

# Pastry Virtuosity: Cake Shake Theory

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It's exciting that desserts in the United States have been improving drastically over recent years. It's hard to ignore the momentum of cupcakes, doughnuts and viral items such as the cake shake! Using our 'pastry mind' we can apply the same skills and artistry as we would for a plated dessert to a cake shake composition.

Seen everywhere from small pubs, chain restaurants and fast food establishments, the cake shake is so over-the-top and decadent, one can't help but be curious. For pastry chefs, the attraction of cake shakes is that there is an audience of customers that love these items. In this article, we will explore the theory behind pairing the cake, the shake and the explosive garnishment of this dessert.

At its core, a cake shake is a decorated glass, a blended shake with ice cream, beer and other ingredients, and a cake slice. The glass is then decorated with buttercream and candy, cookies, and other décor pieces. Much of what can be criticized about cake shakes is that the individual garnishes may be attractive and delicious, but often they seem gratuitous and thrown on randomly. This can also be said for the elements that top the actual cake slice.

The cake slice should be made from scratch, kept fresh and made with high-quality ingredients. Since cake shakes are an extravagant offering, anything is fair game: glitter, chocolate pieces, crisp pearls, candy, etc. Perhaps the biggest challenge with cake shakes is to resist adding these items just to get a 'wow', without considering the overall theme or design. We use the best quality ingredients and custom-made décor pieces to maximize the artistry of the cake shake. Just like a plated dessert!

Cake shakes have a built-in vertical opportunity, so use supports like straws, skewers, and picks to reach for the sky. The design of the assembly is very important. We arrange the top decorative elements like we would a child's pop-up book – layering each item to create depth and dimension. Stability is important, so we build the top assemblage as if we could lift the cake and everything off and it would remain intact.

Below are some of our most successful pairings. Use the photos as a guide to see how we applied the above insight to create interesting beverage pairings, designs with overall theme, and visual appeal with ample height and stunning presentation.

## Candy Land Cake Shake



In honor of National Candy Month, we ran this Candy Land Cake Shake featuring Lindeman's Framboise, a raspberry vanilla ice cream shake, berry layer cake and featured nostalgic favorites nerds, swirl lollipops and candy necklaces. The framboise and berry flavors are reminiscent of the flavor of a candy necklace, and the colors we lifted off the Candyland game board.

## S'mores Campfire Cake Shake



Working with a popular combination such as S'mores can be redundant, so we stayed close to home using the marshmallows, graham crackers and chocolate from our childhood. The cake is chocolate espresso layered with house-made marshmallow fluff and white buttercream. The chocolate flavor of Young's Double Chocolate Stout is a natural complement to the chocolate syrup, vanilla ice cream, and marshmallow fluff. The top assembly plays with the geometry of the cake (triangle), whole graham cracker (large rectangle), chocolate bar (smaller rectangle), and burnt marshmallows (cylinders). A colorful 'lit pick' flame adds red, yellow and orange to the otherwise muted s'mores colors, and the flame brings action to the cake shake.

## Rough Cider



A simple variation on the cake shake, diners enjoyed our Rough Cider, a Hennessey-spiked cider cocktail made with our mulled cider (juniper berries, cinnamon, cloves, orange peel) and topped with fresh apple pie, whipped cream, caramel and cinnamon sticks. We switched out our usual glass for a glass mug to complement the 'rough' theme and supported the warm apple pie slice with cinnamon sticks.

## Pumpkin Pie Cake Shake



Another variation is the Pumpkin Pie Cake Shake made with Great Lakes oatmeal stout, vanilla ice cream, pumpkin pie slice, caramel, whipped cream, vanilla buttercream and gingersnap cookies. The top is garnished with a milk chocolate leaf maple leaf. To avoid a drab presentation, Thanksgiving colors were brought in by adding orange crunchies to the outside of the glass green chevron stripes to sip the shake. The spice of the beer matches the traditional pumpkin pie, and extra is added when blended, so every sip tastes like pumpkin pie.

## Bananza Cake Shake



Our most recent offering is the Bananza Cake Shake, made with banana bread beer, malted milk balls, banana chips and vanilla ice cream. The cake is also banana and topped with chocolate stars and streamers. Gold glitter and gold crisp pearls help complete the look. We chose to work with banana because it's a yellow fruit, as an

elaboration on the yellow color of the beer. Everything on this shake is yellow or gold, but we chose to top the dessert with a dark chocolate star to give depth to the assembly. The effect can be viewed as a star falling out of the night sky.

## **Grinchmas Cake Shake**



My favorite Cake Shake to date is the Grinchmas Cake Shake, as the entire shake works together to portray one idea. The shake is Great Lakes Christmas ale, Oreo cookies, peppermint cake, and candy canes. There is a lot going on with flavor here, but the idea was to create a Grinch that was immediately recognizable in as few elements as possible. We carefully matched the green and added sprinkles to simulate fur. The eyes were made by piping chocolate on a stencil copied from the original Dr. Seuss book. We placed the cake upright and trimmed it with white chocolate cotton candy. We can almost imagine the Grinch himself sipping on this murky green cake shake!

As a note, each of these cake shakes were served @publichousechi exactly as shown. We hope you enjoyed these examples of cake shakes with some applied dessert theory to create playful and delicious offerings for the restaurant or bar.