

A WORLD MADE BY SUGAR DOUGH

Halfway between an artist and a pastry chef, exists the cake designer: a new profession that is already wide spread in American has arrived in Italy. The role of the cake designer? Create figures, little houses, flowers, newly weds, bijoux and cars out of sugar as if they were real structures. The "works of art" by cake designers are highly sought after for parties, baptisms, birthday parties, graduations and weddings. Even in times of economic crisis it seems that cake designers are always busy because one can cut back but a party with a spectacular cake capable of surprising guests is a must for any social event. Fiorella Balzamo was attracted by this fascinating world some years ago while she was getting her degree in architecture. «I was one exam short of the degree and I had started my thesis - says Fiorella. - One day after seeing the movie *La Finestra di Fronte* by Ferzan Ozpetek, where the protagonist

dreams about making cakes, I decided to walk away from my undergraduate studies and started to decorate cakes. I gave myself a year to see if the business could work and I have never stopped working with fondant since. I was one of the first in Italy to enter the world of sugar art and I am quite proud of myself because there were no exiting courses where I could learn the secrets of the trade. I had to teach myself». Today Fiorella is one of the best known cake designers in Italy and she often collaborates with famous wedding planners, like Angelo Garini.

What is the secret behind a cake that is so beautiful that it reminds us of the famous house made out of marzipan in the fable of Hänsel e Gretel?

We are talking about desserts that come from the anglo-saxon tradition and adapted to Italian tastes. Often we use "pan di spa-

gna" which is filled with our traditional creams. The cake is then covered with fondant (the principal ingredient of sugar art) which thanks to its elasticity can be easily sculpted and modeled to create fantastic decorations.

How long does it take you to make a cake?

To make a cake that is not too complicated it takes around 6 to 7 hours. Even longer if we are talking about a cake with complex three dimensional decorations. In total, I dedicate around 12 hours to work every day, including many weekends because I have a lot of requests: I manage a diary in a cooking magazine, I have created a DVD in which I teach a step by step technique for decorating cakes and I promote my book *Le torte di Fiorella. Viaggio nel mio dolce mondo: il cake design* published by Malvarosa.

You have a lot of requests for cakes?

In order to purchase one of my cakes you must contact me around a month to a month and a half in advance. I am very careful and in order to guarantee quality results I do not make more than one cake a day.

Who are your clients?

I do not have a precise target client. My customers are variable and the requests are numerous: from classical cakes to those that are more complicated. I admit, however, that I prefer cakes for children that allow me to let my imagination run wild recreating the world of fables and cartoons.

How does one become a cake designer?

You need to have your hands in the fondant from the morning to the evening because only in this way do you become comfortable handling and modeling it. Today, there are several courses dedicated to teaching both beginners and professionals during which each student decorates their own cake. In every case, for beginners and experts, the advise that I always give during my courses is «make the same decoration 20 times and the 21st time it will be perfect».

