



## **POINTERS FOR SUCCESSFUL SHOW COOKING and JUDGING**

Welcome to the world of Show Cooking. Participants have a lot of fun and gain valuable cooking skills. To win a prize is a special bonus, but if your entry doesn't win, at least you have made the effort and contributed to the success of the Show. You then have had the experience and probably the desire to 'do better next time'. Practice improves us all in whatever we do.

- ❖ Knowledge of your stove and oven is at the heart of better cooking. Read the user guide. There can be huge variations between ovens and this may mean higher or lower temperature requirements, different placement of shelves when baking, or different oven functions to give different outcomes.
- ❖ **ALWAYS READ THE COOKING SCHEDULE VERY, VERY CAREFULLY.** Classes will state what is required. Pay particular attention to quantity stated and direction advice eg. Tin size, icing, and decoration.
- ❖ Knowing a little about what the judge is looking for, may help with your cooking. As you know, food is made up of water, carbohydrates, proteins, enzymes, lipids (fats), emulsifiers, oxidants and antioxidants, flavours, pigments, vitamins and minerals. All these form the natural structure, texture, colour, and nutrients of food and these are what are judged. Quality will be the first consideration in Judging
- ❖ Judges look for: no air holes, and items being over/under cooked.
  - Appearance – shape, size and height.
  - Baking – volume and colour
  - Texture and colour inside
  - Flavour and aroma
  - Fillings
  - Decorations
  - Presentation
- ❖ The judge then looks at all entries and commences a process of elimination. Scones and Pikelets are broken not cut; Quickbreads (anything not using yeast for rising). Biscuits should be broken or cut depending on type, and pastries cut in half. Bread is cut in half. Only small portions of Jam, Jellies, Marmalades, Lemon Butter and Pickles are tested.
- ❖ Packet Cakes are in a separate class and are not judged with home-made cakes.
- ❖ Choose good quality ingredients, (eg. butter will always taste better), and use at room temperature.
- ❖ When adding flour, do not add all at once. Alternate between wet and dry ingredients, ensuring dry ingredients are added last. Some flour is drier and you may not need it all. Only add until you achieve a good consistency for the mix. Use Fielders Cornflour for cakes and White Wings for thickening.
- ❖ Cake pan preparation is important. Grease cake pans either with non-stick cooking spray, or brush base and sides with melted butter.
- ❖ Cake cooler marks on the bottom or top of entries lose points. Cover cake cooler with thick tea towels before turning out the baking or just forget the cooler and turn out on a tea towel only.
- ❖ When icing cakes or patty cakes, remember the judge will be cutting them in half.
- ❖ Cakes must be cool before icing. Always neaten the icing edging around your baking. If it runs over the sides, points will be lost.
- ❖ When icing cakes that are to be joined, (eg. Sponge Cakes), use only a thin layer of icing, and a thin layer on top using very little butter.



- ❖ One tablespoon of hot water added while creaming butter and sugar helps remove sugar spots.
- ❖ Carrot and Banana Cakes should be iced with butter icing unless specified in the schedule.
  
- ❖ **Tin Sizes:** In most Show Cooking and Judging, the TIN SIZE is either stipulated or expected. In Maleny, we try not to make it too specific as it gives variety to the presentation and it means you don't have to go out and buy another cake tin.
  

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| <b><u>Bar Tin</u></b>       | - | 21cm x 11cm   |
| <b><u>Loaf Tin</u></b>      | - | 22cm x 15cm   |
| <b><u>Lamington Tin</u></b> | - | 28cm x 18cm   |
| <b><u>Sandwich Tin</u></b>  | - | 20cm round  |
| <b><u>Fruit Cakes</u></b>   | - | 250gm mixture (means the amount of butter): 20cm round or square<br>500gm mixture: 25cm round or square |

  
- ❖ **Pikelets** – A good size for pikelets is one tablespoon. Always pour mixture from point of spoon to get a good shape
- ❖ **Biscuits** – Bake in a low sided tray. High sided trays block out heat causing the bottom of the biscuits to brown before the top. If mixture is too soft, refrigerate rather than adding extra flour, which can spoil the mixture's texture. Shape needs to be neat, perfect and all the same. Colour should be delicate straw to golden and varying shades of brown, with even colouring and no dark base. Base must be free from flour and smooth all over. Texture of biscuit should be fine and crisp so it will snap and not crumble. Butter helps with this. A drop biscuit can be crisp or soft; a bar biscuit has a more cake-like texture. Flavour plays a big part in judging, delicious according to variety and tempting.
- ❖ **Anzacs** - are round, flat, slightly domed, hard and crisp when cool. They should remain crisp if kept in an airtight tin. They are nut brown in colour, and if good fresh oatmeal is used, (not quick-minute oats), they should have a characteristic nutty flavour.
- ❖ **Shortbread** – Delicate straw colour when exhibited. When tasted, should leave a rich butter taste in your mouth.
- ❖ **Kisses** – Characteristics are shortness and fine texture due to the presence of cornflour. Kisses are mostly joined with jam and dusted with icing sugar, or as the schedule states.
- ❖ **Slices** – Should be cut into 5cm squares. Base firm and cooked according to recipe. Nice even colour. Firm icing if schedule states, not too wet, no drips over the edges. For Show work, trim edges.
- ❖ **Sponges** – A good sponge is light and moist, but not soggy. Delicately and evenly browned with no overhanging or sugar spots. With a sponge toll, take care not to overcook as they will crack when rolled. Always use warm jam in a sandwich sponge or roll.
- ❖ **Butter Cakes** – Neat appearance. Firm icing on top only for Show work, unless otherwise stated. Moist texture and good flavour, light to touch. No air bubbles, cooked evenly, nicely browned top and bottom, risen evenly without cracks. Cocoa must be well mixed through the mixture, no lumps of cocoa showing. Never put a skewer into Show cooking as it will leave a mark in the centre of the cake when cut to be judged. If unsure if cake is cooked, lift from oven and put to ear. If it is still making a crackling noise, return to oven for a little longer. Another good guide as to when the cake is ready, is when it has left the sides of the tin. Let cakes sit for a minute or so after taking from the oven. It will avoid sticking and they will come out a lot easier.



- ❖ **Sultana Cake** – Beat well to avoid sugar spots, but do not overbeat. For Show work use only 360gm sultanas to a 250gm (butter) mixture. [Check schedule]. It should be a light brown, beautifully tinted, slightly domed upright cake with a fine soft crust. High points to a cake which shows that the sultanas near the sides and base of the cake are no darker than the ones in the centre. The cake should cut without crumbling, and the slices should hold their shape. Cake should be light and free from holes. This can be achieved by giving the tin a quick bang on the bench as you are putting it in the oven. Crumb should be soft and have a good response to touch. Over-mixing will give a tough cake, and uneven texture and a split dome. The flavour and aroma will come from a wholesome blending of good ingredients.
- ❖ **Boiled Fruit Cake** – As this is called a “poor man’s cake”, it should have only 375gm packet of mixed fruit and a nice glossy top. A lot of competitors lose points by cleaning out the bowl too much. This part of the mixture has less fruit, and this will spoil the cake.
- ❖ **Rich Fruit** – Flavour should be very pleasing, with fruit cut to the same size and distributed evenly. When cut, fruit should have a glossy look. If overcooked, fruit will start to burst. The top should be nice and smooth. This can be achieved by wetting your hand and patting the top of the cake before cooking. Do not put dates or prunes in rich fruit cake for Show work.
- ❖ **Scones** – For competition, scones are cut with a sharp, floured cutter, straight down and not twisted, giving a well-defined circle. Careless and excess handling will give tough and misshapen scones that will rise unevenly. Size should be about 5cm and height all the same. Dough is usually pressed to 25cm in thickness. They should be well risen, light and with tops slightly domed. For Show work, scones should never touch while cooking. The tender crust and base should be smooth and an even golden brown. Base must **not** be overcooked and hard. Inside should be clean, free from soda spots and white to creamy white. Scones should have a sweet smelling aroma which is brought out by the salt, and with no taste of excess rising or soda. Too much baking powder makes them sharp and dry. For pumpkin scones, always strain the pumpkin so no pieces of pumpkin show in the scones when broken open to be judged. Before bringing scones to a Show, rub any visible flour off with a soft cloth. A good scone texture should flake when the thumb is rolled across lightly.
- ❖ **Freezing Points:** All cakes are suitable for freezing. Make sure the cake has cooled thoroughly before freezing. Wrap tightly with cling wrap, so there is no air between the cake and the wrapping. You can either put the cake in a container or just wrap in paper and freeze. Simply ensure nothing heavy is placed on top of cake until frozen.

### **Some Pointers for Decorated Cakes.**

1. All boards to be no bigger than 45cm x 45cm. Boards to be covered with icing, paper material as a matter of choice.
2. Reasonable use of wire, stamens, ribbons, thread tulle, gelatin, and unbreakable gel to support traditional sugar-based icing techniques are permitted. However no wire of any kind is to penetrate cake surface.
3. NO PINS are allowed to hold ribbons and only edible glue or royal icing is to be used to attach ribbons or flowers.
4. No paper or artificial fabric flowers or leaves are to be used.
5. Boards must be raised on cleats [small strips of narrow timber or similar] sufficient to enable ease of handling. Cleats must be adhered to the board.
6. Posy picks are permissible. Sprays must be attached to the exhibit.
7. Wooden and Perspex skewers are permitted for support in tiered cakes and novelty work.
8. Pillars or other means of elevating cakes are permitted.
9. Dummy cakes may be used in some classes where icing and decorations only are judged.



10. Minimal amount of metallic paint will be allowed.
11. All work must be the bonafide work of the exhibitor.
12. It is to your advantage to use a variety of decorating skills.
13. "Novice" is for beginner decorators who have not won more than three firsts in Cake Decorating in this class.
14. Decorated 2 tier Wedding Cake – icing only judged.
15. Wedding Cake miniature – fully edible. Two or more cakes to be tiered or otherwise presented on a common base. Maximum board size 15cm square. All decorations to be in proportion with size of cake.
16. Decorated Birthday Cake or Special Occasion Cake – icing only judged. No butter icing. Must include inscription.
17. Novelty Iced Cake – any imaginative creation or design formed from cake. No butter icing. The majority of exhibit must be cake.
18. Sugarcraft. No cake required, any imaginative design, floral or novelty, on a suitable presentation base.
19. Novelty decorated Cake – Butter icing only. Sweets, biscuits and plastic items allowed.