

Decorating with Icing

Decorating with icing is by far the most fun and exciting part of the cake-making process. However, it can be extremely challenging if you're not sure how to use decorating tools properly. Here are some tips on using decorating tips and some easy go-to cake decorating how-to's for an impressive iced cake.

TIPS ON TIPS

The key piece of equipment for cake decorating is the tip—the small metal cone that fits in the bottom of a pastry bag. The tip is placed in the bag before it's filled with whatever you will be piping. The two basic and most-used tips are known as the plain (or straight) tip and the star tip. A plain tip has just a round hole that comes in various diameters, and it can create beads of icing or smooth lines. The star tip is a multiple-pronged tip used for piping a ridged line, rosettes (see opposite page), and the ever-popular shell border. These are really the only two tips you need for basic decorating. There are, of course, some super specialized tips, like a “grass tip” with many little holes that create the texture and look of grass. And the #2 pastry tip used to fill pastries like cream puffs, éclairs, or doughnuts. It's a long, thin, straight tube that pokes a hole in the pastry and then pipes in the filling without letting any leak out.

GO-TO DECORATING MOVES

If you learn just these two tricks, you'll be golden.

Rosettes: Piping a rosette is very simple but always looks classy and stunning. Using a #30 star tip, pipe the icing through the tip in a

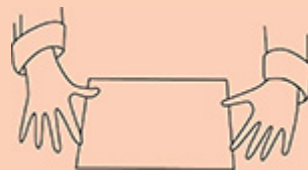
tight circular motion, almost piping its tail on top of itself (see the photo on previous page). To cover an entire cake in rosettes, pipe them in vertical lines across the top and down the sides. This creates a ruffled fabric look.

Petals: To make frosting “petals,” you will need a #6 or #7 plain (straight) tip and a small offset spatula. Starting on the side of the cake, pipe a vertical line of “pearls” (beads of icing). Using the small offset spatula, gently pull a pearl outward like a smear, creating a small petal. Continue to do this for all the pearls on the line. Pipe the next set of vertical pearls where the tails of the first petals end. Repeat this process all the way around the sides of the cake, including the top. To see the finished product, see [this photo](#).

MAKE YOUR OWN CORNET

When you need to pipe a very thin line, like if you are adding intricate detail or filigree, or if you’re writing something like “Happy Birthday” on a cake, you need a cornet, which is small piping bag that gives you really fine control over the icing. It’s easily assembled from parchment paper (but you could also use plain old computer paper). Best of all? There’s no washing up. Here’s how you make a cornet.

1. Cut a rectangular piece of parchment paper. The size doesn’t matter here, just needs to be a rectangle.

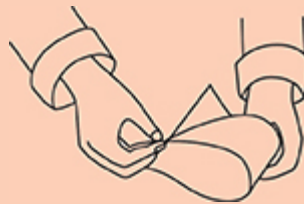


2. Next fold the paper along the longest diagonal, from corner to corner. You will end up with something that is straight along one side and looks like two side-by-side mountain peaks on the opposite side.



3. Cut the paper along the fold, creating two elongated triangles. You only need one of the triangles to make a cornet, but you might need a second cornet, so don't throw away the other half of the paper.

4. Hold the triangle so that the longest of the three sides is facing to the left and the original corner of the paper (the 90 degree angle) is facing to the right. Curl the short end point (at the top) down and around to meet the 90 degree angle corner. You will see that this has formed a cone.



5. Wrap the longer, bottom point around the cone and bring it up to meet the other points. Wiggle and pull at the points of the cone until you have made an absolutely tight and sharp tip. Tuck in the points to hold the cone in place.



6. Fill with your icing and roll the bag up tightly (like rolling up a tube of toothpaste) on the side opposite the seam, to pull the seam taut and keep it closed. Cut a tiny hole in the tip and pipe.

