

The Sculptural Artistry of Cakes

With Raymond Saucedo of Simply Elegant by Raymond · by Monica Sawyer

Raymond Saucedo of Simply Elegant by Raymond has been an artist of the sweetest kind for over 25 years with all things cake! We are fascinated by the sculptural elements we were seeing on his wedding and groom's cakes and had to find out what it took to create these amazing pieces.

"Pray it's not humid!" was Raymond's first exclamation, so right away we know his job is tough in our Corpus Christi weather! The humidity is a big factor in allowing elements to dry, "set up," or just plain cooperate. Cake decorating is a delicate art, and when the weather is nice, you know it's going to be a productive day.

Raymond and his team sculpt the details out of gum paste, fondant and icing while using an airbrush with special food coloring to bring the elements to life. Gum paste dries harder than fondant so it's perfect for making flowers and delicate details. Raymond uses different tools to get the desired shapes, sometimes using commercial cutters and many times hand-cutting every tiny piece. "Universal cutters give you a good start," explains Raymond, "but to avoid the cost of a cutter in every single option, we hand-shape each piece after cutting to get what we need."

Creating "sugar flowers" for a cake is a process that takes at least 3-4 days, depending on the number of flowers. The cost is high for hand-made flowers, but when you realize what it takes to make them, you know it's worth it! First, Raymond has to visualize how many flowers are going to adorn the cake. He and his team make the bud's first, which takes a full day. Day two is for petals. They roll out the gum paste and each petal of every flower is cut individually and shaped. The team has to work quickly because they dry very fast. Raymond



Many other details are created using hidden techniques and "secrets." Some of the trim and lace details are made from actual lace! Raymond will find vintage lace collars and press the lace into the fondant to create the beautiful textures and trim. The thicker the lace the better. The groom's cakes Raymond designs are a whole different kind of art. He often uses real objects to create a 3-d pattern, layers up the sheet cake, and starts carving. "You really have to think about gravity," Raymond explains. "As I'm carving it out, I have to be careful. Parts can collapse. The secret is in the illusion. I use rice cereal treats for the parts that need support!" Raymond is an illusion master, sculpting using various edible elements to get the perfect design you want. "There have been times when a bride comes in with a cake she saw online, sometimes worth millions," Raymond reveals, "and these extremely elaborate cakes you see trending are mostly Styrofoam covered in fondant with one cake layer down below, which we can do if you want. We definitely explain to the couple exactly what to expect and how the cake is created so there are no surprises."

The reason behind Raymond's admirable work ethic and why he loves creating and designing these unique cakes (sometimes pain-staking work) is his customers. "Sure, it gets hard," Raymond says, "but when it's all said and done, it's the people's reactions that keep me inspired. When I know they like it, that's when I enjoy it the most." And we know from experience, Raymond's creations aren't just gorgeous, they are super delicious!

For more information, call Simply Elegant by Raymond at (361) 334-3117, visit his showroom and bakery at 817 Airline Rd. in Corpus Christi or find him on facebook.

often makes a 3-dimensional shape using aluminum foil and lays the cut petal onto the foil mold. He airbrushes each to make them more realistic. A big trend is to use metallics, so he'll paint the petals solid gold if you like! The petals have to dry and harden overnight. "Every petal is like a beauty pageant winner," Raymond says. "They are extremely fragile, so each has a runner up, in case they can't perform their duty." The third and fourth days are for completing the flower using all the carefully hand-made pieces. Wow!!!

