see that by starting the process of writing it will stimulate your thoughts and start the creative juices flowing.

Your ideas can then be organized. It doesn't have to be fancy. Use your document for clarity, goal setting and to help guide you through. Join a local business support group or start one locally or on Facebook You will be amazed how much help you can get through a great group with similar interests as yours.

You can search for business plan examples and see where to register your business online.

#7-Is Working From Home For Me?

This is probably the most important question to answer before going into a business of your own. There are pros and cons to baking from home. Knowing some of the realities ahead of time can better prepare you to answer this question.

This is speaking from my experiences over the years. I

started out with little ones at home. I was fortunate to have two in school and my mom as a sitter for the youngest one. It's difficult to work with children under foot, so setting up some kind of care ahead of time for a couple of days a week helps.

Your schedule will be very different from a regular job. The beginning of a normal work week for others will be your days off. Monday and Tuesday will most likely be the days you can relax depending on how much work you have taken on for that particular week.

Of course in the beginning you will have to work harder than normal to get customers. Looking for opportunities and promoting yourself will become part of your daily life. It can be a challenge to separate yourself from work. Some weekends will revolve around wedding cake deliveries and pickups. What I found was that the wedding cake deliveries, as stressful as they can be, were very exciting and offered an opportunity to explore a new area or restaurant.

As an occasional treat to myself and my husband, who would come along as my support system, we would

find a nice spot for a drink and a meal at a local restaurant or explore a nearby trail or beach and go for a walk or jog. This led to some very memorable times together. I would say that is a pro. I hope this has helped you to start to really think about how you can make a home based cake business work for your situation.

If you want to stay updated on events and specials join [Cakes with Lorelie Newsletter](#)

Please let me know at any time how I am doing and what you would like to see. Your input means a lot to me.

Thank you so much
Lorelie