



frequently asked questions



what's the deal... ?

- **What is Zoë Tops?**

Zoë Tops is a small business, that offers cake tops + giftable sculpture, started by moi, Michelle Grayum. I'm an arsty fartsy sculptin', paintin', illustratin', award winnin' graphic designin', poetry-writin' maker of "stuff" living in Nashville, Tennessee.

- **What's up with the company name... what does it mean?**

zoë /ZOH-EE/ n. *greek*. **1** life. **2** life giving, often in a spiritual sense.

tops /TOPS/ n. *mid. english; old english*. **1** the best. **2** the part of anything that is first or foremost.

Zoë Tops was named in part for the meaning of the words themselves (*the best of life*) and partially in honor of one of my 2 rescue pups. Zoë is a brilliant and beautiful 13 lb. Min Pin mix (*with engaging eyes and fabulous ears*). She has truly been a godsend for my husband and me, as she reminds us daily to... appreciate and celebrate the best of life.



- **What is "cake top couture"?**

couture /KOO-TOOR/ n. *french*. **1** high fashion design and dressmaking. **2** The business of creating custom-designed and often one-of-a-kind clothing, usually for women.

I use the term "cake top couture" to better express what my patron will receive in terms of product and service. I will work directly with you and your cake designer and/or event planner to create a one-of-a-kind commissioned piece of sculpture to capture your event-specific details and as much of your personality as you want to express.

- **What materials are used to create these sculptures?**

The primary medium used is polymer clay. This non-toxic manmade material was originally created for dollmaking and stays soft and pliable indefinitely until it is cured by firing at temperatures attainable in a household oven.

I also use a smattering of wire, solder, aluminum foil, wood, beads, acrylic paint, varnishes, rubber stamps, as well as a multitude of hand tools in the process of building and covering a customized armature.

- **What kinds of wedding/event favors do you offer?**

Currently, Zoë Tops offers the "Good Fortune" Cookie as a standard wedding favor. Sculpted from polymer and individually wrapped in organza favor bags, these non-edible goodies come with your initials + wedding date, or a personal message of your choosing, stamped into the clay fortune tag.

how's that... ?

- **How much do you charge for a cake top?**

Pricing varies according to the complexity of design, how many figures and props are involved, and how labor-intensive each piece will be to create. Visit the pricing page (www.zoetops.com/pricing.html) to see four basic pricing levels with clickable photo examples to serve as a rough guide to get you started. For a personal price quote, please email me directly at michelle@zoetops.com.



faq's continued...

- **How large are the cake tops?**

However large you want! Seriously, I'll make your couture top whatever size you need it to be (*within the max of 12" in any direction.*). So far, my smallest top was 2x2x4" (5 oz.) and my largest was 6x8x12" (1.5 lbs.). If your cake top is on the larger side, your cake designer can simply use dowel rods inside your cake to provide extra support.

- **How long does it take to create a cake top?**

Including time for additional research and photography, I allow 2 full weeks on the calendar to complete an entire couture top project from beginning to end. The time spent on the actual construction of the sculpture itself (*starting from the building of the armature until the final piece is complete and ready to be photographed*) is between 20 and 40 hours. The longest time on record is 60 hours for a single top!

- **How do I properly care for and handle my sculpture?**

To care for your sculpture, you may use a very soft paintbrush or unused makeup brush for dusting. If something should be spilled on the piece, you may use antibacterial gel or water only (*lightly and sparingly*) to clean the clay.

ALWAYS handle your sculpture carefully as one would any kind of art sculpture or porcelain. Even though most Zoë Tops sculptures look whimsical, they are not toys and should not be handled as such. ALWAYS handle cake tops from the base. (*Lift your sculpture by securely placing both hands around the bottom of the base.*) NEVER apply pressure by handling or lifting a cake top from any part of the sculpture above the base section itself.

NEVER submerge underwater. Keep away from extreme temperatures, small hands and curious animals!

hypothetically speaking... ?

- **What if I like what I see, but the "couture" tops don't fit my budget?**

In the future, Zoë Tops plans to offer more affordable ready-made options in addition to the couture tops, to be sold with or without slight personalization. These tops will be pre-priced and made available for immediate purchase. Please visit the website (www.zoetops.com) for updates.

Also, remember that Zoë Tops offers more than just cake tops. You may wish to consider giving a special *thank you* to your family, friends and guests with favors, bridal party gifts, or other specialty sculptures.

- **What if some of my event details have yet to be decided?**

Not to worry, the most important thing is to get your spot booked on the calendar ASAP. Email me as soon as you're interested for a price quote (*no-obligation*) to get the ball rolling. Once your date is officially booked, you'll receive a Spec Sheet to collect your information. Go ahead and fill out + submit your Spec Sheet with all of the information you have at that time. You can continue to submit details and reference imagery until 2 months prior to your event date by email, mail or phone. Information submitted after that cannot be guaranteed.

- **What if my wedding/event details change after I've already submitted them?**

As long as a change is submitted before work has begun on the portion of the sculpture affected by that change, then making such a change would not be problematic. Simply e-mail me (michelle@zoetops.com) as soon as you know about the change and I'll do my best to accommodate.



faq's continued...

- **What if my sculpture becomes damaged or broken?**

With proper care and handling, your sculpture should last indefinitely. However, despite your best attempts, if your sculpture should become *accidentally* damaged, contact me as soon as possible at michelle@zoetops.com or (615) 945-1135. As long as the piece is still repairable (*i.e., not shattered into a bazillion pieces*), I will do my best to mend it for you or lend out advice to help you mend it yourself.

could you, would you... ?

- **Do you make couture wedding favors, too?**

I could and I would... with my clay any day. If you'd like to improvise and create your own favor, your imagination is my only limit. Please feel free to contact me with your fancy new favor ideas at michelle@zoetops.com, and we'll see what we can whip up!

- **Do you make cake tops for anniversaries, baby showers, birthdays, etc.?**

Absolutely. Any life event important enough to remember is worth celebrating with a Zoë Top sculpture!

- **Do you accept credit cards?**

Not at this time. Zoë Tops currently accepts payment via cash, check or money order payable to Zoë Tops.

- **Do you require a deposit?**

For all couture top orders and/or any other sculpture orders (*not ready-made*) totalling \$200 or above:

- {1} 50% of the total price is due 10 days after reservation to hold reservation and for work to begin.
- {2} The remaining balance must be paid-in-full on or before the event date for final sculpture to be hand-delivered. **For all non-local patrons, the remaining balance must be received before final sculpture will be shipped.*

- **Do you have a bridal/event registry?**

Not the typical kind, but yes, your friends and family are more than welcome and encouraged to contribute toward the purchase of your cake top. The same rules apply as above with one additional step:

- {1} 50% of the total price is *still* due 10 days after reservation *regardless of the source of payment*.
- {2} TWO weeks prior to your wedding date, the "registry" will be closed and you will be contacted with the amount of remaining balance due.
- {3} The remaining balance must be paid-in-full on or before the wedding date for final sculpture to be hand-delivered. **For all non-local patrons, the remaining balance must be received before final sculpture will be shipped.*

Avoid accidental overpayment by encouraging your guests to email michelle@zoetops.com for your running balance.



If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

