

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

IT MATTERS LITTLE HOW MUCH EQUIPMENT WE USE; IT MATTERS
MUCH THAT WE BE MASTERS OF ALL WE DO USE. —*Sam Abell*

A pastry chef competing at competition level needs to use the best equipment available. Though each team will have their own specific list of equipment required for their showpieces and desserts, following is a list of basic equipment that most teams use during the course of a competition.

Basic Equipment

CAKE DECORATING TURNTABLE: Turntables are useful for applying frosting to cakes and entremets.

HOTEL PANS: These stainless steel pans are available in various sizes and are useful for baking custards and preparations in a water bath, or chilling down mousses and other fillings quickly.

SAUCEPANS AND SAUTÉ PANS: A good selection of assorted saucepans and sauté pans are necessary for a number of tasks in the pastry kitchen. Choose heavy-bottomed, high-quality pans for your collection.

STAINLESS STEEL BOWLS: You should have a variety of sizes, from small to large.

TIMER: A good timer, preferably with the ability for multiple time settings, can spell the difference between success and disaster during a competition.

Bakeware

CAKE PANS: These pans are now available in a variety of materials, including silicone, tinned steel, and aluminum.

CAKE RINGS: These stainless steel rings are available in a variety of diameters and heights and are used for molding cakes and individual desserts.

COOLING RACKS: Made of chrome-plated steel wire, these racks are used for cooling baked goods and glazing cakes and confections.

FLEXIBLE SILICONE MOLDS: Made of silicone-coated fiberglass, these molds come in a huge variety of sizes and shapes. They can be used for baking as well as molding chocolate and frozen desserts.

SHEET PANS: These rimmed rectangular, aluminum baking pans come in quarter, half, and full sizes. Make sure that yours are not warped before the event.

SILICONE BAKING MATS: Used for lining sheet pans, these handy mats can withstand oven temperatures up to 500°F (260°C). Available in full- or half-sheet pan sizes.

TART AND TARTLET PANS: Made of tinned steel, these pans have fluted sides and usually have removable bottoms. Available in a variety of sizes in round, rectangular, and square shapes.

TUILE TEMPLATES: Many pastry chefs make their own tuile templates from large plastic lids, but you can also purchase high-quality templates made from high-density polyethylene in a huge variety of shapes.

Scaling and Measuring Tools

DIGITAL SCALES: Since pastry is all about precision, having a good scale is important. Sensitive scales that can measure small amounts generally have a small capacity, so you might want to have one scale for small amounts and another for larger ones.

MEASURING CUPS AND SPOONS: You should have a variety of liquid and dry measuring cups on hand and a few sets of measuring spoons to measure small ingredient amounts that might be too small to register on your scale.

THERMOMETERS: You will need a good digital instant-read thermometer that is able to read a wide range of temperatures, and you may need, depending on your preference, a digital probe thermometer and a deep-fat or candy thermometer for other tasks. A laser thermometer is an infrared thermometer that measures the electromagnetic radiation coming from the surface of a sauce, or whatever it's aimed at.

Small Tools

CAKE COMBS: Made from plastic or metal, these tools have serrated edges and are used for making decorative designs on cakes, pastries, and chocolate.

DOUGH DOCKER: A roller with spikes, a docker is used to prick doughs like puff pastry, which prevents them from rising too much during baking.

GRATERS: A box grater is useful for some grating and slicing tasks, while a citrus zester can be used to remove small amounts of zest from citrus fruit. A rasp (or microplane grater) is a more efficient tool for zesting citrus fruit, and can also be used for finely grating chocolate.

KNIVES: A variety of high-quality knives are crucial to pastry work. You will need an assortment that includes a chef's knife, utility knife, paring knife, and cake, bread, and slicing knives.

IMMERSION BLENDER: Also known as a hand or stick blender, this tool functions as an inverted blender. The advantage is that you can use this tool directly in a saucepan or pot.

LADLES: Available in a variety of sizes, ladles are useful for portioning sauces and other liquids.

MANDOLINE: This utensil is used to uniformly slice or julienne fruit and vegetables. A mandoline will also cut paper-thin slices for making fruit chip garnishes.

PARCHMENT PAPER TRIANGLES: These pre-cut triangles can quickly be turned into small parchment paper cones, or comets, for delicate piping jobs.

PASTRY BAGS: These cone-shaped bags come in assorted sizes and are available in nylon, cloth, or plastic. Disposable plastic pastry bags are most convenient to use in a competition.

PASTRY BRUSHES: Available in several sizes, with plastic or wooden handles and natural, nylon, or silicone bristles, these are used for jobs such as applying egg wash or glaze, prepping cake pans, and decorating *macarons*.

PASTRY CUTTERS: Sold individually or in sets, pastry or cookie cutters are available in an endless variety of shapes and sizes.

PASTRY TIPS: Made of nickel-plated metal, pastry or piping tips come in a large variety of shapes and sizes. Generally, the higher the number on the tip, the larger its opening.

PEELERS, CORERS, AND REAMERS: You will need a swivel-bladed peeler (make sure that the blade is sharp) for peeling fruit, a manual apple corer for coring fruit, and a lemon reamer made of wood, metal, or plastic for juicing citrus fruit.

PLASTIC SQUEEZE BOTTLES: These bottles are primarily used for decorating plates with sauce.

ROLLING PINS: Available in an array of sizes, rolling pins are usually made of wood, but are also available in marble, plastic, and porcelain.

SCOOPS: Used for portioning dough and scooping ice cream, sorbet, and mousses, spring-operated scoops are an essential tool. Choose the appropriate shapes and sizes for your needs during the competition. Melon ballers (also known as Parisienne scoops) are available in round and oval shapes and are essential for forming small, perfect rounds or ovals of fruit or other ingredients.

SIEVES: A fine-mesh sieve is useful for sifting dry ingredients, while a chinois is ideal for straining sauces and fillings.

SPATULAS AND SCRAPERS: You should have an assortment of rubber and silicone, high temperature-resistant spatulas for tasks such as scraping batters, stirring sauces, and folding ingredients together. A plastic bowl scraper is useful for scraping out every bit of batter from a bowl. Regular and offset metal spatulas in an assortment of sizes are essential for tasks such as applying and smoothing frosting, leveling batter, and transferring cake slices.

WHISKS: An assortment of small and large whisks is needed for tasks such as emulsifying sauces and ganache, or incorporating air into a batter.

Tools for Chocolate Work

CHOCOLATE MOLDS: Rigid polycarbonate plastic molds yield excellent results and are easier to care for than tin molds.

CHOCOLATE CUTTERS: Made of tinned steel or fiberglass and plastic composite, chocolate cutters have sharp edges and are available in a variety of sizes and shapes.

CARAMEL BARS: These metal bars are used for framing ganache and caramel to a specific thickness and dimension.

DIPPING TOOLS: These come in a variety of shapes, and are used for dipping ganache, fruit, nuts, or confections in chocolate or fondant.

FONDANT FUNNEL: This metal or plastic funnel is used for filling chocolates and portioning sauces.

GUITAR: This stainless steel cutter is used to cut precise pieces of ganache, caramel, and gélées.

HEAT GUN: Like a blow-dryer without the air, a heat gun can be used to keep chocolate in temper.

TEMPERING MACHINE: This machine automatically melts and then tempers chocolate, alternately heating and cooling while constantly moving the chocolate. The machine then maintains the tempered chocolate at the correct temperature.

TRANSFER SHEETS: Acetate sheets with cocoa butter designs on them, transfer sheets are used to create imprinted designs on chocolate.

Tools for Sugar Work

AIRBRUSH: This tool is used to spray food coloring onto pulled sugar and pastillage pieces (as well as a number of other confections).

DESICCANT: Desiccants prevent sugar garnishes from deteriorating from exposure to moisture. Common desiccants are silica gel and quicklime.

SUGAR LAMP: This lamp has a weighted base with an infrared heat bulb and is used for keeping pulled sugar pliable.

BLOWN SUGAR PUMP: A rubber squeeze ball attached to an aluminum tube, this device is used to pump air into sugar to create a balloon, which can then be shaped.

Equipment That Is Usually Provided at the Competition

FIVE-QUART ELECTRIC STAND MIXER: Also known as a vertical or planetary mixer, this mixer has a stationary bowl with an orbiting mixing attachment. It comes with three standard attachments—a paddle, whisk, and dough hook.

INDUCTION COOKTOP: In an induction cooktop, heat is generated directly in the pot or pan, as

opposed to being generated in the stovetop by electrical coils or burning gas. To be used on an induction cooker, a cooking vessel must be made of a special ferromagnetic metal.

FOOD PROCESSOR: This machine has a motorized base with a plastic work bowl fitted on a stem on top of it. It uses a variety of blades and attachments to rapidly grind, purée, knead, or slice food.

CONVECTION OVEN: In this oven, fans force air to circulate around food, cooking it evenly and quickly. They are generally ideal for baked goods.

MICROWAVE OVEN: This oven uses microwave radiation to heat polarized molecules in food, which cooks or reheats food quickly.

CHOCOLATE WARMER: This machine melts chocolate and keeps it in a liquid state.

BAKER'S RACKS: Also known as speed racks, these are vertical aluminum structures that can hold a number of sheet pans. They are ideal for storing baked goods or chocolates.

BATCH ICE CREAM FREEZER: This machine churns a specific amount of ice cream or sorbet base at one time. Its capacity is larger than that of a home ice cream maker, but not as large as that of a commercial continuous freezer.

Packing Your Equipment

The teams with big budgets ship their equipment in big crates via a trucking company. They make the crate the same dimensions as the competition kitchen and assemble their equipment in the crate as it

will be positioned in the kitchen. This way they can easily transfer everything from the crate to their kitchen. These teams also have furniture built to store sheet pans and other equipment. The furniture

slides under kitchen counters and enables them to efficiently store *mise en place* so that it's out of the way as they work.