

Vintage

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I wanted to make a sculpted piece that would resemble some of the vintage Halloween decorations of which I am so fond and this is what I came up with.

To start, you will need some cake. I prefer to work with a sturdy product such as pound cake. This particular material is pumpkin spice.

You will also need some buttercream and some fondant.

I baked three round 9"x2" layers and stacked them with buttercream in between. When I am doing sculpted cake, I tend to stay away from fruit or custard fillings as these may leak out as you carve into the cake.

On this particular piece, I didn't have to have an internal support system, but if you go a whole lot bigger, you will have to have one. Just like making any other cake, be sure that you have supported the weight sufficiently whether you have to use an armature or just plates and dowels.

Once the cake has been filled and stacked, I put it in the fridge to chill and set. There is not a huge amount of carving on this cake, but there is enough to see whether or not you like making sculpted cakes. I started by rounding the top and bottom edges. Since this is a pumpkin, you can shape it as you like. Some are tall and thin, some are short and round...stop carving when you think it is ready. Also keep in mind that your finished product will be larger in both height and diameter after you get the buttercream undercoat and the final fondant covering finished.

The next step is to carve the vertical indentations. Decide how many sections you want your finished



pumpkin to have, taking into consideration that your face will most likely look best centered on one of the sections rather than having a line down the middle



of the face. Divide the cake into the number of sections you want. This cake has 7, 6 smaller ones and then the larger one that holds the face. Make your vertical cuts in a "V" shape with a larger serrated knife and then switch to a smaller serrated knife to refine the "V" cuts and round over the sections or ribs. You will also want to cut indents for the eyes and the mouth. When you are happy with the shapes...stop cutting.

You will want to ice your cake with a crumb coat of buttercream and chill it again. Then I went back and covered it with a second coat and chilled it a third time. You really don't want your cake slipping around when you are trying to cover it with fondant, so let it get good and stable.

The features of this face are made from fondant and laid on top of the buttercream coating so when you put your fondant layer over it all you will have a seamless transition. When you are working with two of something, such as eyebrows, select a piece of paste big enough to

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do both of them, cut it in half and work with one at a time. This way you will have equal amounts with which to work and your items will be the same size. Roll the eyebrow pieces into a ball and then into a comma shape. Put



them in place over the eyes where the orbital ridge would be. I also outlined the eyes so that I had some depth for things like wrinkles without cutting down into the cake and bringing up more crumbs. Select enough paste for both eyes, cut it in half and roll each half into a snake, put it in place around the eye cutout, arranging it to suit the face. The nose is a piece of fondant rolled into a ball, then a teardrop. I pointed the nose and gave it a beaky look.

Put it in place on the face. Roll two balls of fondant for nostrils and put them in place next to the main part of the nose. Next roll two snakes for the upper and lower lip. Put them in place above and below the cut out for the



mouth. Roll two balls of fondant for the cheeks and put them in place at the corners of the mouth.

Depending on how long this stage has taken, you may want to pop the cake back in to the cooler to firm up again. If you work quickly, you may be able to keep working without chilling again. Just make sure that your buttercream is firm enough that your fondant features will not be sliding down the cake when you cover it with the fondant.

Roll out your fondant, I leave it a bit thicker than I would to cover a regular cake since I am going to be stretching it over bumps and into crevices. I like to roll my fondant on a blue Ateco mat or a thick piece of upholstery plastic and use that to carry my fondant to my cake. Drape the fondant over the cake and then peel the plastic or mat off the fondant. Use your hands and fingers to smooth the fondant down over the cake,

working it down over the features and then in where you have undercut at the base to give the bottom of the pumpkin a rounded shape. Trim off the excess fondant with a pizza cutter or sharp knife. Use the sides of your hands to smooth out the blunt edge of the



cut. I used both my ball tools and my fingers to work the fondant down over the features of the face and into the eye sockets and mouth. A dogbone tool and clay shapers come in very handy for making wrinkles and laugh lines. If you have trouble figuring out where these should go, look in the mirror, squint your eyes and smile. Put the lines there.

Now we get to the coloring part of this. You can go with colored fondant and use dusting powders or you can use an airbrush. I wanted that saturated look you get on some of the papier mache items from the 20' and 30's so I went with the airbrush and over applied the final paint.

This starts out with airbrushing the entire cake in yellow. Next apply orange to everything but the eyes. Come back in with some red and overspray lightly. I left the red in the airbrush cup and added a couple of drops of brown to it and got close up for detail shadows and then came back with orange again and sprayed enough that the paint beaded up on the surface and gave it that sort of uneven texture you see in papier mache.

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Airbrushing can be both very simple and very complex at the same time. As a general rule, the closer you hold the head to your work, the finer a line you will get. The farther away you hold the head, the wider your paint is allowed to disburse. I bought a roll of paper towels that had a quilted pattern on it and a jug of paint and practiced with the brush until I could draw the pattern on the paper towel reliably. You will have to play with how close or how far away you need to hold the head in order to get the look you want to achieve. You will also have to practice with the trigger. Some brushes are single action and some are dual. With a dual action trigger you have the ability to control both the quantity of air and the quantity of paint you are shooting. Practice with your particular airbrush until you are comfortable.

The last bits for this piece are the eyeballs which are rolled from black gumpaste and glued into the sockets with a small bit of water and the stem which is made from green fondant, textured with a needle tool and added to the top of the pumpkin.

