

A Ring of



Roses

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"Ring a Ring o' Roses" has without a doubt an eye catching piped centrepiece that will stop people in their tracks; I know this from experience when I revealed this cake at an exhibition in the UK this year.

Royal icing cushion work may be considered old fashioned by some; however as a piped off-piece a cushion can be used in a contemporary fashion on the multi-medium cakes of today. The technique of cushion piping has been set aside by most cake decorators because it's time consuming and we all know that time means money. Our clients would love to see this level of piped work on their cakes and I have attempted to address the issue of time by developing a method of doing commercial cushion work.

I'm sure I'm not the first to have done this method but it's certainly the most effective way I have of creating shaped cushions which can be attached to sugarpaste or fondant covered cakes, this method even works on cakes covered with poured chocolate.

Step 1. Decide on the finished size and shape of your cushion, and then create a paper template of its footprint; this will become the template which you will use to create your paste base for the cushion.

I tend to use pastillage for the next stage of the process however there is no reason why this could not be done with modeling or gumpaste. As this is a centrepiece for "Ring a Ring o' Roses" there is no need to discuss curved cushion work at this time however there is a helpful hint at the end of this article about the process for creating them.

Step 2. Using your footprint paper template cut out a piece of paste, approx 2mm thick, with a small sharp knife; this is the base you will build your cushion upon.

Step 3. Now mould another piece of paste into a domed shape, this should be approx two thirds the size of your

Materials

- Paste of choice
- Royal icing
- Miniature royal icing roses (optional)

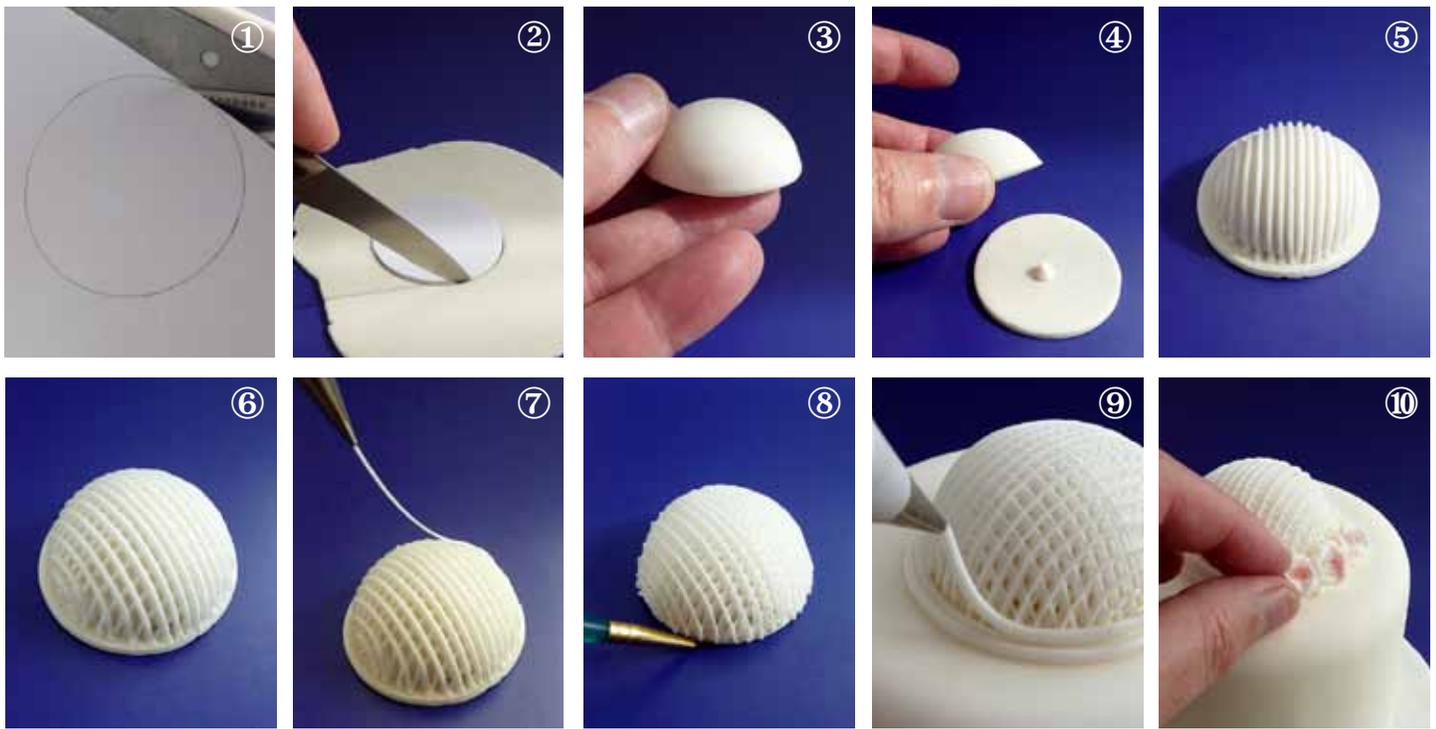
Equipment

- Paper
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Small sharp knife
- No. 3, 2, 1 PME tips (or Wilton equivalent)
- Silicone piping bags or equivalent
- Small paintbrush

desired cushion. Sometimes I use plain chocolate moulds to make my paste domes as this creates interesting shapes. If I am doing more than one cushion on a cake, and want them all identical, I weigh my paste dome with the footprint paper template. The combined weight of paste and template means you will be able to reproduce the cushion to the same dimensions each time."

Step 4. Attach the paste dome with a small bulb of royal icing to the center of the paste footprint, the dome should not come to the edge of the piece of paste but have about a 4mm margin. Set this aside to dry for a few hours.

Fit a silicone piping bag with a No. 2 PME tip (or Wilton equivalent) and fill the bag two thirds with royal icing. When piping cushion work it is traditionally done in the same color as the cake, however in this contemporary age you can achieve some stunning effects with contrasting colors of piping over a coloured dome of paste. Don't



forget harmonics and complimentary colors also work equally as well.

Step 5. Whenever possible look directly down upon your paste dome, this will aid you when piping and help to create straight lines and perfect spacing. Pipe your first No. 2 line directly down the center of your paste dome taking care that the ends of your piping are in contact with the paste footprint, use a slightly damp paintbrush if necessary. Continue to pipe parallel lines until the whole of your dome is covered and all lines are neatly in contact with the dome.

Step 6. Turn the dome ninety degrees and repeat the process making certain that all of your lines are piped at ninety degrees to the first layer of piping. This will then turn your dome into a cushion with two layers of piping. Repeat this twice more so that you end up with four layers of No. 2 piped lines, it is very important that each time you pipe a line of icing that it is directly over the line below.

Step 7. Fit a silicone piping bag with a No. 1 PME tip (or Wilton equivalent) and fill the bag two thirds with royal icing. Continue to build your cushion by piping lines of royal icing in a No. 1 tip directly over the lines of No. 2 icing turning your cushion ninety degrees each and every time. Your cushion will be complete once you have piped four layers of No. 2 icing and four layers of No. 1 icing.

Step 8. The lines of piping should now have swollen your cushion so that it fills the whole of the paste footprint, it is important to make sure all of the ends of piped lines are touching the base of the cushion. Set the finished piece to one side to dry overnight to prevent damage when attaching it to your cake. (The only time I would ever progress onto lines of No. 0 piping is for exhibition pieces and competitions).

Step 9. Once dry attach the cushion to the center of your cake using a couple of bulbs of soft royal icing. Once in place fit a silicone piping bag with a No. 3 PME tip (or Wilton equivalent) and fill the bag two thirds with royal icing. Pipe a No. 3 line of royal icing around the cushion as close as possible then pipe another line of No. 3 icing directly next to it, once completed pipe a further No. 3 line of icing on top of the first line of piping, this will give the base of your cushion a bevelled edge to which you can attach your miniature roses when dry.

Step 10. To finish this centerpiece attach miniature royal icing piped roses with piped royal icing leaves over the No. 3 piping around the cushion. Using small gumpaste blossoms or fondant plunger cutter blossoms are a pleasing alternative to piped roses.

Helpful hint

Whenever I cover a cake in fondant or sugarpaste, that I intend putting a curved cushion piece onto, I usually use a curved top edge smoother as this means that the curve usually matches the curve of a cake dummy. I then pipe all of my cushion pieces in advance onto pieces of greased cellophane pinned to a dummy, when dry I remove them and attach them to my real cake with a few bulbs of royal icing. Sometimes you need to do a small amount of piping around the outer edge of the attached cushion if it is not a perfect fit. 🍷

