

The Hedgepig

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A friend sent me the cutest picture of a stuffed hedgepig the other day and since I can't seem to leave anything alone..... I "caked" it. This project is a fun place to try cake sculpting for the first time, as well as working with the PhotoFrost printer system. I had the good fortune to have the use of a printer and am finding it quite handy indeed.

Make the "petals" for the hedgepig: there are a couple of ways you can do this. I chose to paint my background with non-edible watercolor paints on watercolor paper and then use my printer to reproduce on edible icing sheets as many times as I needed. I love using the PhotoFrost system this way because I can keep all the designs I produce in a file and just pop them out when I need them. You have no copyright issues since they are all your designs and you can experiment all you want with those art supplies you didn't know how to use. You don't need expensive paints for this, but it does help to have some decent paper. I used 140 lb. cold pressed paper. It is a heavier paper and does not tend to warp as easily as some thinner hot pressed papers. Tape the paper down to your desk or easel board (if you tip your paper you will get "run lines," if you leave it flat you will get puddles... the choice is up to you) using painter's tape along the very edges and then wet the entire piece of paper with a large brush and clean water. Use a smaller brush to dab bits and pieces of color onto the paper. If you want a more vibrant color, add more pigment. If you want a more pastel color either mop up some of the pigment with your brush or add a bit more water to that area. When you are happy with the design, let the paper dry just until the majority of the water has either absorbed or evaporated and then sprinkle some Kosher salt over the paper. Do not disturb the paper again until completely dry. The salt will soak up the pigment and give you a kind of starburst pattern inside your original design. When the paper is completely dry, remove the tape and brush the salt crystals off the surface. You are now ready to reproduce that design as many times as you might want for as long as you want. Make sure that you have a separate set of brushes for "regular" art work and for cake art work. Some of the pigments in standard paints are toxic so separate brushes are a must.

Use the PhotoFrost printer/copier to reproduce the design on icing sheets twice for this project.

Roll out some hedgepig colored fondant very thinly in a large sheet. Apply the icing sheets to the fondant. I used a cutter for a small hydrangea leaf to make the "petals" that go on the back of the hedgepig. This small cake took about 40 petals.

You can get 20 out of each icing sheet if you are careful with how you place the cutter. Cut out all your petals and remove the excess fondant.

Let the petals dry until they will hold their shape when picked up, but not so hard that they will crack if bent. I let these sit overnight and they were just right. For this project I used Fondex fondant. You may need to adjust your drying time depending on the type of fondant you use and the humidity in the area. If you need the fondant to dry faster, knead some CMC into it before you roll it out. I generally add 1 teaspoon per pound, but you may need more or less; experiment beforehand to be sure.

The cake for this project was left over from another cake that I had done, so the size of the scraps determined the size of the hedgepig. This one was about the size of a regular sheet of paper 8 ½" x 11". I stacked it three layers high with filling in between each layer just as I would if I were going to ice and decorate it exactly as it sat. Pop the whole cake into the freezer and leave it there overnight or until completely frozen through. Now you are ready to start carving. It sounds way too easy to say, "Just take off all the cake that does not look like a hedgepig." but that is exactly what you do. I started by looking down on top of the cake and making a 45 degree cut at each back corner with my knife straight up and down. Then I moved to the front of the hedgepig and made a deep cut that defined the pointed nose, again with the knife straight up and down. You now have the basic shape, you just have to refine it a bit. We need to round off the top edges slightly, so holding your knife at a 45 degree angle to the cake, make a cut that runs down the entire length of one side. Now do the other side. Undercut the sides on the bottom of the cake in this same manner. You want your hedgepig to appear to be rounded. Don't forget to do both the top and bottom of his backside as well.

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Now move on to the head and face area. This part is going to be tricky. You want the forehead to slope upwards, the cheeks to slope inward and the chin to slope downward. In other words, you are carving a point. Hold your knife at a 45 degree angle to the cake and take little bits off at a time. You can always take more away, but it is much more trouble to put bits back. When you are happy with the shape of the hedgepig, give it a smooth coating of buttercream icing. Don't worry if you have some edges that are sharper than you thought you wanted, a lot of that can be smoothed out with the fondant covering.

Now you can lay the foundation for the facial expression of your hedgepig. Using pieces of fondant, make eyebrow ridges, cheeks and whatever else you might want. Just attach them to the cake by pressing them into the coat of buttercream icing. Put your hedgepig into the cooler and let it firm up again.

Roll out your fondant in a large enough circle to cover the hedgepig, keeping in mind that you will be going over the top of the whole thing, as well as coming back under, too. So leave yourself a bit of extra room. Place the fondant over the top of your cake using your preferred method of transfer. I like rolling out my fondant on a blue mat from Ateco or a piece of upholstery plastic and then using that to carry the fondant and lay it in place. I can then peel the mat or plastic off the fondant and get to work smoothing it out.

Since you will be starting with a larger circle and wrapping the cake, you will need to use your hands to help the fondant go where you want it to. Apply gentle pressure when you want the fondant to compress, don't crease it. Use a gentle pulling motion to help it stretch over the nose, but don't let the nose poke through. When you are working on the nose area, keep one hand under the nose so you don't break it off. It is a pretty thin point. You can use the larger end of a ball tool to help you get the fondant into place around the eyebrow ridges and cheeks that you added before you put the fondant on the cake. Smooth it all into place carefully so you don't flatten out the details.

Keep working the fondant down the undersides of the cake until you get it all the way to the board. Trim off the excess and use your hands to smooth out the cut edges. I do this with the cake upside down in one hand and just quickly run my fingers along the cut edges to encourage them to

go underneath the cake. Put the cake back on the board quickly and rub out any impressions from your hand. You can use a piece of leftover waste fondant to help polish out any dents, finger marks, etc. Rub it gently over the surface being careful not to let it stick and catch the fondant on the cake.

Use the large end of your ball tool to indent for the eyes. Roll two pieces of white fondant and place them into the indentations, gluing them in place with water. Roll two black balls of fondant and glue them in place for the pupils. Roll two comma shaped pieces of hedgepig colored fondant for the eyebrows and glue them in place on the brow ridges. Add a little blush for the cheek areas. Roll a small ball of black fondant for the nose and glue that to the end of the point.

Now it is time to place the "petals". Start at the back of your cake and begin layering the petals, gluing them in place with a small bit of icing. Make sure that they overlap each other and that all the petals are pointing the same way. The petals are his protection (on a real animal they are spines) so they grow in such a way that they can cover as much hedgepig as possible when needed.

Be sure to add a tiny bit of white to each pupil and possibly a small spot on the nose to bring your hedgepig to life. I also added some small pearls to the first row of petals behind the head for a little bit of decoration.

If you have questions, please feel free to e-mail me at frotusbush@gmail.com, or call me at (503) 985-3133 any time between 9:00 am and 8:00 pm Pacific Time. 🍷

