



Module 3 - Section 1 - Cupcakes

Objective: Bake and decorate cupcakes using piping and sugarpaste/fondant decorations.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of good health and safety practices
- Bake a batch of well baked cupcakes
- Create a soft and fluffy textured buttercream
- Create a ripple effect buttercream pattern
- Prepare a suitable piping bag, before creating the decoration
- Create neatly piped buttercream decorations
- Produce neat, well proportioned, sugarpaste/fondant cupcake decorations
- Produce well balanced and proportioned sprinkle decorations

Assessment criteria:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of good health and safety practices
2. Create a batch of well baked cupcakes
3. Prepare a soft and fluffy textured buttercream
4. Create a ripple effect buttercream pattern
5. Correctly prepare a suitable piping bag, before creating the decoration
6. Produce neatly piped buttercream decorations
7. Produce neat, well proportioned, sugarpaste/fondant cupcake decorations
8. Produce well balanced and proportioned sprinkle decorations

You will Need:

CUPCAKES

Tools

Mixer
Cupcake baking trays and cases
Measuring spoons
Spatula
Sieve

Ingredients for 12 cupcakes

180g Self raising flour
180g Caster sugar
180g Butter (unsalted)
2x Medium eggs
2x Tablespoons of milk
Teaspoon of vanilla extract
12x Cupcake baking cases
Piping bags

BUTTERCREAM

Tools

Gem piping nozzle 115 (large leaf)
Tulip Russian nozzle
1M Star
1B Star
3R Plain

Ingredients

400g Butter (unsalted)
800g Icing (powdered) sugar
2 teaspoons of vanilla extract
½ tablespoon of milk
(the size of batch can be altered, so long as the 1:2 ratio is maintained)

Pro gels

Green
Pink
Purple

DECORATIONS

Sugarpaste

Skin tone
Pink
Black
Brown
White
Pink

Dust

Pink
Snowflake

Other

Edible sprinkles
Corn flour
Pink dragees
Ivory dragees

Moulds

Butterfly mould (Karen Davies)
Brooch mould (Karen Davies)
Flower mould (Karen Davies)
Crochet textured mat (Karen Davies)

Tools

Round cutter (just larger than the rim of the cupcake case. Paul used a 3" cutter)
Dresden tool
Scallop and comb tool
Bone tool
Shell tool
Sharp knife
No.0 paint brush

Method:

Baking the cupcakes

- Preheat the oven to 170C/338F for a fan assisted or 190C/374F in a conventional
- Mix the butter and caster sugar on a slow speed for 2mins
- Scrape down
- Mix again for 2mins
- Add the eggs
- Add the sieved self-raising flour, then mix through
- Add the vanilla extract and milk, then mix through
- Scrape down, then one final mix
- Split evenly into the cupcake cases
- Bake for 20-22mins

Supporting Notes:

Cupcakes are always very popular as they provide an individually decorated cake. These decorations come in a variety of ways, which we will explore later in this lesson.

As with all food handling, before getting started all equipment and surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned. Personal hygiene is just as important so ensure that hands are thoroughly washed, a clean jacket or top is worn and hair is tied back. Always ensure jewellery is removed and nails are clean. Health and safety must always be of the utmost importance, but accidents do happen. Always have a kitchen first aid kit available. This will differ from a standard first aid kit, as a blue waterproof dressing must be applied when a food handler has an open cut. This is to make it easy to spot, should the dressing come off while preparing food.

Baking the cupcakes

Start by preheating the oven to 170C/338F for a fan assisted or 190C/374F in a conventional oven. By the time the mix has been prepared the oven should be up to temperature.

Prepare the mix by starting with the butter, which should be at room temperature. Then add the sieved caster sugar to the butter, then mix on a slow speed for approximately two minutes. Check the mix, which should be soft and fluffy, then scrape down the sides, being sure to scrape any unmixed ingredients. Mix again for a short time, then add two eggs, which should also be at room temperature. If this causes curdling, add a little flour. Once the eggs are mixed through, add the sieved flour. When mixing the flour, be careful to ensure the flour doesn't create a dust cloud. Once mixed through, add the vanilla extract, then add the milk. Continue mixing until all the ingredients are thoroughly mixed through, scrape down and finish with another gentle mix.

The mix should now be separated into the cupcake cases. This can be done by using two spoons (or any ice cream scoop) and scraping a little mix into each case at a time. The best way is to separate the mix as evenly as the eye allows, then adjust as necessary once all the mix has been separated. However, you can weigh each case if you want further confirmation that the mix has been spread evenly.

Making sure the oven is up to temperature, bake for 20-22 minutes. The cupcake is baked when the top is springy and a testing stick comes out clear after 12 seconds.

Cupcakes will last for 2 days at room temperature or up to 7 days refrigerated. They will last 4-6 months in the freezer, but always make sure their container is dated.

Making the buttercream

Allow the cupcakes to cool before adding any decorations, which provides the perfect opportunity to start making decorations.

Buttercream is a very popular and easy decoration to add to a cupcake. Buttercream is made by mixing butter and icing (powdered) sugar at a ratio of 1:2. Paul creates a big batch using 400g of butter to 800g of icing sugar. The butter should be mixed at room temperature until fluffy, then add the icing sugar. The icing sugar can be added in short bursts or all at the same time, but be careful not to create a dust cloud when the mixer is turned on. Vanilla extract should be added along with the icing (powdered) sugar, which will add to the taste. Start with the mixer on a slow speed until the icing sugar is mixed through, then increase the speed to mix on medium speed

A little milk can be added to help soften the buttercream or condensed milk can be added, for those with a sweet tooth. Continue mixing for approximately 5 minutes or until the buttercream is light and fluffy.

Colouring the buttercream

Cupcake decorations are most effective when coloured. There are many ways this can be achieved, but Paul's preferred method is adding a little pro gel colouring. Just mix a little at a time until the desired colour is achieved. Just worth pointing out that when mixing colours it is difficult to get two mixes exactly the same colour. It is always best to ensure that enough is coloured up in the first batch to complete the decorations.

When filling up a piping bag, always ensure that the nozzle goes in first. It might be stating the obvious, but there is a reason behind every statement! Place the nozzle into the piping bag and fill the bag with enough buttercream to complete the decoration.

Paul makes up the following colours and piping bags:

- Green buttercream with the 115 (large leaf) piping nozzle
- Pink buttercream with the tulip Russian nozzle
- Purple buttercream with the 1B star nozzle
- Vanilla buttercream with the 3R plain nozzle
- Ripple effect buttercream with the 1M star nozzle

The ripple effect is achieved by placing pink buttercream into the piping bag. Flatten the bag and encourage the buttercream stick to the sides. Open the bag up, then add some vanilla buttercream to the centre of the bag, allowing the pink buttercream to mix from the sides.

Piping the decoration

Make sure that the work surface has been cleaned before starting. Piping can be practiced on the work surface or kitchen towel, allowing for practice attempts, before piping directly onto the cupcake. Before starting, ensure any air is squeezed out of the piping bag.

Paul demonstrates the following techniques in detail on the accompanying video.

Start with the vanilla buttercream and a 3R nozzle and create a gentle cupcake swirl. Place the nozzle on the surface, then create a large outer circle swirl on the first full swirl. With a continuous swirl, bring the second in closer, building on top of the first. Finish with a small sharp peak swirl, breaking the piping by lifting the nozzle away quickly to create a whip look. Practice on the surface until you are happy then start to decorate the cupcakes.

Repeat the same process, but using the purple buttercream with the 1B star nozzle. This creates a more swirl-like decoration, quite different from the plain nozzle. Take the 1M nozzle bag with the pink and vanilla mix and practice the swirl technique. This will produce a

lovely mix where the white and pink mix together to create a lovely ripple, swirl effect. It may take a couple of swirls before the colours fully mix through.

Adding a quick leaf buttercream decoration is best achieved using the 115 (large leaf) piping nozzle. Again, practice away from the cupcake. Press the nozzle down, add a little pressure to the bag, then pull the nozzle sharply away. Keep practicing until you have achieved a regular leaf effect, then add to the cupcake. Pipe around the edge of the cupcake creating the leaf decorations. This decoration is nicely finished off with the pink buttercream with the tulip Russian nozzle. The technique is to squeeze the piping bag, then drop a little buttercream down, then sharply pull the nozzle away. Start on the outside then finish with one in the middle, which makes a beautiful decoration.

Create a rose effect using any of the star nozzles. Start in the middle of the cupcake, then create a swirl motion until the cupcake is covered. Pull the end of the nozzle away sharply to finish the decoration.

The key to buttercream decorations is practice.

Sugarpaste/fondant decorations

Before adding sugarpaste/fondant (paste), apply a thin layer of buttercream to the cupcake. Ensure that the buttercream is evenly spread and pushed out to cover the edges of the cupcake.

Little girl

To create model faces on the cupcakes start by rolling out skin tone paste to 3mm thick. Cut out circles, just big enough to cover to the edge of the cupcake. Place them on top of the buttercream covered cupcakes, then smooth them into position. This will form the base decoration allowing the facial decorations to be added on top.

To make a cute knitted hat decoration, roll the paste out as thin as possible. Create texture by impressing a pattern onto the paste, large enough to cover the target area. Paul uses a crochet mat by Karen Davies, but any pattern will suffice. To cut the paste to size, use the same round cutter used to cut the skin tone paste. Slice off any excess, then place onto the cupcake. Further decoration can be added by cutting a thin strip of untextured paste and positioning where the hat meets the face. Lined texture can be added to the plain strip to add some further detail. If going for a winter hat, add a little white ball to create the pom pom.

Add the eyes by making slight indents with a ball tool. Add some eye lines coming out from the side of the eye, using the Dresden tool. To make the eyes, create two evenly sized black balls of paste, then position into the sockets. Add a cute little nose from a tiny ball of skin tone paste. The smile is created with a simple indent from the scallop and comb tool. Add the ears, using two tear drop shapes of skin tone paste.

Little boy

Start with the skin tone circle, then positioning the eye sockets at the halfway point. Add the eyes, using two rolled black balls of paste. Make an indent where the nose will go, then add the nose using a rolled oval shape. A big sweeping smile is added using the Dresden tool. The smile should start just below the outer edge of the eye, sweep down and finish just beyond being in line with the nose. This will add character and give the cheeky teenager look. Add the ears as before, making a small indent to highlight the inner ear.

To make the hair, roll out a sausage shape then cut into small pieces, then make in to cone shapes. Flatten the cones then add texture using the shell tool. Place the hair on, starting at the sides, then keep adding pieces until a full and funky hair style is achieved.

Using a No.0 paint brush and some pink dust, add some colour to the inside of the mouth. Finish with a little bit of blush on his cheeks.

Teddy bear

Cover the cupcake in a circle cut out of brown paste. Roll out a skin tone muzzle and just measure against the cupcake, ensuring that the size is in keeping with the scale. Using the back of the knife, add three lines to the muzzle to mark the nose and mouth.

Add the eye sockets as before and eye lines can be added for extra detail. Roll out two balls of black paste to fit, then roll a third ball and position on the muzzle for the nose. The ears are added from a ball of brown paste, always checking to ensure that they are in keeping with the proportions. Flatten the ball with the end of a rolling pin, to create the outer and inner ear lines. Roll out a smaller skin tone coloured ball and flatten then shape to fit the inner ear. Finish by adding a little pink blusher to the teddy bear's cheeks.

Decorating with sprinkles

Cover three cupcakes with a circle of white paste.

Wet the edges of the first cupcake, then simply dip the edge in the box of edible sprinkles. The centre of the cupcake can be decorated with a mould finish. Paul opts for a brooch mould, so he prepares the mould by dusting with a little corn flour. Mix the desired colour, then firmly place the paste into the mould. The brooch mould should just pop out, which is why the corn starch is so important. Add some snowflake dust, then stick to the centre of the cake to finish.

With the second cupcake, mark little indents evenly around the edge of the cupcake. Add a little water, then add the ivory dragees in alternate holes. Fill the gaps with the pink dragees. Add a mould to finish the centre. Paul opts for a pink and white marbled butterfly, which works out beautifully. Add the butterfly, then finish with a little snowflake dust.

The last cupcake is going to be decorated with dust colouring. Brush some pink dust lightly across the surface of the cupcake. This forms a pretty base for a decorative mould. Paul opts for a flower mould, which he finishes with some snowflake sparkle to great effect.

This gives a range of beautiful cupcakes, but of course the sky's the limit in terms of what can be achieved.