



Module 4 - Section 4 - Peony

Objective: Create a stunning peony.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Create a simple home-made former
- Create veined petals without using a veiner
- Correctly shape a peony leaf
- Colour the peony using light shades
- Correctly assemble the peony

Assessment criteria:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the technique to create a simple home-made former
2. Correctly shape a peony leaf
3. Create a peony centre to be in scale with the flower
4. Add light shades to colour the peony
5. Correctly assemble the peony

You will Need:

TOOLS

Knives

- Sharp cutting knife

Modelling tools

- Ball tool
- Bone tool

Cake tools

- Small rolling pin

Cutters

- 6cm peony
- 5cm peony
- 4cm peony

Veiners

Most flower veiners will be suitable, but Paul uses those listed below. He also shows how to create the vein effect using a cocktail stick and bamboo skewer.

- Rose
- Orchid (Paul used: cymbidium orchid throat veiner)
- Tulip

Paintbrushes

- 4 x no 6 (or flat brush if preferred)

Other

- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Wire cutters
- Pasta machine (optional)
- Foam pad
- Tin foil
- Foam egg former
- Cocktail stick
- Bamboo stick

INGREDIENTS**Flower paste**

- 150g White - Squires Kitchen

Sugarpaste/fondant

- 150g white (to create the former)

Pro gel

- Peach - Rainbow Dust

Petal dusts

- Peach Delights - Rainbow Dust
- Pale Terracotta - Rainbow Dust
- Moss Green - Sugarflair
- Primrose yellow - Sugarflair

Other

- 28 gauge white florist wire
- 26 gauge white florist wire
- Green florist tape
- Sealable food bag
- Edible glue
- Corn flour puff bag
- White vegetable fat (Trex/Crisco)
- Cocktail stick
- Bamboo skewer
- Stamens 1.5pkts of 144 (matt)

Method:

- Cut 40x9cm 28 gauge wires
- Condition the flower paste adding a little colouring gel
- Roll out the flower paste to as thin as you can take it
- Cut out 7 small, 22 medium & 9 large petals
- Use the twiddle and stick method to add flower paste to the wire
- Add the wires to the petals, then press in place
- Add veining to the petals, shape, then leave to dry
- Create the centre by cutting a 26 and a 28 gauge wire into 3x12cm pieces
- Roll 2.2g of flower paste into a thick sausage and cut into three even sized pieces
- Shape the three pieces into cones
- Create a hook at the end of the 26 gauge wires
- Wet the hook end of the wires, then place into the cone, then flatten the ends
- Separate 3 bunches of approximately 72 stamens (half a packet)
- Double the bunches over in the centre
- Twist around a 28 gauge wire to keep in place, then secure by wrapping florist tape

- Repeat the process to achieve three dense stamen centres
- Brush the petals with light dusts, to provide shading with a darker shaded tip
- Tape the centre together starting with the seed pods then stamens
- Add the small petals, the medium and finish with the large petals
- Tape tightly as you go and finish with full width tape to secure in place
- Lightly steam the flower to finish

Supporting Notes:

The peony is a beautiful flower and although time consuming to make, it has an amazing effect when presented on the cake. Peonies come in such a range of colours that there is a shade for every colour theme. Their density takes time to build but, for most wedding cake designs, one will be enough as the eye catching focus of the cake.

There is equipment for almost every aspect of cake decorating and making a peony is no different. However, there is very often a home-made option that will do the same job. In the accompanying video, Paul starts by making his own former by placing a ball shape of sugarpaste/fondant in a food bag, then indenting the tin foil to create the former shapes. It's as easy as that.

The peony needs lots of petals, which requires a lot of wires. There will be 7 small petals, 22 medium and 9 large. Cut 10 of the 28 gauge wires into quarters (9cm pieces), which gives 40 wires, which will leave a couple of extras.

Condition approximately 144g of flower paste, then add a little of the peach pro gel colouring and mix through thoroughly. The aim is to get a slight base tone, so be careful not to add too much too soon. Just work on a little flower paste at a time, making sure to store all unused paste in a sealed bag or container. The objective is to roll the paste as thin as possible, which is best achieved using a pasta roller. However, thinly hand-rolled paste will work, so long as you can easily read text through the rolled paste. Roll out and cut out a few petals at a time, ensuring that all the paste not being worked on is stored in an airtight bag or container. Repeat the process until there are 7 small, 22 medium and 9 large petals as a minimum, but it is advisable to cut a couple of extras just in case there are any breakages.

Using the twiddle and stick method (taught in the rose lesson) cover the top of each wire to approximately halfway up from the base of the petal. Place the covered wire onto the petal, then gently press into place. There are specific peony veiners, however almost any floral veiner will create the desired effect. Paul used a selection of rose, tulip and orchid veiners to make the imprints, but he also demonstrates how to create the veiner effect using a bamboo skewer or cocktail stick.

Once the petals are veined, turn them upside down (stem to the pad), then create the frill using the ball tool, half on the pad and half on the flower. The aim is to thin out at the ends, creating a ruffle effect, making them flexible, delicate and thin. Before placing the petals in the former, cup and create a slight curve shape, then leave to set. When shaping it is important to consider the finished look. Varying the extent to which some of the petals are cupped will provide a more natural look. Paul gives a detailed explanation in the accompanying video.

While the petals are drying and setting, it is time to move on to create the centre of the flower. Start by cutting a 26 gauge wire into three equal 12cm sizes and repeat the process with a 28 gauge wire. Cut the seed pods into three equal sizes from a sausage shape of approximately 2.2g then make each into a cone shape. Using the 26 gauge wires, create an open hook, dip into water, then insert into the paste, allowing the hook to hold the wire in place. Finish by rolling out the very tip with the ball tool to get the desired seed pod effect.

Taking approximately half a packet of stamens (72) wrap the 26 gauge wire in the centre, then double the stamens over to form one thick bunch. Secure in place with a tightly wrapped wire and/or florist tape. Repeat the process for the other two bunches of stamens.

Note that in the accompanying video Paul varies the size of the bunches, which is entirely down to personal preference and taste.

Adding colour always brings the flower to life. Start by brushing the stamens with the primrose yellow dust to get a bright, stark colouring. Paint the seed pods using the moss green dust mixed with a little yellow and lightly brush the colour on. To paint the petals, start brushing from the base outwards with the peach delight dust (or whatever your chosen colouring might be). This is to be done sparingly and lightly, to give an almost two tone effect with the white. Using the pale terracotta, add some gentle shading at the tips.

Once all the petals have been coloured the wires should then be taped. Using half width green florist tape, wrap the tape tightly and neatly around the wire. Repeat the process for all the petals, as this ensures that the wire is hidden and makes the petal a lot less likely to move once in place. Before taping the seed pods, use the tweezers at the very top of the wire, create a slight bend on each, bring them together with the seed pods facing outwards, then tape them up tightly. Attach the stamens to the stem, taping each bunch separately.

Before adding the small petals, bend the wires a little to help them shape to the stem. Place and position two or three at a time, before tightly taping to the stem to form the inner layer of 7 petals. Repeat the process for the medium petals, building the flower up slowly but surely. Do not be obsessed with being too neat with the positioning of all the petals, remember that peony petals are irregular in nature. Ensure that all the petals are added tightly to the stem, finishing with full width florist tape to make the flower secure.

The key thing to remember is to tape tightly and let your eye guide you as to the final positioning of all the petals. All that is left to do is to lightly steam the flower, just to bring the colours out and give a shiny finish.