

Christmas Tree Cake Tutorial



Sweet
DISPOSITION
CAKES



I recommend using a mud cake for the christmas tree, if you have a firm regular cake recipe that can also be used, especially one that is easy to carve. I would not recommend a sponge cake as it will be too soft and difficult to carve and cover with ganache.

These are the recipes that I use, you don't have to use these if you have a different recipe or method that works for you. Other recipes and/or methods can be found on the internet, I have found many useful sites just by googling.



Ganache

1.2 kg dark chocolate
600ml thickened cream

For white chocolate and milk chocolate ganache use a 3:1 ratio, sometimes a 4:1 ratio is needed in warmer temperatures.

1.2 kg white or milk chocolate
400ml thickened cream

Place the chocolate in a large mixing bowl, plastic or glass is preferred as you may need to melt the ganache in the microwave later. Bring the cream to the boil in a saucepan and pour over the chocolate, mix with a spatula until the chocolate has melted into the cream. Whisk by hand to mix the chocolate and cream thoroughly. Cover and set aside at room temperature to set or place in refrigerator overnight.

To use the ganache microwave for short bursts until it is soft enough to mix with your spatula, make sure any lumps are beaten in.

Gumpaste

1 teaspoon of CMC.
500 grams fondant.

Sprinkle the CMC onto your bench or work surface and knead into the fondant, you should feel the fondant firm up as you knead. Wrap tightly in two layers of cling wrap and set aside to firm up. It can be coloured like fondant but it may be easier to colour the fondant before adding the CMC.

If you are using tylose it is usually double the amount of CMC but not always, instructions should be on the packet or tub that you buy from your cake decorating store.

Half strength gumpaste

For the board I use half the amount of CMC in the fondant, this makes it easier to roll out.

Syrup

100g Apricot jam or Sugar
100g Boiling water

Add the boiling water to the sugar or jam and whisk together thoroughly. If using jam strain the mixture to remove any pieces of fruit, I find the cheaper and more jelly like the jam is the easier it dissolves. Let cool and store in the refrigerator.

Royal Icing

1 large egg white
250g pure icing sugar
lemon juice or acetic acid

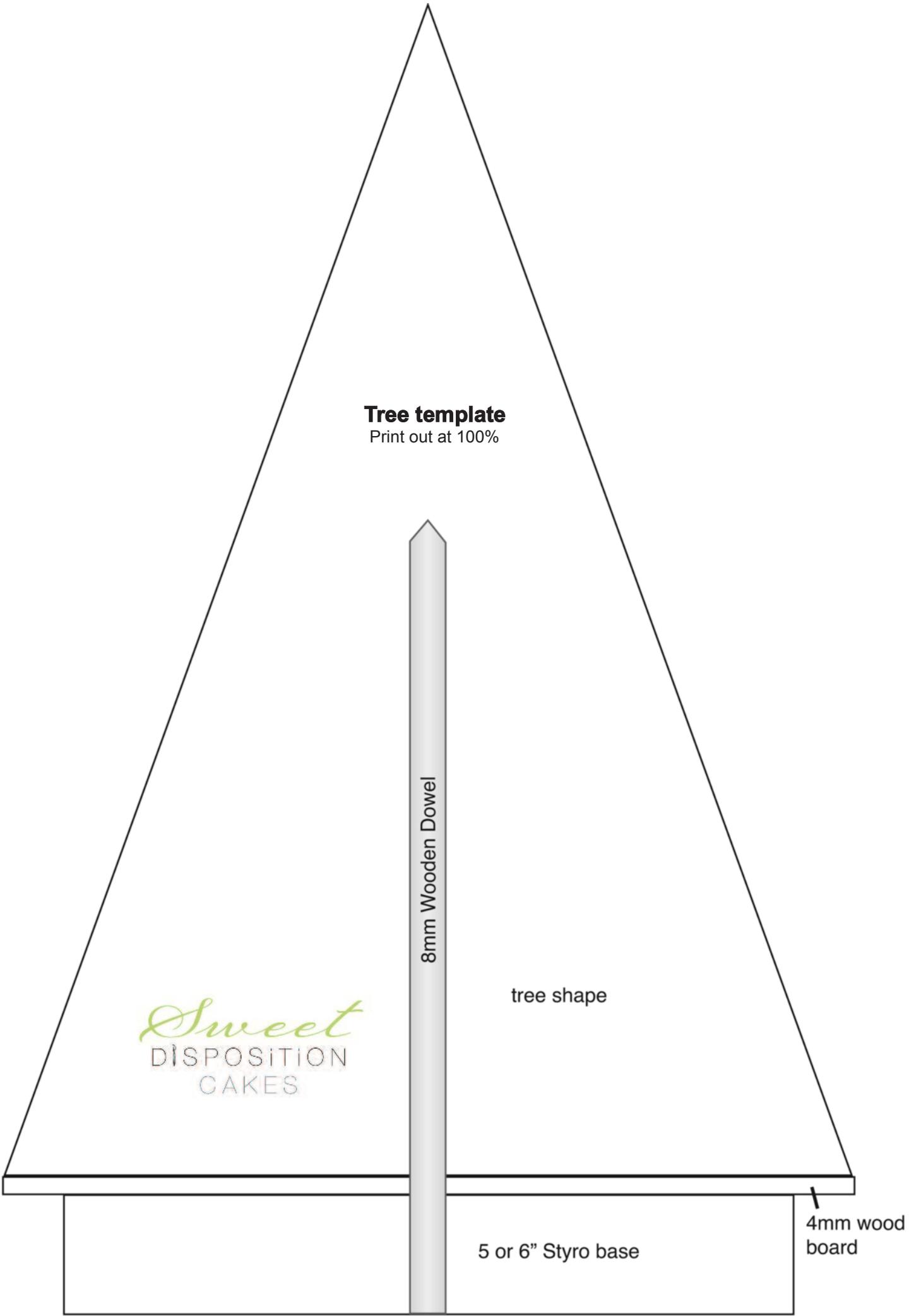
Put the egg white in your mixing bowl and add half the icing sugar, using the beater attachment mix until all of the icing sugar is dissolved, add the rest of the icing sugar and a squeeze of lemon juice (or a few drops of acetic acid) and once it is mixed thoroughly beat at a faster speed to thicken the mixture. Place in a small bowl and cover with cling wrap against the royal icing and a second layer over the bowl. Place in the refrigerator until needed.

Colour your royal icing with gel colours, adding a small amount of colour at a time mixing well.

Sugar glue

1/4 teaspoon of CMC or tylose
2 tablespoons hot or boiling water

Using a small container add the hot water to the tylose and mix slightly with a toothpick to help break up the CMC or tylose. It will not dissolve straight away, cover and leave overnight in the refrigerator and the powder will dissolve completely. CMC is a different strength to tylose and may result in a slightly thicker glue, I use it like this but if you want to thin it just add some more hot water.



Tree template
Print out at 100%

8mm Wooden Dowel

tree shape

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5 or 6" Styro base

4mm wood board



Materials

7" mudcake (4" high) & 6" mudcake (4" high)
 Chocolate ganache (white or dark - recipe included)
 1 kilo fondant to colour for tree. (Americolor leaf green, gold and yellow were used for this tutorial)
 150g coloured gumpaste for balls and candy canes. I divided my gumpaste into 3 and used red (Satin Ice with added CMC) yellow and white to colour the gumpaste.
 500g half strength gumpaste for board.
 Gel food colours
 Cornflour
 Syrup
 Royal Icing
 Sugar glue
 CMC for making gumpaste
 Tree template (provided)

Optional:

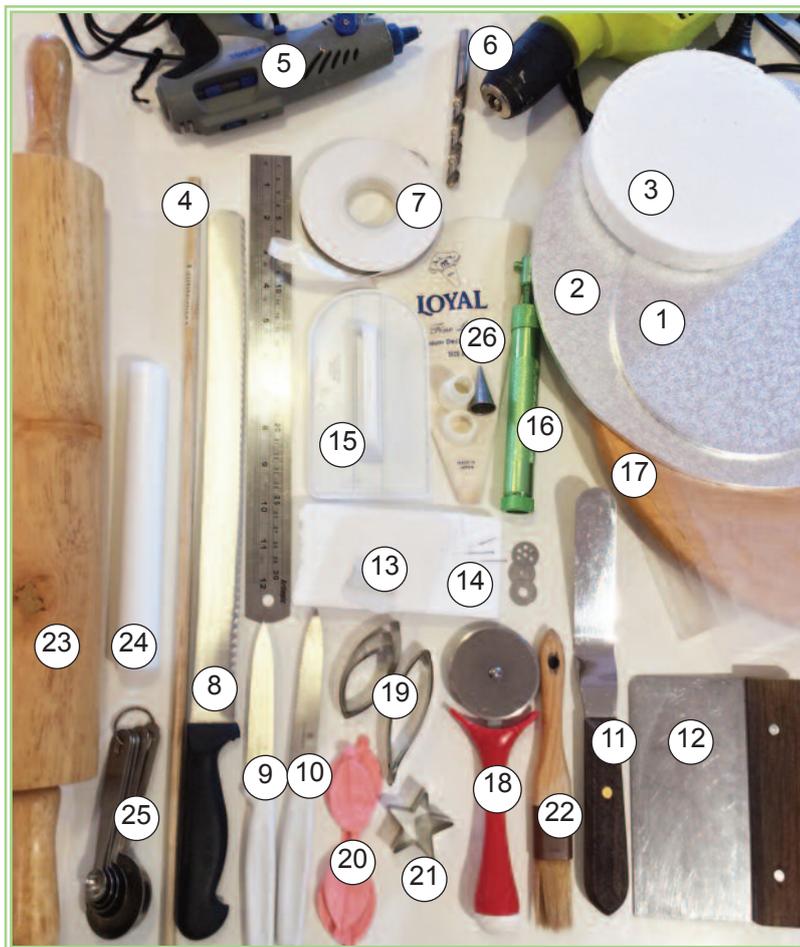
Airbrush and airbrush colours to add shading to leaves
 Petal dusts or lustre dusts for tree, decorative balls and star.

Tools

1. 7" 4mm round wooden cake board
2. 12" 6mm round wooden cake board
3. 5 or 6" round styro (1" high or cut a 5 or 6" styrofoam dummy cake down into 1" sections)
4. 8mm wooden dowel,
5. Hot glue gun, PVA glue can be used but will need to dry overnight.
6. If you have one, a drill for the holes and a 8mm drill bit for wood.
7. 6mm ribbon for board trim
8. Large serrated knife used to layer the cake.
9. Paring knife
10. Small serrated knife
11. Crank handled spatula
12. Metal scraper
13. Flexible smoother (made from overhead transparency sheet)
14. Acupuncture needle
15. Wilton smoother (or smoother you prefer to use)
16. Extruder (optional, lengths of fondant can be rolled by hand)
17. Turntable (I just use an Ikea turntable)
18. Pizza cutter.
19. Leaf or flower cutters.
20. Leaf molds (optional).
21. Small star cutter.
23. Rolling pin.
24. Small rolling pin.
25. Measuring spoons for CMC.
26. PVA Glue for attaching ribbon to board.

Optional:

Plastic slips or a piece of vinyl to cover fondant or cut leaves.
 Pasta Machine.





1. Using the coloured gumpaste set aside for the different coloured balls, pinch small amounts and roll into little decorative balls. I have rolled mine to be just under 1cm. Lustre dust can be used to add some shine (gold, silver and cranberry pictured above) or leave plain. I usually roll around on a tissue to remove excess lustre.



2. Extrude or roll out very thin sausage lengths of red and white gumpaste (I used red and white). Twist them together and roll on your board or table with your hands or smoother to make sure they stick together.



3. Cut into 6cm lengths (almost 2"), curve top over and leave to dry. With the CMC added to the fondant they dry pretty quickly and can be dried at the same time as the leaves if time is limited (they will still be a bit flexible but can be placed on the tree).



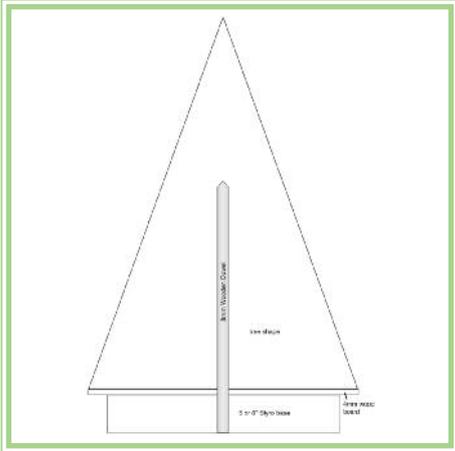
4. Drill holes in the centre of the 12" and 7" board (or the desired size of your cake board). I used an 8mm dowel and an 8mm drill bit. Depending on the size of your tree it may be a little top heavy when slightly higher on the styro base. Add a hole to the centre of the styro base, and cut the dowel. I have supplied a guide for the height of the dowel with the tree template. I made a slight point to the top of the dowel to make putting the cake through it easier.



5. Hot glue the dowel into the hole in the 12" base board (I put a piece of paper under the hole so I don't stick the board to the bench. Add some glue to the board around the dowel, add styro base to the board.



6. The styro is now glued to the base board. Place the 7" cake board over the dowel and start stacking your cakes.



7. Print out your tree template 100%, if you wish to have a larger tree just increase the size of your printout or photocopy to suit, remember the base board will need to change sizes for a wider tree base.

You can laminate your template or if like me, you have no laminator just use some clear packing tape on the front and back of the template and cut out.



8. Starting with your largest cake, add cake layers to board, 'glue' the bottom layer to the cake board using some ganache then add ganache in between layers of cake working your way up.



9. Add layers of cake until the dowel is just covered or until you have almost reached the height of the tree template.



10. Attach your template to your stack of cakes, some ganache will hold it in place.



11. Using your large serrated knife trim the sides of the cake following the shape of the template.



12. Move the template to a carved side and trim the remaining sections of cake, you will end up with a pyramid shape.



13. Cake after trimming 4 sides.

Use the trimmed cake to finish the top triangle part at the top of the template, attach with ganache. You may want to wait for the ganache to set slightly before trimming.



14. You can continue using the template to trim the cake then switch to the small serrated knife to smooth off any rough portions until you end up with a cylinder shape your happy with. Make sure you have a few mm of board showing so there is room to ganache the cake to the edge of the board.



15. Using your palette knife cover the tree in a layer of ganache.



16. Let the ganache set before smoothing it.



17. Smooth ganache with your metal scraper. The ganache doesn't have to be perfectly smooth as the leaves will be covering the first layer of fondant. This step is just to try to prevent air bubbles from forming under the fondant.

Once covered with ganache let the ganache set overnight or you can place the tree in the fridge to set for about 10 - 20 minutes.



18. Colour your fondant. I did two trees while I took pictures for this tutorial, one I wanted as a gold/light yellow colour (I used Americolor gold and yellow) and the other I used leaf green and some yellow.



19. I used some baking paper as a template for the fondant, I cut a length of baking paper and wrapped it around the tree. I ended up with a rough triangle shape, it's best to do this before adding syrup to the cake. Brush cake with syrup, if the cake was in the refrigerator make sure it is at room temperature before covering or the fondant will be clammy and difficult to smooth.



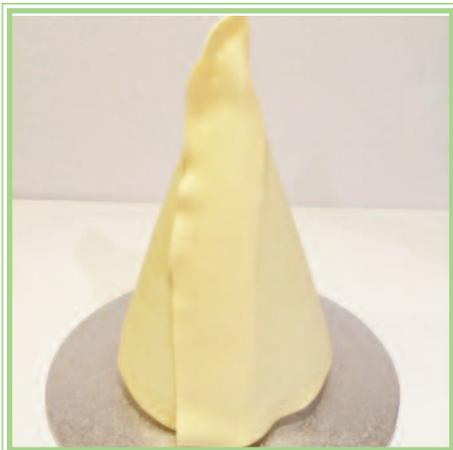
20. Roll out your fondant with your rolling pin, I like to roll it out thinly (approx 3mm) as more fondant is going on later as leaves. Lay your baking paper on top and using a pizza cutter or paring knife cut out the shape.



21. Fold the sides of the fondant back so it is easier to manage and won't stretch so much and place on one side of the cake.



22. Wrap the sides of the fondant around the cake.



23. Overlap the fondant and using a paring knife cut down the middle of the overlapping section, through both fondant sections.



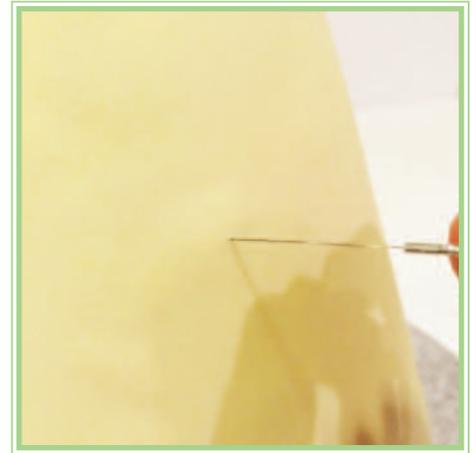
24. Fold back top part and remove excess fondant.



25. Join seam and smooth.



26. Use a smoother to smooth out the fondant.



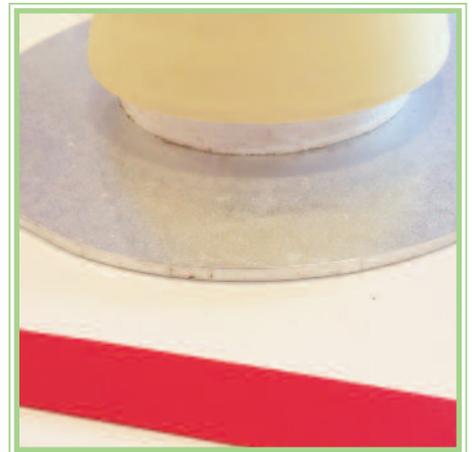
27. If you find bubbles under the fondant use an acupuncture needle to make a small hole and smooth the air out.



28. Trim excess fondant that falls underneath the cake board using the paring knife.



29. Roll a long strip of coloured fondant thinly on cornflour or icing sugar (I used coloured Satin Ice). Cut a strip of fondant just under 1 inch wide and the length should be just longer than the circumference of the styrofoam base.



30. Brush the styrofoam base with some syrup (piping gel or water can also be used) and wrap the fondant strip around the styro under the cake board.

Cut away any overlap and join ends neatly.



31. Make up 500g of half strength gumpaste (half the amount of CMC) for the base board. Roll out the white fondant slightly larger than the 12" baseboard. I roll mine to around 5-6mm thick. Cut a hole slightly smaller than the styro base, you can use a small plate turned upside down or a smaller sized board like the 5" I've used in the picture.



32. Carefully pick up the fondant and place over the tree. Adjust the fondant so that the cut out hole sits neatly against the styrofoam, flip up the edges and lightly brush syrup on the board underneath.



33. Move the board to the edge of the bench and use your smoother or flexible smoother to cut the excess fondant by rubbing the smoother along the top edge. Finish by smoothing off the fondant with the smoother.

- leaves & decorations



34. Roll out the gumpaste for the leaves thinly or use a pasta machine. Using the leaf shape you prefer or a similar shaped petal cutter cut out the leaf shapes (the cutter used for the tutorial was approximately 1" wide & 2" long). The top tip of the leaf isn't seen once on the tree so it can be left off

At this point you can use a leaf veiner to add some detail by pressing it into the top of the leaves or you can leave them plain.



35. All that is needed to shape the leaves are the lids of cake boxes with the edges folded at a 45 degree angle. Line the leaves along the edges, fitting 11-12 leaves on each side of a 14" board.

Cut 130 - 150 leaves for the tree size that is shown here. If you have a smaller leaf cutter cut approx. 15 - 20 of these for the top section of the tree plus 2 full length leaves, put these 2 leaves aside under vinyl or in plastic sleeves.



36. Roll some gumpaste to about 1 to 2cm thick and using some sugar glue insert a toothpick and let dry with the leaves.

You may wish to paint it with some gold or silver lustre, just add a small amount of decorators alcohol and mix with a brush. 2 coats should be enough, leaving to dry between coats.



37. Colour your royal icing to match the colour of your tree and pipe a large dot to fix the leaves in place. By the time the last leaves are cut the first leaves can be placed on the tree. I space my leaves out and place the next row to fill those spaces. I follow this pattern till the leaves end up closer together then start spacing them out again. Near the top of the tree switch to the slightly smaller leaves till you get to the very top



38. Place the two full sized leaves (the ones placed aside earlier using the whole leaf shape) across the top of the tree hiding the tip of the fondant underneath. Add the star to the top.



38. Using dots of royal icing attach the decorative balls and candy cakes onto the tips of the leaves. The extruder can also be used to add long strips of fondant to the tree as garlands. You can brush lustre dust onto the tips of the leaves or add some RI snow.

If you have an airbrush you can add shading of shadow to your tree under the leaves.

Finish off your tree by attaching a ribbon to the edge of the base board with some non toxic PVA glue.

