Serves 180

3/4-inch-by-22-inch square plywood board, corners trimmed 2 recipes Royal Icing (recipe follows) Pearl dust, for dusting monogram 2 to 3 teaspoons lemon extract Violet paste food coloring, for blossoms 1 fifteen-inch square piece of 3/16-inch-thick foam board 1 twelve-inch square piece of 3/16-inch-thick foam board 1 nine-inch square piece of 3/16-inch-thick foam board 2 fifteen-, twelve-, and nine-inch square Moist Yellow Cake layers (recipe follows) 1 sixteen-inch Masonite cake square 1 twelve-inch Masonite cake square 1 ten-inch Masonite cake square Amaretto Syrup (recipe follows) 6 cups plum jam, heated and strained Swiss Meringue Buttercream (recipe follows) 13 pounds rolling fondant Cornstarch, for rolling 14 quarter-inch wooden dowels About 1 dozen fresh flowers, for bouquet Wide ribbon (64 inches long by 2 1/2 inches wide), for bouquet

Wide ribbon (83 inches long by 3/4 inch wide), for base

- 1. To prepare the base: Working on a flat surface, draw a circle in the center of plywood base that is 2 to 3 inches smaller than the largest cake tier. Using a large offset spatula, spread royal icing over surface between the drawn circle and edge of board, coating the surface smoothly. Tap board on further smooth surface and eliminate any bubbles. Set aside to dry, about 24 hours.
- 2. To make the royal-icing monogram: Choose lettering, and select a monogram style. Make a template, then enlarge to desired size on a photocopier, making several copies. Place reproductions on a clean, flat surface. Cover with waxed paper, and tape in place. Make 1 recipe royal icing. Divide in half. Set one half aside in an airtight container. Thin remaining half recipe royal icing by adding a small amount of water at a time, until icing falling from spoon into bowl disappears into a smooth surface after about 5 seconds. Fill a small pastry bag fitted with a #2 plain round tip with thinned icing. Outline one letter at a time on waxed paper; flood center with thinned icing to fill in, mounding slightly. Work quickly before icing hardens. Make several spares, as letters are fragile. Set aside until completely dried, about 2 hours. Remove monograms gently from waxed paper with a small spatula. Place 1/4 teaspoon super pearl dust in a tiny bowl. Add lemon extract; stir with a small paintbrush until dust is diluted. Lightly paint surface of monograms with mixture to create a pearled effect. Set aside to dry, about 15 minutes.

- 3. To make royal-icing blossoms (26 blossoms are needed for this cake, but make extras to allow for breakage, as they are very delicate): Cut a piece of waxed paper into several 1 1/2-inch squares. Set aside. Place 1/3 cup reserved royal icing in a small bowl, tint with violet paste food coloring to desired shade for center of blossoms; transfer to a small pastry bag fitted with a #2 plain round tip. Transfer remaining reserved white royal icing to a medium pastry bag fitted with a #101 petal tip. Attach a small square of waxed paper to a flat flower nail with a dot of royal icing. Pipe white royal icing in blossom shapes onto waxed paper. Reserve remaining white royal icing for final assembly. Dot center of each blossom with tinted royal icing. Transfer the waxed-paper square of completed blossoms to a flat surface to dry completely, about 2 hours. Dried royal-icing blossoms will keep for several weeks at room temperature in an airtight container.
- 4. To trim foam-board squares: Using a ruler as a guide, draw lines through center to connect diagonal corners. Place ruler across corner to measure a 3-inch space. (The 1 1/2-inch mark on ruler should be perpendicular to diagonal lines drawn.) With a utility knife, cut along edge of ruler. Repeat process with remaining 3 corners.
- 5. When cakes have completely cooled, place one of each size cake right side up on its trimmed corresponding-size foam-board. Place remaining three tiers on their corresponding size cardboard cake squares. Wrap all cakes tightly in plastic, and chill for at least 6 hours. (This makes the layers firm and easy to handle.) Cakes can also be frozen at this point.
- 6. To trim the cakes: Remove cakes from refrigerator. Remove parchment paper from bottoms of cakes that are on foam board; discard. Return cakes to foam boards. Using a serrated knife, trim tops of cakes level, making sure to maintain a 2-inch height on each cake. Place cakes on foam boards, bottom side up, onto cakes of corresponding size on cardboard. Using the trimmed foam boards as a template, trim off corners with a serrated knife. Place one of each cake on the corresponding-size foam boards, cut side up. Brush the cut surface generously with amaretto syrup.
- 7. Using a medium-large pastry bag fitted with a coupler, pipe Swiss meringue buttercream around the perimeter of each cake that has been moistened with syrup. This "dam" will prevent the plum jam from seeping out. Fill the 15-inch cake layer with 3 cups plum jam, the 12-inch cake layer with 2 cups plum jam, and the 9-inch cake layer with 1 cup plum jam. Place the remaining cake layers, cut side down, on their corresponding-size plum-jam-filled cakes. Brush tops generously with amaretto syrup.
- 8. Using an offset spatula to give each tier a "crumb coat," frost top and sides of cake with a thin coat of Swiss meringue buttercream. This thin layer of icing will seal the cake. Start from the center, and work toward and over the edge, making sure to spread buttercream over sides of tier. Chill until firm, about 30 minutes.
- 9. To frost the tiers: Using an offset spatula, thickly "crumb coat" a layer of Swiss meringue buttercream over each tier to coat cake entirely. The coating should be uniform. Chill until firm, about 1 hour more.

- 10. To cover cakes with rolled fondant: Lightly dust a clean work surface with cornstarch. Roll out 6 pounds of fondant, about 21 inches square and 3/16 inch thick. (If any air bubbles should appear, prick with a sewing needle.) Remove 15-inch cake from refrigerator. Roll square up on rolling pin, and transfer to cover 15-inch cake. Using hands, smooth fondant to cover top and sides of cake without wrinkles. Trim away excess with a pizza wheel. (Trimmings may be reused if they are free of crumbs and frosting.) Set cake aside. Repeat with 12-inch tier, rolling out 4 1/2 pounds fondant, about 18 inches square and 3/16 inch thick. Finally, repeat with 9-inch tier, rolling out remaining 2 1/2 pounds fondant, about 15 inches square and 3/16 inch thick.
- 11. Place the 15-inch tier on base or serving platter. Insert a 1/4-inch-diameter dowel vertically into the 15-inch tier. Mark dowel flush with surface of tier, and remove from cake. Cut dowel at the marked place. Use cut dowel to measure 13 more dowels the same length. Insert 8 dowels, evenly spaced, around perimeter of cake, allowing a 2 1/2-inch border from edge. Insert 1 dowel in center of already placed dowels. Insert 4 dowels, evenly spaced, around perimeter of 12-inch cake, allowing a 2 1/2-inch border from edge. Insert 1 dowel in center of already placed dowels.
- 12. Using a large spatula, carefully transfer the 12-inch tier to rest on the 15-inch tier and the 9-inch tier to rest on the 12-inch tier.
- 13. Fill a small pastry bag fitted with a #4 plain round tip with reserved white royal icing. Pipe decorative dotted borders on all edges of each tier. Using royal icing, attach dried monogram onto front of 15-inch tier. Attach one dried royal-icing blossom to each side of the monogram and more blossoms onto the bottom corners of each tier.
- 14. Make a bouquet with the flowers. Tie bouquet with desired ribbon to form a large bow with long tails. Trim tails to desired length and cut a V-shape into ends of ribbon. Place bouquet on top tier of cake, allowing ribbon to drape down the side. Using a glue gun, glue desired ribbon to edge of board, covering completely.

Sources:

Wendy Kromer Specialty Confections 137 East Water Street Sandusky, OH 44870 419-609-0450 www.wendykromer.com

Pearl dust
Flower nail #7
16-inch Masonite cake square
12-inch Masonite cake square
10-inch Masonite cake square
Rolling fondant
1/4-inch wooden dowels
Plain round tip #4

15-inch-by-2-inch square cake pan 12-inch-by-2-inch square cake pan 9-inch-by-2-inch square cake pan New York Cake and Baking Distributors 56 West 22nd Street New York NY 10010 212-675-CAKE or 800-94-CAKE-9

Fax: 212-675-7099 www.nycake.com

Note: To order back issues of Martha Stewart Weddings, please call 1-800-274-6800

Royal Icing

Makes 2 cups

1 pound (about 4 cups) confectioners' sugar 5 tablespoons meringue powder

1. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine confectioners' sugar, meringue powder, and a scant 1/2 cup water. Mix on low speed until icing is fluffy and begins to come up the side of bowl, about 5 minutes. Add more powdered sugar as needed to achieve the proper consistency.

Moist Yellow Cake

Makes about 8 cups batter

Eight batches of the following batter are needed to yield two 15-inch square layers, two 12-inch square layers, and two 9-inch square layers. Fill each 15-inch pan with 14 cups batter, each 12-inch pan with 11 cups batter, and each 9-inch pan with 8 cups batter.

1 1/2 cup (3 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more for pans

4 cups cake flour, sifted, plus more for dusting pans

1 tablespoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

3 cups sugar

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

6 large eggs, room temperature

1 1/2 cups milk, room temperature

- 1. Heat oven to 350°. Butter baking pans; line bottoms with parchment paper. Dust pans with flour, making sure to coat pans evenly. Tap out excess flour. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside.
- 2. In the bowl of a heavy-duty electric mixture fitted with the paddle attachment, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add vanilla, then eggs one at a time, beating to combine after each addition. Scrape down sides of bowl as necessary. Add flour mixture in three additions, alternating with milk, starting and ending with flour.
- 3. Measure batter into prepared pans. Bake 15-inch squares for 1 hour 10 minutes, 12-inch squares for about 1 hour, and 9-inch squares for about 50 minutes. Cakes are done when the tops are golden brown, and a cake tester inserted into center comes out clean. Cool cake in pans for 10 minutes. Remove cake from pans; transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Amaretto Syrup

Makes 7 cups

This recipe can be prepared several days in advance and refrigerated in an airtight container.

4 cups sugar 3/4 cup amaretto

1. In a large heavy saucepan, bring 4 cups of water and the sugar to a rolling boil. Remove from heat, and add amaretto. Let stand at room temperature to cool.

Swiss Meringue Buttercream

Makes about 8 cups

10 large egg whites 2 1/2 cups sugar 4 cups (8 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

- 1. Combine the egg whites and sugar in the heat-proof bowl of an electric mixer. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water. Whisk constantly until sugar has dissolved and whites are hot to the touch, about 5 minutes.
- 2. Transfer bowl to electric mixer. Using the whisk attachment, mix on low speed, gradually increasing to high speed, until stiff, glossy peaks form, about 10 minutes.
- 3. In a separate bowl, beat butter until creamy and fluffy.
- 4. Reduce speed to low, and add the butter to the egg whites until smooth. Add vanilla extract, and continue mixing until incorporated.