

WED DOSSIER CAKES

BY LISA SHAMES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM WHITE



HOW SWEET IT IS!
A stunning sugar art-
accented cake by Margaret
Lastick at Le Royale Icing.

PETAL PUSHERS *Four Chicago sugar flower masters take the cake to the limit*

Sugar flowers may be a 100-year-old confectionery art form, but in the hands of these innovative—and nimble—pastry chefs, the oh-so-delicate wedding cake adornments look as fresh as a, well, you know. Flower power indeed.

LE ROYALE ICING

When it comes to sugar flowers in the Midwest, the name that comes up first—and most often—is Margaret Lastick of Le Royale Icing. Celebrating 20 years in the wedding cake business, Lastick fondly recalls the days when she would fly around the country, personally dropping off her cakes adorned with hundreds of flowers. “Back

then I had to tell people that they weren’t real flowers!” she laughs. For her *CS Brides* cake, Lastick envisioned the paper collages she made as a young girl, decorating the lower half of each of the cake’s three tiers with white fondant, cutout-type shapes. For the flowers—a combination of roses and fantasy blooms—Lastick stayed away from primary colors and opted to mix her own (she admits to watching cartoons for color combination ideas). For a touch of “bling,” she added her signature rhinestones to some of the stamens. Then, the top was left smooth to give the eyes a rest. While the paper-thin flowers are very delicate—she often transports them

atop protective Styrofoam—they have stamina, says Lastick. “Couples still have the sugar arrangements I made for them 20 years ago. They hold onto them as keepsakes.” 35 Chicago Ave., Oak Park, 708.386.4175, leroyaleicing.com.

VANILLE PÂTISSERIE

While Keli Fayard, cake designer and co-owner of Vanille, describes her off-white cake as “very simple,” closer inspection of the 30 flowers and 20 tiny buds says otherwise. Aiming to create something earthy, Fayard took inspiration from the green-and-gold sugar bamboo trim encircling the base of each layer and, from CONTINUED...



...CONTINUED there, came up with the orchid-like flowers that adorn the first and third tiers. “There are ways to incorporate flowers or plants other than having them cascade down a cake,” says this Culinary Institute of America-grad. (For those who have their doubts about the persuasive powers of baked goods, Fayard met her husband and partner, Dimitri—a member of the U.S. team that won the gold medal at the recent World Pastry Championship, no less—when the two of them worked together at NYC’s Payard Patisserie & Bistro.) To keep the emphasis on the bamboo and blossoms, Fayard didn’t include leaves which, she admits, gives the cake more of a Hawaiian vibe than the exotic one she was initially going for. But don’t be surprised to find cakes inspired by the bold colors of India at Vanille. Her home’s proximity to Devon Avenue has left its mark on Fayard. 2229 N. Clybourn Ave., 773.868.4574, vanillepatisserie.com.

TAKE THE CAKE

For couples looking to reproduce fresh flowers in sugar for their wedding cake, Mary Winslow, chef and owner of Take the Cake, has a recommendation: Don’t. “For me, the reason to do sugar flowers is so you can exaggerate elements in nature or expand upon them to make something new—an abstracted, surreal version of the original,” she says. Or, as in the case of the golden pagodas that decorate her three-tiered cake pictured



INCREDIBLE, EDIBLE Clockwise from top left: A pretty pagoda-embellished cake by Take the Cake. Toni Marie’s technical-yet-timeless sugar art. Bamboo and blossoms by Vanille Patisserie.



above, pick a type a flower that’s not often seen. After some digging online, Winslow stumbled upon these rare blooms and immediately fell in love with their beautifully muted colors, thinking they would work perfectly with the bohemian-yet-sophisticated design she was creating. To add texture, Winslow piped on a tone-on-tone henna-like paisley pattern to the ivory cake. And even though she had never created this particular flower before, that didn’t stop her. Says Winslow: “With sugar flowers, once you get the basics down, you can play on and play around with those skills. It’s fun!” 1635 W. Walnut St., 312.850.4530, takethecakeetc.com.

TONI MARIE’S SWEETS & SAVORIES

The way Toni Marie Cox sees it, making sugar flowers isn’t for everyone. “It requires a lot of patience,” she says. “You have to be the type of person who enjoys doing things that are tedious.” Not a problem for Cox, who credits her background in sculpture with giving her an added edge when it comes to forming the petals thin enough so they look realistic, but not so much that they tear. To find ideas, Cox combs the fashion scene: Her four-tiered cake here features sugar embellishments inspired by elaborately beaded scarves and headdresses worn by gypsy dancers. On top of the subtly metallic fondant sash, Cox created an abstract flower with feather-like petals, as well as more realistic ones, all adorned with silver dragées and white nonpareils. But no matter if she’s crafting peonies, cherry blossoms or large old-fashioned roses—all hot trends, Cox says—her philosophy is the same: “I like the flowers to appear to be part of the cake and not just something tacked onto it.” 51 S. Washington St., Hinsdale, 630.789.2020, tonisweets.com. ■