

Always Watching

by Dawn Parrott



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A Tutorial by
Dawn Parrott

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Ever want to wow your friends and family! This fun and easy Halloween cake is sure to do that. Best part is, you can make this with your kids and make it a fun family project and memory. My kids helped with this cake and had fun doing it. They love to brag to their friends when everyone ooh's and aaaah's. Be sure to bring them in and let them have a "hand" in it.

Dawn Parrott is a Certified Working Pastry Chef and award winning cake designer in Houston, TX. Her designs have been featured in various cake magazines and books, as well as on multiple episodes of "Food Network Challenge."

Shown to the right are Dawn & her daughters Ash & Carrington



Materials Needed:

- 3 - 14" Square cakes (or smaller depending on your coffin size)
- Foam Core Board
- Exacto® Knife
- Paper for making templates, plus pencil and ruler
- Wooden Board for cake base
- 1/2" pipe flange
- 12 - 1/2" pipe
- Various types and sizes of PVC pipe. See pictures. (I highly recommend going to your hardware store and playing with all the connectors and shaped pieces of pipe. It is so much fun. I created the hand and the tree from these).
- Buttercream (I used chocolate in this piece as most of my pieces are dark)
- Cake Pop Roller for the Eyes (you can make them by hand if you don't have one)
- Fondant for mummy wrapping
- 3" Round Styrofoam ball
- Cake spatula
- Pizza cutter or small knife
- Modeling chocolate for panels on coffin (you can do all this in buttercream or fondant. I like the way the modeling chocolate hardens and makes panels so clean)
- Rice Krispies® for the forming of fingers and tree
- Colored Fondant for eye color
- Black fondant for eyes
- White fondant to cover the eyeball
- Red food marker or red gel color and paintbrush
- White Candy Melts



Step 1: First you need to draw templates for the size of the actual coffin. This is the cake part. I find it is easier to start my design around the actual cake part of the design. Depending on the size of cake you bake, this will determine the finished size of the coffin.

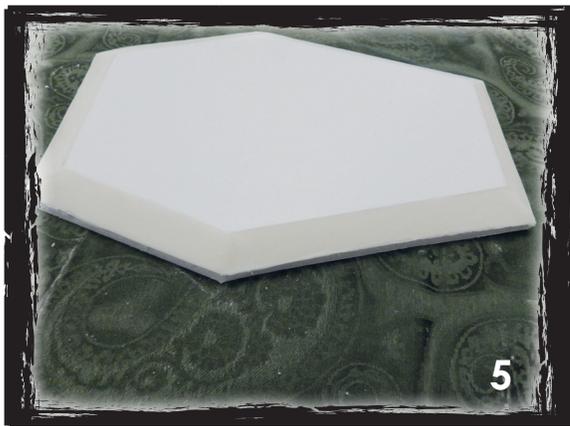
2. Then you need to design a slightly bigger piece for the lid and base. I went with 1/2 inch all the way around the cake template. Then you need a smaller piece to help in the beveled edge on the top of the coffin. I took the actual cake size and decreased it 1/2 inch all way around. This gave me a 3/4 inch from the inside piece to the outer lid edge.



Step 3: Cut your foam core with your templates. You will need two the size of the lid (larger one) and two smaller ones.

Step 4: Make your lid. If you prefer to have this all edible, I would use fondant and allow it to dry hard. However, I generally use foamcore or cardboard for ease and lightness. Cover the one side of the largest piece in black or red fondant. This is the inside of the coffin. Allow this to dry. Once dry, glue the first smaller piece of foamcore to the opposite side of the covered piece. Try to center it as best as possible. We are now going to create the beveled edge.





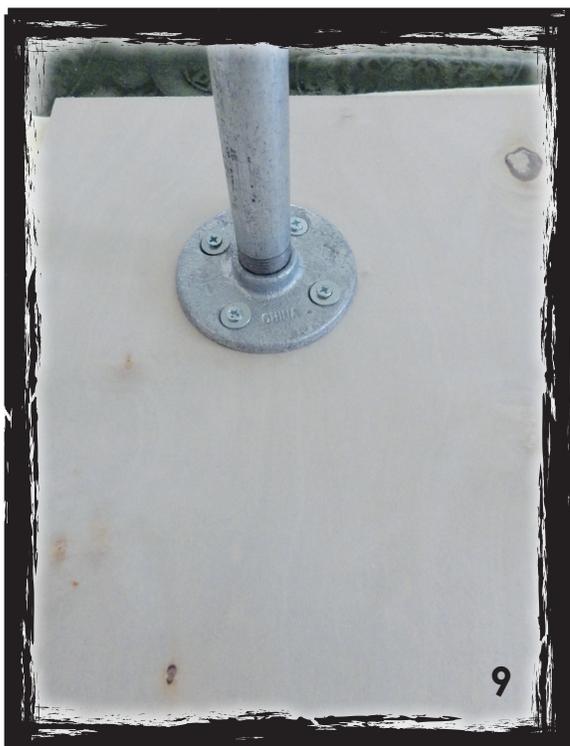
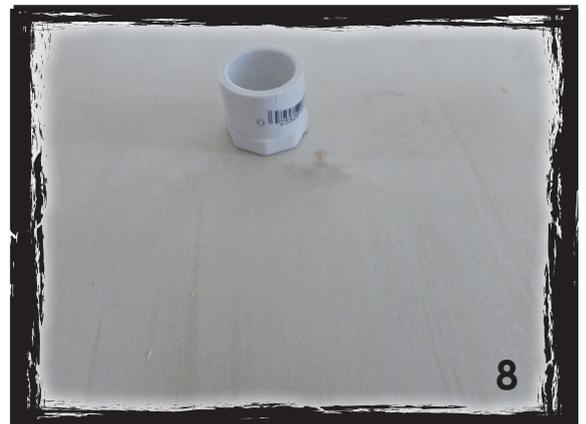
Step 5: I used fondant for this application. You need to fill in the gap between the two boards. I soften a piece of fondant and use a rolling pin to ensure it is filling in and leveling. I then go back with a fondant smoother to ensure the edge is correct. Glue the second smaller piece directly on top of this smaller piece. Once dry enough to work with, roll out enough fondant or chocolate (depending on what you use) to cover the entire top in one piece.

Step 6: Roll out enough fondant or modeling chocolate to cover the top side of the bottom board as well.



Step 7: Once dry, finish with trim on the sides and edges. I am using a little mold that looks like studs for the side and hand making some details to make the wood look ornate.

Step 8: Prepare your cake board. Once you have your PVC piping figured out, you need to decide on placement on your board so you can permanently fix them. I decided that my tree was to sit in the corner, so, first I need to take 4 screws and attach the flange to my board.



Step 9: Once in place, I screwed in the 12" pipe. This is the support for my tree. Take the assembled pipes and place over the pipe/flange. It will wiggle but don't worry, once you add some Rice Krispies it will lock in place.





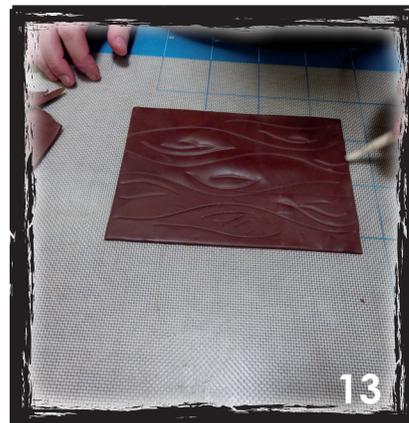
Step 10: With your tree in place, you need to decide where the coffin is going to go. I am placing mine under the tree limbs on an angle. Now, I also have a small PVC part that is threaded on one end. I have to drill a hole in my wood to then screw this PVC part in. Then I can decide on my height of cake and parts needed for the arm. Stay with me, promise, it is much easier than it sounds.

Step 11: With the placements made for the finished piece, we now get to the fun part, making the cake. Remember our template for the cake? I took that template and covered it in tape on both sides. You may wonder why I would do that. It's to protect it from the grease of the cake. This way I can use it over and over again. I am going to put the first two layers together with just icing in the middle. Cut the shape and place it on the bottom board you prepared for the coffin. I am using three cake layers for my cake; you can decide how big you want your cake to be. I don't want my coffin to be too small for my mummy hand! At this point, I am going to place the cake on the board and decide how tall I want my arm to come up from the cake. I am going to have my arm in between the 2nd and 3rd layers. Cut your piece of PVC that goes from the board to the arm. Wash the PVC pieces you are using, remember, they came from a hardware store!!!! *** Wrap your cut offs and place in the fridge, we will use these later****



Step 12: Ice and place the third layer on the coffin. Now you want to place a good crumb coat all over and put the cake in the fridge. (another advantage of having the cake on a separate board)

Step 13: While the cake is chilling this is a good time to roll out your modeling chocolate panels or fondant to cover the cake.



Step 14: Remove your cake from the fridge and begin placing panels of chocolate on the coffin. I made milk and dark chocolate and then rolled them out after twisting sausages of each together to create a wood feel. Then you can use a Dresden tool or wooden



a Dresden tool or wooden skewer to make lines in your chocolate like the lines in wood. Careful not to press too hard, you just want to mark it. If your icing has crusted over and the chocolate isn't sticking, you can put a little buttercream on the back and attach. I used a ruler to measure each side of the cake, so my panels were the right size when I attached them.



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Step 15: Let's get to the hand and eyeball. Place the Styrofoam ball on a wooden dowel and then place the dowel in a foam cake. This will allow both of your hands to be free to work the fondant. Roll out white fondant. I spray my Styrofoam with water to attach the fondant more easily.



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Step 16: Cover the ball. (Don't worry if the bottom area isn't perfect, this will not be broken). Once you have the ball covered in white fondant, roll out the colored fondant. I used green. I cut a circle. My

ball was a 3" ball and my circle is 1.5-2". Dampen the green circle and attach to the ball. Next, roll out some black fondant and cut a smaller circle, about 1/3 the size of your color. Dampen and attach to the center of the green. Finally, you make a little ball of white fondant and place it over the edge of the black and green. Now to make it fun. Use your edible marker or paintbrush and red color, paint/draw lines on the eyes to make them appear to be red or irritated. (adds to the creepy feel of the cake)



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Step 17: The Hand. I made my hand a mummy. To achieve this you roll out your fondant, I decided to use 50/50. Half gum paste, half fondant. Roll this paste out thin and cut into strips about 1" wide. Again, water is all you need to attach this to the PVC. Just wrap the PVC pipes, don't forget to tear the edges up and leave hanging off strips with tattered edges.



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Step 18: Once the wrapping is done, you need to add the eye. I used a little white covered wire for this. I folded a length of wire in half and inserted it into my ball, then inserted it in to the hold of the top finger area. This will stop it from falling off. Now, take some white fondant and make finger tips from the PVC pipe openings to the ball. Wrap them to match the hand. To finish, take some brown and white petal dust. Use a brush to add as much "dirt" effect as you want. Our hand and eye are now finished.



Step 19: Let's get to that tree. I keep this very simple. If you want a more tailored look, you can use fondant or modeling chocolate. First, I add some Rice Krispy treats to bulk up the tree. Once you have the tree looking the way you want, we need to put our "bark" on. My approach is that I want my tree very rough and old or dead looking. So, the easiest way to do this is to use buttercream. Yes, I said buttercream. Put on some gloves, and use your hands. Apply the icing with your hands. Once you have it coated, you can drag your fingers through the icing and make lines or rough areas. This is the time you are allowed to play with your hands!!! It is fun to play with and a great time to have your kids help!

Step 20: Time to make our creepy accents. Remember those leftover cake cut offs? Let's put them to use. I took out my cake pop roller, (now, if you don't have a cake pop roller, you can use your hands, but I recommend you get one of these great tools). Take your extra cake and put it in a food processor, blend until crumbly. Put the cake crumbs on wax paper and knead to a dough. I found my cake to be not wet enough, next time I will add some icing or maybe some flavoring to help. Make your cake balls. Place them in the fridge to cool. While they are chilling, melt your white candy melts. Dip the cake balls in the white candy melts and allow to set up. Once dry, add your colored fondant circles and black circles on the eyeballs. Don't forget your little white dots!! Again, draw the red lines to finish.

Step 21: Ok, time to finish!!!! I don't want my board to look bare or like I forgot it. First hot glue ribbon all around the edge. Make sure your ribbon is wider than your board. It is going to hold the dirt in. I used two packages of Oreo cookies. I placed them in my food processor and crushed them. Even the white parts. This makes the dirt look more real. Spread the dirt all around the board. Finally, place your eyeballs in the dirt, the tree, etc...

What a fun cake. Who wouldn't like to have this at your next Halloween party!! I know I would. Best part is, you can do this with your kids, and they will love making this with you.

