

Santa and His Reindeer

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In this project we have Santa trying to round up some unruly reindeer and get them back to work. I did this in gumpaste but it could easily be done in modeling chocolate or fondant for that matter. It just depends on which medium you like to use. I use a waterpen to glue the gumpaste together.

To begin, I prepare the board to give it some topography. You need to decide where you will put your reindeer, the trees and Santa. Be sure to allow enough room for the "reindeer angel". Place your topographical elements on the board by gluing some Styrofoam™ pieces to it with royal icing. If you are doing this directly on a cake, just add some cake scraps and fill them out with icing. Then either ice it as smoothly as you can with buttercream or cover with fondant. If fondant is your final icing, use your fingers to gently smooth the fondant down and around the dimensional pieces. You can use the large end of your ball tool or your finger to make the indentation for the "snow reindeer". Keep in mind that the size of your indentation will determine how large your finished reindeer should be.

Some of the parts for the reindeer need to be made ahead of time and allowed to dry for ease of handling. Start with the ears. Pinch off a tiny piece of tan paste, roll it into a ball and then flatten it into a pancake. Roll two of the edges together and point them. Now make a point on the opposite end. Do the same for the other ear and set them aside to dry. You will need to make two ears for each reindeer.

Antlers are the next thing to make. Pinch off a piece of paste that makes a ball about 3mm in diameter. Roll the paste into a snake that is thicker on one end than the other. Point the skinnier end. Use your X-ACTO® knife to make a cut in the other end so that the paste makes a "Y" shape. Make another cut a little farther down so that you have three branches on one end. Roll each of the branches between your finger tips to make them pointed. Shape each point in the way you would like them to dry. You may need to prop them in place with some bits of tissue. Make the second antler, forming the points so that they are the opposite of the first antler. It always



helps me to lay them side by side so that I can see how the points need to go. Make another pair for the second reindeer. Let these dry thoroughly.

Next we do the hooves. Pinch off a bit of paste that is about 4mm in diameter when rolled into a ball. Make the ball into a cone and use your X-ACTO® knife to make a vertical cut in the front of the hoof. Wiggle the X-ACTO® blade back and forth to help you separate the two sides of the hoof. You will need six hooves all together since the deer in the snowbank only has the front two legs showing.

Now that those pieces have dried, you can make the rest of the reindeer.

I start with the legs.

You will want a piece of paste that is the size of half a grape for the front leg. Roll it into a ball and then into a cylinder that is thicker on one end than the other. Make the knee by placing the leg across the index finger of your non-dominant hand then use the first two fingers of your other hand to roll back and forth across it. This makes a knee every time. You can use your X-ACTO® knife to mark some creases where the leg bends. Use the small end of your ball tool to make a bit of a hollow in the end of the leg that will have the hoof. Insert the hoof into the indentation and glue in place with the waterpen. Use your X-ACTO® knife to make some cuts at the bottom of the leg so that it looks like the hair is growing downwards and it covers where the leg joins the hoof. You are going to do the same thing for the back legs, but this time you want a piece of paste that is about as big as 3/4 of a grape. These legs are just a tad longer, but they have a hip area that is much larger than the shoulder of the front legs. Roll your paste into a ball and then into a cylinder, leaving much more of the paste at the hip end. Make your knee just as you did for the front legs, make the hollow for the hoof and glue it in place; make the marks for the hair. Use your fingers to smooth the hip area into the shape you like. The leg will fit up against the body so the hip only needs to be rounded on the outside and flat on the inside. Lay your legs out the way you want them. Make a front pair of legs from the knee down for the second reindeer.



They only need to be sticking out of the snow bank a little ways so the actual length needed depends on your desired look.

You will need about 1/8 of a cup of tan paste for the body. Roll it into a ball and then into a cylinder. Roll the



cylinder between your index fingers to shape the waist. Give a bit more paste to the end that is going to be the rump. Roll the neck area between your index fingers as well. Lay the body between the legs and glue together with your water pen. Make the tail from a very small

piece of tan paste and a very small piece of white paste. Roll each into a ball, then a teardrop and flatten. Stack the two colors together and press together. Glue in place for the tail.

Make the head with about 1/3 of the paste you used for the body. Roll it into a ball and then into a pear shape. The wide end of the pear will be the nose. You will eventually want the head to bend in the middle so that it looks like an "L" from the side. The

eye area is the upright leg and the nose is the horizontal leg. Use your ball tool to make the indentations for the eyes by poking the small end of the tool into the eye socket and lifting up just slightly. Use either the small end of your PME cutting wheel or an X-ACTO® knife to make the mouth. Being careful not to distort the shape of the mouth, gently work the small end of your ball tool in between the lips and poke in just a bit to give the look of an open mouth. Use the tips of your fingers to pinch in a chin under the "O". You may need to use bit



of tissue to prop the antlers and ears in place. Now use the small end of your ball tool to make holes for the ears and antlers. Glue them in place with the waterpen. Roll two very small balls of white paste for eyes and glue into the sockets. Roll two very tiny balls of black paste for pupils and glue them to the eyeballs; flatten them slightly



as you glue them in place. Roll a small piece of either red or black paste into a ball and shape it into an oval for the nose. Glue in place and let dry. Make the head for the second reindeer.

Santa also has some parts that need to dry ahead of time to make them easier to handle. His boots are made from pieces of black paste about the size of a grape, rolled into a ball, then an oval and flattened on one end. When you press down on the part you want to flatten, you will be forcing the paste that was there to go somewhere else, namely towards the front of the boot. This will give you that nice rounded toe. Roll a small piece of black paste into a ball and then into a cylinder. Squeeze it down just a bit between your fingers. This will be the top of the boot. Glue it in place with the water pen. Make the boots and let them dry.



To make the pants you will need between 1/8 and 1/4 of a cup of red paste. I generally use Super Red by Americolor™ but even with that sometimes I find that I need to add enough color that it thins the paste so I also usually add some CMC to help the paste set up (about a teaspoon of CMC to a pound of gumpaste or fondant). Roll the paste into a ball, then into a cylinder. Make a vertical cut in the center of the cylinder that reaches 3/4 of the way from the bottom to the top. These are now pant legs. You can add some stitching lines using your tracing wheel if you would like. I usually add knees on the pants, but I don't make them as defined as

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I would if it were just a naked leg. These knees are in pants so you want to hint at the knee without making it too pronounced. You can make some cut marks on the sides of the knees if you wish to help add some detail. Use your ball tool to make hollows at the bottom of the pant legs where they will fit down over the boots. I will stick either Saifun noodles or toothpicks up the pant legs just to give the figure some added stability while it dries. Moisten the hollows at

the bottom of the pant legs and set them down over the boots. Let dry overnight.

Make the arms the same way you did for the front legs of the reindeer using about half a grape's worth of red paste for each arm. Remember to make a right arm and a left arm. Use the small end of the ball tool to hollow out the end of the sleeve where the hand will go. Lay them in the position in which you want them to dry and let them be.

The hands are made from pieces of paste about the size of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a grape. Roll it into a ball and then into a teardrop. Flatten the large end of the teardrop. This will be the hand. The narrow end of the teardrop will be the wrist. Use your X-ACTO® knife to cut a piece out of the side of the hand where the thumb stops. Cut down just a little bit to separate the thumb from the rest of the hand so that it could move freely, but do not cut it off of the hand. Look at your hand. Make it look like that. Then make three more cuts for the fingers. Use your fingers to round and define each digit. The rounded end of a flat toothpick makes great fingernails. Press it down just a little and then back into the finger. This gives the look of a nail and a cuticle. Use your X-ACTO® knife to make marks across the back of the fingers for knuckles. To help the thumb take on the proper shape, hold it between your thumb and index finger and pull your index finger back towards your hand while holding your thumb still. This will draw the paste along your thumb and lengthen and curl the thumb of your molded hand. Give it a thumbnail just like you did for fingernails. Now here comes the tricky part.....make the opposite hand. You

will want one hand with the fingers curled to hold the harness. You will want the other hand to have the index finger pointing straight and the other three fingers curled. The thumb on that hand can be curled down holding the other three fingers in place. Point emphatically at something. Look at your hand. Make Santa's hand do that. Prop the hands in the way you want them to dry and let them harden up.

For the the head you will need a piece of paste about the size of two or three grapes. Roll it into a ball and then into an egg shape. The wider end will be the forehead and eyes, the smaller section will be the chin. Use your fingers to make a neck by pulling down a little bit of paste from the back of the head.

Cut a piece of 22 gauge wire about 3" long and make a crook in one end using your needle nosed pliers. Insert the end with the crook on it into the neck. Use your ball tool to make indentations for the eyes. Press in and lift up slightly to form the brow ridge. Roll a very small piece of paste into a ball and into an oval. Glue in place for the nose. Roll two very small balls of white paste and glue in place for the eyeballs. Roll two very tiny balls of black paste and glue in place for the pupils. Press them onto the eyeballs and flatten them just slightly. Roll two small balls of white paste into comma shapes for the eyebrows. Glue them in place over the eyes. Make one eyebrow raised and the other eyebrow normal so that Santa will have that cranky look. Use your X-ACTO® knife to make creases at he corner of the eyes. Poke the wire into a piece of Styrofoam™ and let the head dry.

Roll about $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of red paste into a ball and then into a pear. The small end will be the shoulder area and the larger end will make Santa's tummy. Glue in place on top of the hips and legs. Use your





ball tool to make indentations at the shoulder, pressing in and lifting up. Attach the head and neck to the body by poking the wire down into the body and gluing in place with the water pen.

Cover the head with a piece of white paste for hair. Use your dog bone tool to make marks for hair. Most of it will not show so you only have to worry about the edges of the hair. Roll out a piece of white paste fairly thinly and cut out the shape of a beard from it. Glue that to the chin. Now roll pieces of white paste into snakes, curl them and glue them to the beard. Extend the curls up onto the face and head. Roll two comma shapes for the mustache and glue in place under the nose.

Make the white trim for the suit and glue in place. Make Santa's hat from a cone of red paste, add the white trim and glue to the head.

Glue the arms in place, propping them until dry. Make the harness from some pieces of brown paste and drape over the hand and arm he is not pointing with.



I made the large tree ahead of time from pieces of green paste that had been rolled into a ball and then flattened into a pancake and formed into irregular shapes. Dry them over bits of tissue. To assemble the tree, roll balls of green paste and place them between the pieces. For the smaller trees do the same thing, stacking the pancakes. Place some of the pancake stacks on bamboo skewers to give them different heights.

Put all the elements in place on your scene and sift powdered sugar over the top until you are happy with it. If you would like, sprinkle the whole thing with edible glitter.

I am always happy to answer questions and love to see pictures of your work. You can contact me at frotusbush@gmail.com 🍷

