



## Baking with the Cake Boss: 100 of Buddy's Best Recipes and Decorating Secrets

By Buddy Valastro

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Buddy Valastro, the star of TLC's smash hit *Cake Boss* shares everything a home cook needs to know about baking as he takes readers through the same progressive training he had in his own apprenticeship.

Call it the Buddy system, because *Baking with the Cake Boss* is an education in the art of baking and decorating, from kneading to rolling, fondant to flowers, taught by Buddy Valastro himself, the star of TLC's smash hit *Cake Boss*. With more than 100 of his most sought-after recipes, including birthday and holiday cakes and other special theme designs, this book is a master course that culminates in the showstopping cakes for which Carlo's Bake Shop is famous.

Following the arc of Buddy's career from apprentice to master baker, *Baking with the Cake Boss* offers readers the same on-the-job education earned by everyone who comes to work at Carlo's Bake Shop, with some of Buddy's and the family's memories shared along the way. It builds organically from simple cookies and pastries to pies, flower-adorned cupcakes, and basic fondant cakes, to breathtaking cakes for every holiday and special occasion. And, as you progress from basics to bedazzlements—like the safari cake complete with chocolate animals and a waterfall—Buddy shares his inspiring enthusiasm and stories from the shop in his inimitable voice. He also provides the tools for creating your own personal trademark cakes, with a chart that lets you mix and match cake, frosting, and liqueur syrup for cakes the way *you* like them. And there are plenty of photos that illustrate artistic flourishes and decorations you can use to adorn your individual creations. With 650 gorgeous, step-by-step instructional photos that let you follow Buddy as if you were next to him in the bakery, *Baking with the Cake Boss* is an incomparable dessert education that will become an essential reference for aspiring and skilled bakers alike.

Bursting with delicious, tried-and-true recipes, how-to boxes and sidebars, and numerous tricks of the trade, *Baking with the Cake Boss* is a rare treat—a fun, accessible guide to baking, all in a gloriously designed, fully illustrated package worthy of the Cake Boss's artistic vision.

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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

#### Recipe from *Baking with the Cake Boss*: Chocolate Brownie Clusters

In a bakery like Carlo's, everybody contributes some recipes at some time or another. These cookies—which replicate the flavors and textures of a brownie in a meringue--like cookie that's miraculously crisp on the outside and gooey in the middle—were the invention of the late, great baker Sal Picinich (who passed away while I was writing this book) and they're pretty ingenious.

What impresses me about these cookies is the complex, deeply satisfying result achieved with just a handful of ingredients: egg whites, sugar, cocoa, and nuts. The batter looks like an unholy, goopy-gooey mess. When you make these, you might even think you did something wrong—how could it transform into something appetizing? Your doubt might even be increased by the fact that these can only be spooned onto your baking sheet; the dough is too sticky for a pastry bag and too messy to work with by hand.

But trust me: Once these get into the oven, something magical happens and these ugly ducklings turn into perfect little swans—and everybody will love the way they mimic the flavor and texture of brownies. It's a cookie to die for.



## Ingredients

- 3 extra-large egg whites
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups powdered (10X) sugar
- 1 1/4 cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 cups unsalted raw walnut halves

## Instructions

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 325 degrees F.
2. Put the egg whites and lemon juice in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whip attachment. (Be sure the bowl is immaculately clean; see "Egg Whites," page 56.) Whip on low speed for 2 minutes, then on maximum speed until stiff peaks form, about 5 minutes.
3. Sift the sugar and cocoa powder into the bowl together, then fold into the batter with a rubber spatula until the batter is smooth and shiny. Fold in the walnuts, until they are well coated with the batter.
4. Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper, using nonstick spray or a dab of butter in each corner to glue the paper in place. Drop heaping tablespoons of dough 1/2 inch apart, being sure to include about the same number of walnuts (3 or 4) in each one.
5. Bake until the outside has crisped and the bottom starts to pull away from the parchment paper, 15 to 20 minutes.
6. Remove the cookie sheet from the oven. As soon as the clusters can be moved, use a spatula to transfer them to a rack and let them cool.

Enjoy the cookies right away, or store when completely cool in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

## Sifting

I sift ingredients for two reasons: (1) To be sure dry ingredients aren't too compacted; sifting helps ensure a lighter result in the baked good being made. (2) To better combine two or more dry ingredients that will be added to a recipe at the same time. This is especially important when you are using leavening agents such as baking powder and baking soda—you want those strong-acting ingredients to be as evenly distributed as possible to ensure an even result across the entire baked good. (All of that said, in some cookie recipes I don't call for sifting because the dough gets mixed enough that the ingredients can't help being evenly distributed.)

## About the Author

**Buddy Valastro** is the star of the hit TLC series *Cake Boss* and *Next Great Baker* and author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *Cake Boss* and *Baking with the Cake Boss*, as well as *Cooking Italian with the Cake*

*Boss*. He is owner of Carlo's Bake Shop in Hoboken and the Cake Boss factory in Jersey City, which supplies stores around the country. Buddy lives with his wife and four children in New Jersey.

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Baking with the Cake Boss

## Introduction



It all started with a cookie.

Everything I am professionally. All that I'm capable of doing in a bakery. Every wedding and theme cake I've ever conceived and created. It all began with the first thing I was ever taught to make when I started working at my family's bakery: butter cookies. It's been a long time since my first "official" day on the job—almost twenty-five years—and it *feels* like a long time. When I look back over my life and career, I recall my skills growing at the same slow pace at which a tree grows.

A baker's development doesn't happen overnight. It's a painstaking thing. Even if you have raw talent, you have to nurture it, develop it. You have to patiently back up instinct and intuition with craft and, most of all, practice. Because in baking, practice doesn't just make perfect. Practice also lets you move on to the next level, the next challenge, the next thing to be mastered.

Learning to bake is like learning to speak. You pick up that first word, even if you pronounce it imperfectly, and then pretty soon you learn another, and then another. You might not be able to say every word as clearly as a network anchorman, or put words together into sentences, but even as a kid you know that's where you're headed, to a place where you can string words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, paragraphs into anything you want—an essay, a story, a memoir—if you put in the time to get good at each of the component parts.

It's the same with baking. Those butter cookies were like my first word. They're not difficult to make, and they're still one of the first things we assign to baking newbies at Carlo's Bake Shop, my family's business on Washington Street in Hoboken, New Jersey: You mix a dough of butter, sugar, almond paste, egg whites, and flour; scrape it into a pastry bag; pipe circles of it onto a parchment paper-lined tray; and bake them.

Next to the magnificent theme cakes we produce, those butter cookies might sound like the most idiotproof grunt work you could imagine. But they're not. The beautiful thing about baking is that it all fits together; just as words lead to sentences, and sentences lead to paragraphs, those cookies—as well as the others I made in my first months on the job—laid the foundation for all the baking and decorating that awaited me, and if you're new to baking, they can do the same thing for you.

### **THE KARATE KID PRINCIPLE**

You've probably already made cookies, but I wonder if you have any idea how much you've learned about pastry and cake making from something as simple as mixing and baking a chocolate chip cookie.

If you've made cookies from scratch, then you already have experience with one of the most important things about baking: mixing dough until it's just the way it's supposed to be. As for the baking itself, you've

developed an eye and a nose for doneness, and you've learned a little something about how food behaves after it comes out of the oven, like the effect of carryover heat (the way things continue to cook by their own contained heat as they rest), and that the cookies will harden as they cool.

Those things might not seem like much—I bet you've never even given them much thought—but if you've ever made chocolate chip cookies from scratch, then you've already begun to unleash the baker within.

I call this the “*Karate Kid* principle.” In the movie *The Karate Kid*—both the original and the 2010 remake—the young protagonist is forced by his master, Mister Miyagi, to execute a series of seemingly mundane tasks: sanding the floor, painting a house, and waxing a car (in the original) or picking up and putting on a jacket, then taking it off and hanging it up (in the remake). The boy doesn't see the value of these tasks—in fact, he thinks the old man is toying with him—but when it comes time to step up and do some real karate, he finds that he knows all he needs to know: the brushstrokes he used to paint taught him the motion for blocking a blow; bending over to pick up the jacket prepared him to duck; and so on. He's been learning more than he ever realized just by doing those simple little things, over and over.

It's the same with baking: You do small tasks like mixing cookie dough, or piping an éclair full of cream, or rolling out rugelach. It's assembly line work, or at least that's how it seems. But when it comes time to do more intricate baking and decorating, you realize you already know a lot of what's required. If you do enough baking, then you don't even have to think about it because your senses take over: Your fingers know what dough should feel like when you work it; your eyes and nose develop a sixth sense for doneness; and your brain makes adjustments based on the end result so you can correct your course the next time to make it even better.

Once you get all those tasks down to a T, and you move on to the next ones, that's when you have your *Karate Kid* moment. All of those cookie-making skills come into play when you decide to tackle pastry; the mixing, rolling, shaping, and baking have become second nature, so you can save your mental energy for what's new: assembly and decorating. And by the time you get to cake making and decorating, and discover that you've already got the tools to do that... well, it's a truly mystical moment in a baker's life when we realize that we possess the skills necessary to make our tools and ingredients do whatever we want them to, and that we're capable of more than we ever thought possible. I hope that this book will help you attain such a moment in your own baking life.

I'm living proof of what I'm talking about. In my early days at Carlo's Bake Shop, I was confined to simple baking tasks such as making cookies and what we call “finishing work,” which means slicing and piping pastries full of cream, or topping them with maraschino cherries or strawberry halves. Those jobs didn't seem like much at the time, just your basic dues-paying labor. But eventually, I got so good at these rudimentary tasks that I didn't even have to think about them. By making cookies, I learned how to mix, picked up some simple piping techniques, and honed my eye for doneness, learning to discern the fine lines between “hot,” “done,” and “burned,” which were different for each cookie. By making pastry, I learned a greater variety of skills, developed greater finesse with dough, and began to develop what we call the “Hand of the Bag,” the oneness with a pastry bag that you need to be able to decorate cakes. And cakes were the next step in my education.

Because repetition leads to mastery, my favorite times at the bakery were the holidays, when we'd bang out 150 pans of éclairs and 150 of cream puffs in a single day. I used to look forward to those crunch times, because when each one was over, my skills had risen to a new level and I was ready to move on to the next thing. January didn't bring just the new year; on the heels of the December madness at Carlo's, it also brought me new challenges in the kitchen.



I've designed this book to track the same path I took at Carlo's, the one that any young baker still takes there today. Of course, you don't have to bake these recipes in the order I've arranged them in this book, especially if you already have a certain degree of baking and decorating experience. But if you do bake them one after the other, in order—and if you take the time to really learn each recipe until it's second nature to you—when you get to the theme cake recipes, you'll be amazed at how much you know: You will be an expert mixer, and baking will be a breeze. If you are going to use fondant, you'll have already developed crucial rolling skills; and if you're going to do a lot of piping, you'll already know all the techniques required to produce the various effects.

## **YOUR CARLO'S BAKE SHOP APPRENTICESHIP**

To put all of this another way: Think of this book as your own, private apprenticeship alongside me, the Cake Boss himself. I am going to teach you everything I learned at my family's bakery, in the same order I learned it. We're going to start by making cookies, then work our way up through the Carlo's "curriculum" of pastries, pies, basic cake decorating, and theme cakes.

There is going to be a difference between my education and yours, however: I'm not going to make you wait for the larger lessons to reveal themselves. As we take on each recipe in this book, I'll tell you exactly how it will help you with future recipes, so you can flip or think ahead and start to connect the dots for yourself.

Of course, if you already have some baking experience—or even if you don't—you don't have to follow my suggested sequence. You can make all of the recipes in this book without cross-referencing any others in the book, except for the occasional "subrecipe" for a filling, icing, or dough. But if you're starting to bake from scratch, I'd encourage you to confine yourself to cookies for a while, then move on to pastries, then pies, and finally to cakes.

## **THE PEP TALK**

Before we get started, I'm going to give you a little talk I like to give to everybody who comes to work with me and my family. Baking is hard work, and in a professional kitchen, it's a team effort. So I think of myself as a coach, and part of my job is to motivate people whenever I can, starting with their first day on the job.

So imagine that it's six o'clock in the morning. You've been up since five. You took a quick shower, pulled on your checkered pants and cook's whites, drove or trained it to Hoboken, and made your way through the predawn streets to the cobblestone alleyway that leads to our back door. You push it open and prepare to step through the looking glass, into your baking future.

The first thing that hits you is the glare. The kitchen is bright. It has to be. We need to be able to discern all the little differences in batters and doughs as they're mixed and in the wide variety of final products as they come out of the ovens.

You spot me waiting for you. Even after all these years, I still love these early morning hours and I'm a bundle of energy and excitement. I take pride in being up and about and hard at work while most of the world is still fast asleep. Most bakers I know feel the same way. These hours are sacred—the streets beyond the bakery walls are quiet; the phones aren't ringing yet. It's the perfect time to commune with our ingredients and our ovens with zero outside distraction. It's the perfect time to bake.

"Hey, how's it going?" I say and we do a high five that turns into a handshake in midair. "Are you ready to

work?”

“Yes,” you say... if you know what’s good for you.

“That’s what we like to hear,” I say. “But before we get you started, let’s have a cup of coffee.”

We head out to the retail floor and help ourselves to two coffees from the pot behind the counter. On the way back into the kitchen, we pass the picture of my father—Buddy Sr.—hanging over the staircase. The words “Gone But Not Forgotten” are emblazoned across it. And it’s true: To this day, his spirit imbues everything we do. His passion and energy inspire everybody who works here—the veterans worked shoulder-to-shoulder with him and the younger generation receives his passion indirectly from the veterans. It’s a chain, a continuum, that I hope will never end.

We find a corner of a bench (wooden worktable) where we aren’t in anybody’s way. As the bakers mix and roll all around us, heaving huge trays of this and that into the ovens, then hauling them out, golden-brown and smelling of sugar and spices, I tell you what I want every new baker to know.

“Within these walls is everything you need to know to be a *complete* baker.” When I say “complete,” I emphasize the word so much that you jump a little. “Complete baker” is a term that has special meaning at Carlo’s. Everybody who works here takes pride in being a complete baker.

“My cake education was nothing special back when I was a kid,” I say. “In those days, everybody in a bakery knew how to do everything. ‘All-around bakers,’ we called ourselves. *Thoroughbreds*. There was nothing that we couldn’t do. We baked Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, making everything from biscotti to cakes. Then on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, when people had their celebrations, we decorated cakes from sunup to dusk.

“Age might be a strike against you in the corporate world,” I tell you. “But here, there has always been great respect for the elders, because they’ve been doing things longer than the rest of us and for the most part are better.”

You nod. You look around, and notice that older guys like Danny Dragone—one of our longtime utility players—have no trouble keeping pace with younger guys like my brother-in-law Joey Faugno, who runs the baking department. Both of them are much more than bakers, or even managers; they are fountains of baking knowledge and wisdom. They spend a good part of each and every day patiently nurturing young talent by pointing out the things that their charges can learn only through firsthand baking experience, like calling their attention to the distinct textures and colors that let you know when each dough is done mixing. Or how certain cookies need to finish baking out of the oven, on their pan, even though they might seem a little raw. Or that you need to smell the fresh ricotta we still get from a local farm—in pails, on ice, with no labels or expiration dates—before making cannoli cream, to make sure it’s not spoiled. We also check up on our young colleagues in more subtle ways—for example, when I see somebody making a wheat pie, I always take a sniff of the filling as it cooks on the stovetop because my nose will tell me whether or not they remembered to include the orange and lemon zest, both of which give off a distinct and potent perfume.

The old pros look so good doing their jobs that new kids can be intimidated and make bad decisions. While I was writing this book, a pair of young bakers burned two racks of cookies. Not burned black, but burned enough that they weren’t right to sell. That’s a mistake that anybody can make, even me, even today. What matters isn’t whether cookies burn, but what you do with them when that happens. In this case, the guys—maybe afraid we’d be cross with them—put the cookies with the properly baked ones that were

headed for the pastry cases on the retail floor, which was a big mistake. Fortunately, we caught the burned ones before they went out for sale. They weren't so horribly wrong that they had to end up in the garbage can, but we couldn't sell them, so we donated them to the homeless, which is what we do with the baked goods we produce that aren't quite up to our commercial standards, but are still pretty delicious.

Joey, Danny, and all the other veteran bakers are each like well-oiled machines in their own right. And there's no chit-chat, no clowning around—they are all focused on what they are doing, and on doing it to the best of their ability. One guy might be mixing batch after batch of dough, which we still do in an old industrial Hobart mixer, the baker rolling up his sleeve and sticking his arm down into the depths of the bowl to scrape it; another might be pulling trays off the rotating shelves in the oven, then getting trays of unbaked cookies and pastries onto those shelves before too much heat has escaped; yet another might be doing finishing work, icing cookies or piping éclairs full of cream.

I think about how each of these guys could switch roles or how they could all do the same task if that's what the production day called for. It's an increasingly rare way of doing things.

"Times have changed," I say. "This is the era of specialization. Today, there are guys who just bake, and guys who just decorate. But I think it's best to do it all."

And this is when I look up from my coffee and stare you right in the eye: "That's how we're going to train *you*."

This is also about the time I can tell that a new baker is ready to get going, to get his hands dusty with flour and start making the magic happen. But before I set that person to work, I like to make a few more points, and I want to make them to you before *we* begin baking together.

1. Success in baking is founded on repetition. The most important thing to realize about baking is that repetition is the gateway to greatness. Just as athletes have to train and musicians have to practice, if you want to be a terrific baker, you need to learn to love the process—from measuring out your ingredients to mixing batters and dough to baking to decorating. There's no separating one part from another, because all those steps add up to success in the final product, and if any one of them is suspect, then the whole thing falls apart. I also think of great bakers as soldiers, because it's all about discipline, about taking great pride in turning yourself into a human machine that can execute the same series of steps over and over in the exactly same way.

2. There are many ways to be creative. On *Cake Boss*, the theme cakes are the center of attention, and with good reason: They are jaw-dropping, showstopping examples of unbridled creativity. Our theme cakes make anybody who sees them, even other professionals, say, "How did they do *that*?" But there are many ways of being creative. If you don't have the hands for, or interest in, elaborate decorating, but love the flavors and textures of delicious baked goods—and the pleasure those qualities give to the people you bake for—then you might turn out to have a skill for creating your own distinct recipes. Or you might find that you have a knack for instituting small changes that make a big impact, like adapting my recipe for Raspberry Bars to make apricot, blueberry, or lemon-orange bars; or perhaps making a simple but attention-getting adjustment like dipping half of each bar in chocolate. Or you might take the recipe for Butterflies and relocate the wings from the top to the bottom, using them as legs to fashion a different animal, bringing your own distinct sense of play to the pastry.

In other words, don't feel that you have to become a cake boss yourself in order to find happiness in baking; there are countless home bakers out there who take great pride and satisfaction in making nothing but

cookies. If that's where your comfort zone and happiness lie, be happy with that and get as good at it as you possibly can.

3. Always be willing to try new things. As much as I believe in repetition and consistency, I also believe that it's important to try new things, to balance the required discipline for baking with a chance to be spontaneous and to grow. Whether it's tinkering with a tried-and-true recipe to see if you can make it even better, or attempting to design something you've never seen before, it's worth the trouble and relatively minor expense to innovate, especially if you end up bringing a new recipe or design into the world.

4. No two bakers are exactly alike. There's no one way to do anything when it comes to baking. The recipes and advice I share work for me, and for my family and coworkers, and for the customers who line up outside our shop on Washington Street in Hoboken, New Jersey. But—who knows?—you might come up with a new way of doing things—from tweaking a recipe to discovering a new use for a kitchen tool—that works for you. At the end of the day, baking is about your own individualistic relationship with the tools and ingredients; if you can come up with your own way of doing something, don't hesitate to go give it a try. And if you change a recipe, be sure to keep notes on what you did so you can do it again! (See “Keeping a Book,” below.)

5. Believe. Along with a good rolling pin and mixer, and a well-stocked pantry, there's something else you need every time you bake: confidence. If you watch seasoned bakers do their thing, they all exude an easy confidence. You need to have the same slight swagger when you step up to your workstation and dust it with flour. You need to know in your bones that you will not fail. Why is this so important? Because you need to trust all your senses; for example, most dough doesn't look anything like what the final product it produces looks like, so you need to have the confidence to know you've mixed it properly. Similarly, when you step up to a naked cake, piping bag in hand, and get ready to go to work on that blank canvas, if you have any doubt in yourself, it will be reflected in imperfect borders and wavy lines. Believe in yourself when you bake and decorate; it's as important as anything else.

## **KEEPING A BOOK**

All professional bakers keep a notebook full of hard-won baking wisdom—everything from recipes for the signature items in the shop where they work to old family treasures they want to be sure survive through the ages. But you can't necessarily pick up a baker's book and use it like a cookbook, because a lot of us, especially the veterans, keep our notes in a form of code, changing at least one ingredient so that nobody can steal from us.

My favorite story about this tradition involves one of the legends of Carlo's Bake Shop, Mike Vernola, better known as Old Man Mike. Mike's encrypted recipes were almost as revered as the man himself. To keep a young, up-and-coming baker from ripping off his secrets, Mike always changed the quantity of one ingredient in a recipe; for instance, an ounce of salt might be represented as twelve ounces of salt. There was no rhyme or reason to it; one recipe would have the flour wrong, another the sugar. And only Mike knew the correct quantities.

One day, a job applicant was trying out with us, and he managed to get his hands on Mike's book. Somebody saw him take it into the bathroom, and—worried that Mike's intellectual property was being lifted—reported it to me. I tracked down my father with great urgency and reported what was going on. Rather than freak out, he let loose with a roar of laughter.

“What's so funny?” I asked.

“He’s got *Mike*’s book,” my father said. “Nothing’s written down right. He won’t be able to use any of it!”

Now, that’s a funny story, but—in all seriousness—I encourage you to keep your own book. At the very least, you should keep notes in the margins of this and other cookbooks. Maybe you like a little more sugar than I do for a sweeter effect in some recipes; or maybe your oven is a little slower (or faster) than mine, so you want to adjust baking times. Maybe you like to add another spice or chocolate chips to some recipes, or maybe you want to remember to make a dish for a particular person or occasion. Write those things down, *all* of those things.

If you do a lot of baking, especially if you’re a professional or aspiring professional, you should go beyond making notes in a book and start keeping your own notebook. Make it something personal that fits comfortably into your bag or your pocket. Keep notes (they can be shorthand) on recipes, tricks, lessons, and so on. And do yourself a favor: Periodically type those notes up and keep them in a backed-up computer file so that you have them available if you lose the notebook. If you come up with a lot of original stuff, you might even do what the old-timers do and write in code; just be sure you remember what you changed so you can use the recipes yourself!

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Thomas Jones:**

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to understand everything in the world. Each book has different aim as well as goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They may be reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is definitely reading a book. Why not the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, individual feel need book once they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you should have this *Baking with the Cake Boss: 100 of Buddy's Best Recipes and Decorating Secrets*.

#### **Daniel Hayes:**

The particular book *Baking with the Cake Boss: 100 of Buddy's Best Recipes and Decorating Secrets* has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was published by the very famous author. Mcdougal makes some research previous to write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you can obtain the point easily after scanning this book.

#### **Carolyn Franklin:**

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