



Module 6 - Section 4 - Piping

Objective: To produce three different icing tubes/tip designs to finish and decorate a royal iced cake.

In completing each section the user will be able to:

- Make a home-made piping bag
- Measure evenly marked points around the circumference of the cake
- Pipe a shell border and snails trail
- Pipe a simple message on the cake surface
- Pipe a drop line decoration
- Pipe simple flower decorations

Assessment criteria:

1. Create a home-made piping bag
2. Accurately measure even spacings around the circumference of the cake
3. Produce a neat written piped message on the surface of the cake
4. Demonstrate a neat and even drop line decoration
5. Demonstrate a simple piped floral decoration
6. Demonstrate the shell border and snails trail piping technique

You will Need:

Tools and ingredients for the whole Module are listed in Lesson 1.

Method:

The methods in this lesson are very visual. Refer to the accompanying video for clear instructions.

TEMPLATES

1. Piping practice - 1
2. Piping practice - 2
3. Piping practice - 3
4. Piping practice - 4

Supporting Notes:

Piping bags

Piping bags are available in various off the shelf shapes and sizes. Most cake decorators have their own personal preference, so it is always best to try a few different brands and sizes to get the best piping bag for your project.

However, there is also the home-made method, which is made using greaseproof paper. In the video Paul uses greaseproof paper which is 37.5cm wide. Start by taking one corner of the roll and placing it on the opposite side of the roll, creating a 45 degree angle, then cut. Then fold the bottom of the cut edge to the top of the edge, which will create another 45 degree angled piece. Cut the fold, which will give you a triangular shaped piece of greaseproof paper. In the video Paul demonstrates how to turn those triangles into piping bags. The technique is to have all the ends of the triangle meet at the same point, forming a secure home-made piping bag.

Piping a written message

Piped writing is used in most birthday or celebration cakes, so a great skill to perfect. Start by preparing two piping bags, one with a No.1.5 nozzle and the other with a No.2. If using the home-made piping bag, cut a hole at the tip, enough to ensure that the nozzle fits in half way down and does not wobble. This means that the tube is secure, and the icing will not leak out at the base of the tube. Prepare soft peak consistency royal icing and put a little in each bag. Do not overfill the bag. It is easier to pipe with a bag 2/3rds full

Before starting to pipe a message on a cake, the comforting news for anyone who is not confident, is that royal icing can be easily removed. Of course, there are always exceptions. The key thing to avoid if you are not confident is strong colours, especially black, on a white cake. White on white is very quickly and easily removed allowing you as many practice runs as necessary. The key to learning any technique is practice. This is especially true when it comes to learning how to pipe a message onto a cake. But, just like riding a bike, once learned, the skill will be with you forever.

Happy Birthday is the best message to practice your piping/writing skills, as it is the one that is asked for most often. Positioning the writing is very important, so ensure that the area for writing is properly measured. If starting out, or not confident about writing in a straight line, ensure that there is a guide in place. Capital letters using straight lines, where possible, are usually the easiest to get started with. Also the thicker the line and the bigger the letter, the easier it will be to get a neat result, but the thinner tube will give a neater design.

Templates are provided for you to practice on. Just laminate them or place in a see through sleeve and practice until the pattern or lettering is mastered. Practice is the key to success with piping skills.

When piping/writing, the objective is to minimise the amount of royal icing (piping) at the start and end points of each letter. This is achieved by laying the start on gently and lifting off sharply at the end. Check that each letter is neat and in place before moving onto the next. Letters can easily be removed with a scrape of a palette knife. Ensure that all remnants of the royal icing have been taken off the cake. To achieve a neat and smooth finish, flatten down any peaks using a wet paintbrush.

Once you have practiced and achieved good results, experiment with different styles and smaller nozzles. Once the structured way of writing has been mastered, it is worth trying freehand and adapting a more personal style. Use the templates available in this lesson to practice. Practice and patience are required to master the technique.

One of the key terms to be familiar with is the drop line. This is where the end of a letter is extended to form a swirl or longer tail. A good example would be the 'Ys' on Happy and Birthday. Instead of the tail of the 'Y' ending in the conventional manner, the piping bag is moved away from the cake to create an extended tail, which is then dropped onto the cake in a decorative style. This can be very effective, adding a more stylish and professional finish.

Evenly spaced markings

Adding evenly spaced decorations can be challenging. Paul demonstrates, using a till roll, how to achieve even spacing (greaseproof paper can also be used). Cut a piece of till roll

and wrap around the circumference of the cake, then mark the paper where the two ends meet. Fold the paper in half, then half again, ensuring that the folds happen at the marks made at the join. Depending on how small you want your decoration, repeat the process until you get the desired spacing. Once the paper is wrapped around the cake once more, make tiny marks where the fold lines appear and that will give you evenly spaced markings.

Covering the join

There are a number of options to cover the area where the cake meets the cake drum. The quickest solution is to add a ribbon. There is also the option of adding a long thin, even strip of sugarpaste/fondant and wrapping it around the join. However, as you have gone to all the effort to create a beautiful royal iced cake, it would be worth adding a royal iced decoration.

It is advisable with any new royal icing decoration to practice away from the cake until you have mastered the size and decoration, before adding to the cake. This is another opportunity to use the practice sheet template available with this lesson.

One of the more popular methods to cover the join, between the bottom of the cake and the cake drum, is to pipe a royal icing snail trail. This is created using a plain tipped nozzle. The No.2 nozzle, will give a smaller, neater, finish or the No.6 nozzle, which is bigger, will hide wider marked areas. The snail trail is created by adding a small dot of royal icing, then dragging the tip away to form the starting point for the next one.

A shell border is created using a star nozzle. The shell border is created in a similar way to the snail trail, by creating a small star shape then quickly moving the nozzle away. Done side by side, they create a pretty shell effect.

On the assignment cake, demonstrate 5 shell, then 5 snail trail patterns (size doesn't matter), alternating around the base of the cake to hide the join. It will not fit exactly, so ensure that the uneven join is at the back of the cake.

Drop line work

Drop line work makes for a very pretty and often elegant decoration. This is best achieved using stiff peak royal icing and a No.1.5 nozzle. Angle the cake so that the side of the cake is easy to work with. Start by lining up the nozzle with one of the markings added to the cake earlier. Once the royal icing is attached, pull it out and around to line up, then drop down at the finish marked point. Repeat the process achieving an even drop line all around the cake.

Piping a flower

Piping is great for adding many decorations. Before adding any decoration, ensure that the position has been measured. Position a piped flower decoration below the drop line joins, adding one below every second join.

To make a simple flower, start with a little dot using a No.1.5 nozzle. Then, evenly space five smaller dots around, with two either side of the central dot, which will form the dots as shown as the five on a dice. Add one on top to make the five smaller dots. Finish the decoration by piping on three dots below the flower, a large, then medium, then small dot.

The key to all royal iced decorations is practice.