

martha stewart

FALL 2003

weddings



sentimental bouquets
fairy-tale dresses
cakes with sugar flowers
a harvest wedding



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a letter from martha



I WISH I HAD KEPT COUNT of how many beautiful cakes we have created for our weddings books and magazines over the years. The designs must now number in the hundreds! These designs started modestly, more than two decades ago, when I published my first book, *Entertaining*. I was not a professional decorator, I had not gone to cooking school, nor had I been tutored by any famous bakers. I just loved cakes: I loved decorating them, garnishing them with icings and fresh flowers and ribbons and candied fruits.

When we started *Martha Stewart Weddings*, we began addressing the entire world of cake decorating: mammoth cakes, tiny cakes, and even cupcakes, enlisting the minds and hands of talented bakers and decorators who had spent years designing and developing cakes that were meant to make one swoon, smile, and stare in awe.

Wendy Kromer, a professional baker, has made many of these cakes; she is, in fact, a regular contributor to this magazine. Perhaps you may have seen her on my television show. Ron Ben-Israel (with

me, above), has built a wonderful business making cakes for all occasions, but he specializes in weddings. These two wizards have collaborated on what is perhaps one of the most unbelievably gorgeous wedding-cake stories ever: “Cakes Decorated With Sugar Flowers” (page 272). If I were to get married tomorrow, I would not know which of these elegant cakes pictured to choose—they are each so unique and wonderful.

Making sugar flowers is not an elusive art form, but it does help if you know a bit of botany and have nimble, steady fingers and a tremendous amount of patience, for the art of sugar flowers is extremely time-consuming (see “The Making of Sugar Flowers,” page 194). You also must be able to envision the final design of the cake, so that each of the flowers molded goes well with all of the others. But I admit, after a morning of making sugar flowers with Ron, I did not want to stop. It was so much fun! It was simultaneously relaxing and nerve-racking but ultimately so satisfying to see a flower—we were fashioning orchids—take shape so readily. The most fun of all was comparing the sugar orchid to the real thing, and not being able to distinguish one from the other!

I hope you enjoy these stories, along with all the other fascinating and informative articles in the issue.

Martha Stewart



cakes decorated with
**SUGAR
FLOWERS**

They assume the delicacy and splendor of fresh blossoms without their fleeting, fading nature. Sugar flowers are at once exquisite and enduring—the perfect enhancement to any wedding cake.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Sang An* TEXT BY *Melissa Clark*

the making of sugar flowers

Creating sugar flowers takes an equal measure of patience, skill, and artistic vision.

The result: confectionery masterpieces that are wonderful for a wedding cake.



A CLUSTER OF SUGAR BLOOMS or one single perfect gum-paste blossom is one of the most spectacular decorations for a wedding cake. For the cake maker, it's also one of the most labor-intensive. As in nature, every sugar flower is unique. Confectioners model their botanically accurate sculptures after individual blossoms, incorporating the quirks that make one tulip, for instance, different from another. Every element of the flower—the stem, stamen, leaves, petals—is handmade, and each bloom can take hours to complete.

The art of making sugar flowers dates back to at least the Middle Ages, says Ron Ben-Israel, a New York-based wedding-cake specialist. The time-honored recipe for gum paste—an edible dough—is just powdered sugar mixed with a tiny amount of gum tragacanth, a sticky substance from the roots of an Asian shrub. The gum strengthens the sugar and makes it pliable.

Using sugar flowers allows you to choose any bloom in any color for your cake. And unlike their natural counterparts, once sugar flowers are crafted and set, they won't droop; properly stored (in an airtight plastic container to keep them dry) they can even last years. So pluck one from your cake as a unique memento.

Colorless gum paste becomes lily-of-the-valley. After food coloring is kneaded in, the dough is rolled, cut, and shaped. The leaves are brushed with a powder called petal dust to mimic the gradations found in nature.

how a tulip is made

For loosely petaled flowers, like these tulips, petals are wired and then taped together.



1 The gum paste is tinted, then rolled thin and cut into petals. A cutter with smooth sides forms petals for basic tulips; an irregularly shaped cutter creates ruffled edges for parrot tulips.

2 The edges are thinned with a ball tool, and the petals are threaded onto wires.

3 To achieve a tulip's texture, the cut-outs are pressed into a silicone mold (some cake makers press them into the palm of their hand). They are then dried in plastic molds to maintain their shape.

4 For the centers, a ball of gum paste is pushed onto a wire that has been

wrapped in floral tape. Tweezers can be used to pinch it into a natural shape. Stamens are placed around the center and affixed to the stem with floral tape.

5 Once dry, the petals are attached by taping their wires to the stem. Like most natural tulips, these have six petals.

6 Several shades of yellow petal dust are brushed on to add nuances of color.

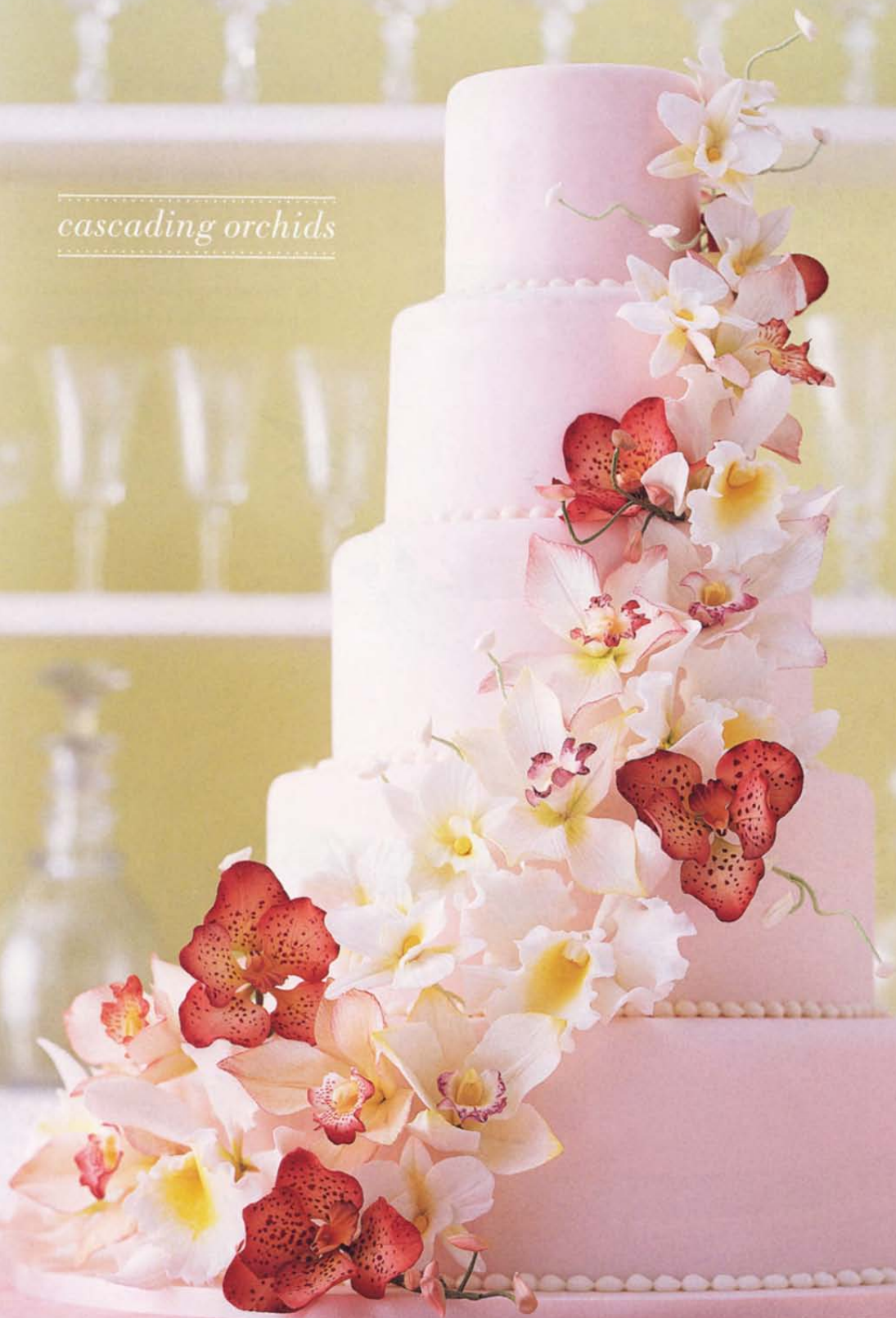
7 The finished parrot tulip is shown open. The others are more closed, as if they have just come into bloom. Since they are wired, tulips should be removed before the cake is served. SEE THE GUIDE FOR SHOPPING INFORMATION



blushing garden rose



cascading orchids



Using dozens of gum-paste flowers in an abundant cascade is a classic, opulent way to display them on a wedding cake. Above, a variety of orchids with the *depth* and detail of the real flowers flows downward from the top tier. Pale-pink fondant forms a soft backdrop. Opposite: Whimsical and lighthearted, these pretty little cakes—a fresh alternative to a single grand *confection*—are adorned with sprigs of sugar freesia in yellow, lavender, and white. The cakes are iced in the same colors, but paired with a differently hued flower. A *Swiss-dot* motif piped onto the fondant is echoed in the cloth draping the cake table. SEE THE GUIDE FOR SHOPPING INFORMATION

CREATED BY THERESA CANNING AND ALEXA MULVIHILL
HELLEBORE, CHERRY BLOSSOM, AND DAISY CAKES BY WENDY KROMER;
ROSE, ORCHID, AND FREESIA CAKES BY RON BEN-ISRAEL



a trio of freesia