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A HEAVENLY WINTER WEDDING CALLS FOR A CAKE THAT SPARKLES IN THE MOONLIGHT. BY HILLARY QUINN

Once upon a time, the wedding cake was simply a white, pedestaled confection that provided a good photo op, complete with the bride forking Crisco-based frosting into the groom's mouth. But today, the wedding icon has morphed into a gourmet, showstopping dessert event as sumptuous as the most beautiful gown or cascading bouquet. And nothing sets the stage for a winter wonderland wedding as fittingly as a sparkling cake that captures everyone's attention.



"I'm finding that brides really want their cakes to glimmer and shine these days," says Odette D'Aniello, owner of Celebrity Cake Studio in Tacoma, who loves to mimic the metallic embellishments she sees on the hottest bridal gowns in her own bakery creations. Jennifer Nurse, owner of Jen's Desserts in downtown Seattle, agrees that adding shimmer is a growing trend, but she considers it a timeless one. "Couples won't look back at their wedding photos and think their cake looks dated," she promises. "And that's especially true if you go with a subtle, sophisticated amount of shine, rather than piles of glittery stuff."

**At first glance:** Naturally, every bride wants a cake that tastes as delicious as it looks. But for most people, planning the visuals comes first, and that means choosing your cake's color scheme, which can range from shimmering white and cool silver hues to warm gold, bronze or champagne tones. Nurse, who works with white chocolate wrap (a flat, flexible chocolate covering) in lieu of sugary fondant ("It tastes so much better and cuts beautifully," she explains), creates a pristine, snowy effect by pressing sparkling edible sugar crystals right into the chocolate. "The effect is like little jewels or sugar sequins all over the cake," she says. (For a more dramatic look, ask your cake designer for sugar "shards," which are chunkier, like rock candy.) To complement a nude or champagne palette, Nurse also likes to cover her cakes in ground caramel—"a beautiful, shimmery gold dust"—because it plays well with the winter fruits she nestles among the layers, such as figs, apples, pears and pomegranates. At Sugar Cake Studio downtown, owner Tobey Rodriguez cooks raw sugar in the oven, creating a pliable "glass wall" that she wraps around her creations; when the sugar hardens, the result is a sparkling capsule that guests crack with a fork to get to the moist cake inside. But for just a touch of shimmer, ask Rodriguez to top your cake with a cluster of her glistening blown-sugar ornament balls—they can be tinted to match your gown and décor.

**The inside scoop:** Underneath that gleaming exterior, cake flavors and fillings can range from tame to tantalizing. If you're after wintry perfection, D'Aniello recommends going with an all-white interior—say, white cake coupled with white chocolate mousse or pastry cream. "It's a really clean look when you cut into it," she explains. Ivory or champagne-colored cakes pair well with subtle flavors that complement the antique appearance: Pink Champagne (a light, fruity-flavored cake filled with Bavarian cream or a white chocolate mousse) is one of D'Aniello's most popular requests. Nurse, on the other hand, often reaches for citrus with her sparkly creations. "It's a nice, bright flavor in winter that enhances the metallic look," she says.

**Seeing the light:** A heavenly cake deserves to be shown off in grand style. Evening weddings showcase shimmer best—especially when you flank the cake table with dozens of flickering votive candles whose light reflects off the sugar and gilding. Cut-crystal glassware, silver servers, even strands of miniature Christmas lights woven throughout a velvet cloth turn up the sparkle on what is, unquestionably, more than just a dessert course. \*

*To contact these wedding-cake artists, see Resources on page 152.*

OPPOSITE PAGE: Four layer "Autumn Slice" cake with Belgian chocolate and orange cake, layered with orange mousse, frosted with European butter cream and enrobed in white chocolate rolled fondant icing, faux finished in edible gold with white chocolate details by Celebrity Cake Studio. Grace footed platter cake plate, \$46.95, from Crate and Barrel. Small buffet salad plates, \$3.99 each, at Cost Plus. Ivory Windsor napkin, \$3.95 each, at Crate and Barrel. PAGE 104: Round white chocolate genoise cake layered with Meyer lemon mousse and Meyer lemon curd, with orange blossom butter cream frosting, white chocolate wrap, edible sugar sequins and an edible handmade sugar flower by Jen's Desserts. Cake plate, baker's own. Table linen Vienna Bodrum, \$119, Tag cake knife and server, \$51.95, at Table Top Shop. PAGE 105: Round chocolate layer cake with orange chocolate mousse and white chocolate fondant icing with blown sugar balls touched with real gold leaf by Sugar! cake Studio. Mariposa Tulip flutes, \$22.95 each, at Table Top Shop. Stylist assistant: Robin Kelley. Assistant: Catie Holderman.

