

The information in this handout builds on the information found in the Wilton "Decorating Cakes" Book (pink cake on cover, found at Michaels). My most highly recommended book for beginners is Toba Garret's "The Well Decorated Cake" (bookstores). This is meant to give you a record of all the "extra" information I cover (and can't find time to cover!) in class. I have taken this extra step so that you will not have to occupy yourselves with taking a lot of notes during our Lessons. You will need your hands for other business – mainly practicing the art of decorating cakes! Enjoy!

Decorator Buttercream icing is used for this class because it holds its consistency for several hours and can be refrigerated for up to two weeks in an airtight container. It is also easy to alter the stiffness of the icing for several kinds of decorating, and it is a pure white icing, which means that when you add icing color to it the color you see is roughly the color you will get. There are a wide variety of other types of icings you will want to try – several recipes are included in "Decorating Cakes", which we will be using as our handbook for this class.

Laurie's Student Decorator Icing

Notes: Great for roses and very white cake icing. Very resistant to warm weather. Okay at room temp for 3 days, fridge for 4 weeks, freezer for months.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups/12 oz. solid white vegetable shortening* **Hi-ratio shortening, found in cake stores, is the only one with the right consistency since they changed all the shortening to include zero trans-fats. When you can't buy hi-ratio,** Crisco is best (or half Crisco half hi-ratio), because it is thick and opaque (white) and will give you a bright white, firm icing. Always keep it in the cupboard, at room temperature. When recipes call for butter use room temperature butter (cold butter will form lumps). If you want to use a kitchen scale, like I usually do, a cup of Crisco = 8oz., 2 cups = 16 oz. or 1 pound. (This means you get three batches out of one large can of Crisco) You may experiment with 1/2 butter or margarine, 1/2 Crisco – or all butter/margarine (when the weather is cool).

1 stick (4 oz.) margarine, slightly softened. The addition of margarine helps solve some of the troubles associated with trans-fat-free Crisco, but adds a little color to the icing. When pure white buttercream is necessary you can use hi-ratio shortening or use a recipe meant to adapt to the new Crisco (LOTS of [adjusted](#) recipes at www.wilton.com)

***1 teaspoon clear vanilla flavor, 1/2 teaspoon clear butter flavor** *OR, use 1 tsp of vanilla, almond OR butter flavor) I use both to give the icing a sweet, rich, buttery flavor – quite necessary when your "buttercream" contains no butter!

4 to 6 Tablespoons milk (give or take) **Note:** this recipe makes an *extremely* stiff icing – this is to help you err on the side of caution. It's much easier to add a little extra liquid than it is to add a bunch of sugar. Plan on adding some extra liquid to achieve the right "stiff" icing for you. I.E. if you can roll it into a ball with your hands it is far too stiff.

2 pounds pure cane confectioner's sugar (powdered sugar) Sugar substitutes will not work for this icing. The best sugar is the kind in the plastic bags – not only does it not require pre-sifting to get the lumps out, but it also comes in 2 lb bags perfect for a batch. Measure carefully to achieve proper consistency. At home I use a scale. **Plus extra sugar, just in case.**

2 Tablespoons Meringue Powder (optional) **Used only in warm weather.** In this recipe it is used to lend strength and stability to the icing, and to prevent humidity from breaking down your decorations. **1 T cornstarch** may be substituted for Wilton meringue powder (as it is 50% cornstarch anyway).

A pinch of salt (optional) I use popcorn salt, because of its fine texture. I add this to all buttercream icings to enhance the buttery flavor.

Instructions:

Blend the butter, shortening and flavorings together very well. Next, add 1 to 2 cups of the sugar plus half of the liquid and beat well again until very smooth. Add the rest of the sugar and the rest of the liquid (you may do this a little at a time) and beat until combined. Too much beating will make the icing break down. Use slow speeds. Add the meringue powder / [cornstarch](#) (optional) in the last batch of sugar. **IMPORTANT:** If your icing is way too stiff (i.e. the mixer makes a lot of noise), your icing needs to have a little extra liquid added to it. Add a 1/2 teaspoon of milk at a time until icing is more workable.

Scoop mixture into a Ziploc bag and freeze for up to 3 months or refrigerate for up to two weeks. Just be sure to let the icing thaw until it is at room temperature before attempting to decorate with it. In bowls, cover with a damp paper towel when not in use.

Converting icing from stiff to medium to thin consistency is only a matter of adding more of the liquid used in the recipe. Remember: if you need to make an icing stiffer you can usually just add a little more sugar.

Stiff consistency = forms smooth, stiff peaks that hold their shape at an angle – used mainly for roses and other stand-up flowers.

Medium consistency = 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of milk/water per cup of stiff icing – used for piping smooth decorations that hold their shape (borders, leaves, stars)

Somewhere between Medium and Thin can be used for icing cake.

Thin consistency = 1 teaspoon piping gel + ½ to 1 teaspoon milk/water per cup stiff icing - used for vines and writing and other decorations that will lay on cake surface.

Note: best and easiest thin/piping icing is the stuff from a can at the grocery store (really). Stir well and add color before using. Use a parchment bag with a very small tip to pipe intricate designs. Keep remainder in refrigerator for up to 8 weeks or freeze for later use.

Medium icing is the best for icing cakes because it doesn't pull crumbs off as you glide the spatula over it, but neither does it slide down the side.

When decorating an 8" round cake you will need a double batch of icing to ice and decorate: 3 cups medium consistency to ice, 1 cup stiff for roses and ½ cup thin for vines, writing and leaves. Whatever's left after icing the cake becomes the medium we use for shells, stars and other medium decorations.

Featherweight Bags -- Best "grip" – much easier to control and squeeze with one hand. Reusable . Dishwasher safe! Rinse well, then turn inside out and spread across prongs on top rack! To clean, *separate coupler* and wash in hot soapy water. May be cut to accommodate any size coupler or tip

Disposable Bags may be washed and reused. If they get a little slippery in your hands place the entire decorating bag into a featherweight bag – the outside bag won't get dirty and it'll be much easier to hold. Also, this keeps warm hands from melting icing. Melt candy melts/chocolate chips in these bags in microwave and use for writing and other decorating. Allow chocolate to cool in bag, store in a tightly closed container, and you can re-melt in the same bag next time. Great for bag-stripping effects (as you'll learn later in this Course) because you can see the stripe!

Couplers Allow frequent changes of tips without refilling bags. Also dishwasher safe.

Tips: Don't Fill any bag more than about ½ full – or you'll squeeze icing out the top of the bag while decorating!

If you have trouble holding the bag with one hand and filling it with the other you can always use a tall cup to hold the bag while you fill it.

Parchment Triangles -- disposable and convenient. Use for very small amounts of icing. Can be used with or without a coupler. Triangles can be cut in half to make smaller bags, great for melted chocolate for garnishing cakes, cookies. Great for brush striping. Parchment itself can be used flat for several applications: use for smoothing icing on a cake, use with piping gel for a pattern transfer, use squares of parchment for making roses, pipe directly onto this totally non-stick surface to make air-dried, color flow or royal icing decorations (the latter two are covered in Advanced Cake Decorating). You can bake cookies on it and they will never stick. Even better you can remove the entire sheet – cookies and all – to a cooling rack without trying to remove the cookies with a spatula. Parchment can also be used to cover the bottom of a cake pan, making removal from the pan a snap!

Tip: Make a "W" with the points instead of just matching them perfectly together. This will enforce the seam and help maintain the cone shape. Tear a "dog ear" to keep it together while you fill it with icing.

Baking / Cake pans help bake evenly and release cakes very well. 3" deep "Preferred Decorator" pans are great because you get a cake that's almost twice as tall without having to mix and bake another layer. Simply torte the cake and fill it twice to get a nice, tall cake.

If you're unsure how much batter you will need to fill a pan, use this trick: Fill the pan with water (2/3 full for 2" deep, 1/2 full for 3" deep) and measure. Measure your mix accordingly. Most boxed mixes yield 3 to 3 1/2 cups – SuperMoist is my favorite because it yields about 4 cups.

Be sure to use shortening to grease every bit of the interior of the pan. For "flat-bottomed" pans take out extra insurance by adding a layer of parchment or waxed paper to the bottom. Grease the parchment as well. Flour the greased pans very well and tap out the excess. Touch up any shiny spots that remain with grease and flour. To skip the flouring use homemade pan grease for a smooth, crumb-free release every time. Especially great for shaped pans.

Fill 2" deep pans **2/3 full**, fill 3" deep pans only **½ full**, and for shaped or stand-up pans follow the directions closely and use a denser cake recipe, such as pound cake. It's okay for the cake to rise way up out of the pan. If you're worried, use a layer of foil underneath to catch any drips. Note: Pans over 14" may require baking at a lower temperature to be able to bake evenly all the way through. One way of getting cakes to rise without crowning is to use Bake-Easy Strips or dampened dishtowels (or cut strips of towels). You moisten them and secure them around the outside of the pan. The moisture helps regulate the heat from your oven so the cake rises evenly, straight up in the pan. Again, use foil underneath to catch drips. Give cakes space to bake. If you're putting two on a rack make sure they are not touching each other or the sides of the oven. If you're cooking on top and bottom racks be sure to rotate cakes once they're "set" and expect them to look pretty terrible on the top (which is fine). Check for doneness with a toothpick inserted in the middle (if it comes out wet it's not ready – cook longer at same temp or reduce heat). Or, you may touch the cake top carefully. It will feel springy when done and it will begin to pull away from the sides of the pan. Cool in pan on wire rack for about 20 minutes, or until the sides of the pan are no longer too hot to touch. Turn the cake out by placing a cardboard circle on top and flipping it over. Remove the pan (this is super-easy if you've used parchment to line the bottom!) Then place a paper towel on top, then a cooling rack, and flip it back. Cool completely before handling!

Torting Cakes must be entirely cool. You may even want to freeze your cake for 20 minutes to be able to make it stronger before you torte it. Just remember to let it come to room temperature before icing it or your icing will "sweat" moisture.

Use **cake leveler** or bread knife to slice the "crown" or round part off the top of the cake. This will become the bottom, which sits on the cardboard circle or plate.

Use a **cardboard circle** or **cake board/circle** as a platform with which to move your cake around. Use a circle the same size as your cake. If I'm decorating directly on the plate the cake will rest on I first put down a grid of waxed paper strips to keep the plate clean until I'm done frosting the cake. Use a bit of icing to secure the cake to the cardboard or plate to prevent it from shifting. Between the cake board and the plate (which is usually 1" to 2" larger than the cake/board to allow for a place to pipe a bottom border) use wet/sticky fondant, carpet foam or double sided foam tape so the cake doesn't slide off the plate in transit.

Revolving Cake Stand/ Turntable it's quite difficult to ice a round cake smoothly without one of these. They're well worth the cost, but you can make do with a spice rack or lazy susan if you have one.

The **cake leveler** is helpful and inexpensive. Or, try "marking" the cake with your knife all around about ½" deep. Then take a length of fishing line, fit it into the groove, tie it in a half knot in front and pull. Mark cake with a line of frosting so you know how the layers are to fit together after filling.

Filling Create a thin "dam" of icing around the outside edge of cake. Buttercream icing with fresh fruit, preserves or cocoa blended in makes a great filling that can be held at room temperature. Do not use a large amount of filling, or it will push the "dam" of icing out of its way and sneak into your icing. Use a spare cake circle wrapped with Press N Seal, contact paper or a Ziploc bag to move the layer into place on the filled layer. Never pick cake layers up with your hands – they'll crack.

Icing the Cake The 16" featherweight bag and #789 cake icer tip make short work of icing a cake. A large offset spatula is so much easier to work with to get a nice, flat top and sides, though you can get by with a smaller spatula.

If you're using a spatula only you may want to use a layer of thin consistency icing to cover your cake with a "crumb coat" before doing the official icing. This layer seals in all those pesky crumbs and gives the next layer of icing something to adhere to. This method is used with wrapped cakes (Intermediate Decorating) to give rolled icing something to adhere to and help smooth the shape of the cake. If your cake is imperfect (a chunk missing from the side, or a top which isn't level), just use more icing to fix the appearance of your cake. No one will complain about having extra icing on their slice. Believe it or not, I use an average of 1 ½ to 2 pounds of icing for an 8 inch cake.

Make the sides of the cake nice and thick. You can always take icing off with your spatula.

Build the sides up nice and high so that you can maintain a nice "corner" from the top to the sides. I like to use a **bench scraper** to scrape the icing from the sides at a nice right angle, or a **cake comb** to create a ridged pattern in the side which looks very professional.

To use the parchment smoothing method, remember to let the icing form a "crust" for about 20 minutes first. Lay parchment or paper towel on the icing and smooth with a **fondant smoother** to "iron out" the imperfections. Easiest method: Use a high-density foam paint roller (white rollers seen in hardware stores for about \$3) to "drive" over the icing.

Icing consistency

Stiff icing should not be so thick that you cannot squeeze it through a bag with a tip. To check for the right consistency use your spatula: Stir the icing and then pull the spatula out of the bowl. Do you see stiff "peaks" form? Are they a little bit jagged? Can they hold up when you tip the spatula at an angle? This is great for piping roses.

Medium icing is used for stars and borders, so it needs to hold its shape when piped, but it should be easy to squeeze from the bag. Pull the spatula out of the bowl again. Do you see smooth triangular "peaks" form? This is the thickest consistency you'll use for icing a cake. Slightly thinner icing is great, too.

Thin icing is used for lines, strings, and writing. See notes in recipe above. It should form smooth peaks that "flop" over at the tips, but it should still have a little body to it. Practice writing on waxed paper to see if you like it before writing on your cake.

Correct Bag Position

It should only take ONE TWIST to hold the bag and squeeze. The more twists at the top the harder your thumb has to work to keep the twist in place – and the harder your thumb has to work the more tired your hand will be, and thus your decorating will become shaky. My method: Flatten the top of the bag. Pinch the bag in the joint of your thumb and first finger, using the side of your thumb to keep it flat. Position the bag so the top of the icing is in the palm of your hand. Twist bag once using your other hand. Adjust the position of the tip itself by twisting it. Now squeeze – if it's easy to squeeze you're doing it right. When it becomes difficult it is time to re-adjust the bag. Now your other hand is free to rest the bag on or help guide your movements.

Refer to these diagrams to get the hang of positioning your icing bag.

Place clock flat on table. This is meant to be the round, flat top of your cake.

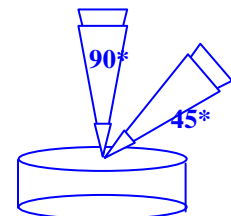
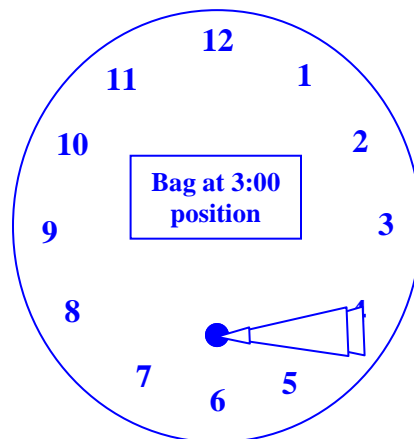
Remember, the *tip* is always pointing to the center of the clock.

The *back*, or open end of the bag, is held according to the appropriate number position.

The *angle* refers to the position of the back of the bag in relation to the cake.

A 90-degree angle is a bag pointing straight up and down at the center of the clock (think of "dripping" the icing from the tip, like water drops from a faucet).

A 45-degree angle is a bag held at a sideways angle (think of pulling the icing along in a line).



Bags at angle to work surface

Decorating Tips Tips are nickel plated to prevent rust. Do not soak them in bleach, however. They are dishwasher safe, as are the couplers. There are several sizes within each type, with the highest number having the larger opening. Each tip can produce multiple designs.

Decorating food colors (Gel Paste Colors) Colors are concentrated to provide much more intense and various colors than liquid colors. Won't thin your icing. Available in WHITE! You can brighten your white icing or lighten a color to a pastel shade. If you're going for a dark color try mixing some cocoa powder into the icing first to make it darker – and tastier! To make really red icing you need really red color – “Red Red” or “Super Red” only – others are pink or magenta. Add a lot of pink first, then a smaller amount of red is needed – this reduces the risk of bitter flavor. If your icing colors should ever dry out, just use a little **glycerin** to bring them back to life – never add water! Very Important: When tinting icings like buttercream always remember that the color will be a shade or two darker after the icing dries. If you want the cake or decorations to be exactly the same color on each cake, always tint more icing than you think you will need. It's very difficult to match a shade exactly a second time. If you end up with more icing you can always freeze the extra buttercream for later use, or add cocoa powder and use it as a filling. Also, icing colors like red, pink or purple will fade if left in sunlight – even over the course of a few hours. Keep this in mind if you are making a very special cake. Consider using a royal icing for your decorations instead (and perhaps test them in the sunlight for a few hours a week ahead of time!). No-fade pink and no-fade purple color are now available – look for them online (Chefmaster “purple” and “ribbon pink”)

Piping Gel – ideal for adding to icing to make a great writing consistency – can also be tinted any color to make a sparkly gel for writing, balloons, etc. Also great for use as a pattern transfer medium. This is used in small amounts in all three Courses.

Star Tip Decorating This is the simplest way to get a uniform, professional look on a cake – and it's one of the most fun!

Try using different tips – the “grass” tip, or a round tip can bring new dimensions to your cake! Black tube icing can be used for the outline – this defines each area and gives you a “paint by numbers” canvas to work with. Do not be afraid of making mistakes. It is very simple to scrape the icing away and begin again. Think of the last cake you bought for a party. Was it perfect? Did anyone notice or call attention to the imperfections? Use cookie cutters to provide a perfect outline for star fill-ins (or piping gel!)

Common problems and corrections:

- tip touching the surface of the cake; begin your star at the surface, not poking into the surface
- lifting bag before stopping pressure; practice squeeze, stop, lift, position
- holding bag at improper angle; when piping stars the bag should be straight up and down. Use your other hand to guide the tip's position.

Pressure control is important: practice using a medium amount of pressure. If your design requires a lot of firm pressure it may be simpler to switch to a larger size tip (for example: if you want a thick line you may want to use a larger round tip). Sometimes you need to vary your amount of pressure to create a particular shape: Practice hearts and leaves to learn better pressure control.

Arm movement is also important: If you have trouble controlling the movements of your arms you can try letting the bag/tip do more of the work by working your wrist (try zigzags this way to see which method you prefer). Or try resting your elbow on the table or a box to get better control over what you are doing.

Round Tip Decorating To practice writing, consider adding **piping gel** to your icing to give it some “stretch”. Or, use plain, tinted piping gel to see if you like the sparkly, translucent look.

Use a toothpick to draw your lettering on your cake, then trace over it with your icing. Or, try **message press sets**, **scroll press sets**, or **cookie cutters** to press an outline for your design.

Common problems and corrections when writing:

- Not touching the surface will result in misshapen letters; this refers to icing touching the surface, not the tip.
- Dragging the tip along the surface will result in crooked lines; be sure to touch the surface with icing as you begin, then lift the tip and let the icing drop to the surface. Stop pressure and touch the surface to end.
- If a mistake is made you may remove the lettering with a small spatula, paintbrush or Q-tip and begin again
- Practice is the key: write the words on parchment paper before writing on the cake – you can practice until you get the feel of it – and you can always scrape the practice icing back into the bag.
- For larger messages, write message on cake BEFORE positioning roses, balloons, etc.

If you get a “point” on your writing, or your dots, you can use a finger dipped in cornstarch or a damp finger to push the points down before the icing sets.

The Rose – Part 1 You may use a Hershey's Kiss candy as your rose base – just cover the tip well so the color of the candy doesn't show in the center of your rose. Or, freeze your bases before building petals. If you have trouble taking the square of waxed paper off with the cone still attached you may try piping the cones directly onto squares of waxed paper on your tabletop. Let them dry awhile then use them to make your rose. Buttercream roses can be air-dried (be careful to check them for mildew) or frozen (freeze in single layers) to be used later *if using all-shortening icing*.

Common problems and corrections:

- If your cone is too tall, too skinny or tilted it will make your rose a little more difficult to construct. Practice proper bag pressure and keep bag end pointed straight up.
- Proper height of cone should be 1 ½ times the opening of the rose tip you are using.

- Bottom of the base should be the diameter of a nickel.
- The base must be large and sturdy enough to support the petals.

Flower lifting scissors can be used to “scoop” the rose off the flower nail and position directly on your cake. Use a small spatula to help remove the rose from the scissors.

Icing Effects I use **color mist** spray to create “clouds” by tearing a paper towel into a rough cloud shape, holding it to the side or top of the cake, then spraying an even mist of color against the top of the paper. To create patterns you can cut shapes out or spray over a **grease-proof doily** to get a neat lacey effect. Buttercream can also be “embossed” with **embossing tools, cookie cutters**, paper towels or lace fabric to print it with a nice texture. Be sure to dust fabric or lace with cornstarch or powdered sugar first, to prevent sticking.

The Rose – Part 2 The key to making roses is being able to operate your little “turntable” (flower nail) with one hand and pipe your icing with the other. Begin with the icing touching your “cone” and “anchor” your icing. Continue to squeeze the icing bag – get a feel for how the icing will actually “push” your flower nail to spin in the correct direction. Follow through with this action by pushing your thumb against the flower nail, toward the tip of your finger.

Practice ending pressure and drawing your tip toward you and down to “pull” the edge of the petal into position.

Notice the position you must hold the bag in to keep your first petal very close to the tip, creating a “bud” in the center of your rose.

Get a feel for how the next row of petals will be applied – the tip will be at 12:00 to the “bud” you’ve just created. Feel the different ways your wrist needs to hold the bag in order to pull the petals into position.

Common Problems and Corrections:

- Beginning with the tip too low on the base; correct this by matching the top of your tip with the tip of the “cone”/base.
- Moving bag around the base instead of turning the nail; remember to turn the flower nail and keep your icing bag in one place. This may seem difficult at first, but, again, practice is the key. You will be able to make a great-looking rose, believe me!
- Moving tip back down the mound before the ribbon of icing has crossed over itself: Remember that most of the time you are squeezing icing out and pulling it into position, rather than pushing it where you want it to go.
- Turning the nail in the wrong direction: you will get a feel for which direction is correct, but the simplest reminder is to pass your thumb from the inside of your finger to the tip. This will rotate the “turntable” in a counter-clockwise direction.

The Shell These are the most versatile and commonly used border decorations. Making these will give you a feel for pressure control, building icing up and releasing the bag as you pull the icing into a point.

Common Problems and Corrections:

- Lifting the bag results in humps; be sure to let the tip and pressure control do the work for you. Build up, move toward yourself and release pressure. Note: it is much easier to work from the side of your cake so that you are pulling the bottom of the shell toward you, rather than working from side to side.
- Skinny-looking shells: let the icing fan out for a full, rounded shape. Be sure to start your next shell on the tail of the last so that they overlap.
- Tails don’t point, or icing is hard to pipe: your icing may be too stiff. Simply squeeze out your bag, mix in a little liquid, and fill again.

Figure Piping The main idea here is to produce an icing buildup – this is achieved by keeping your decorating inside the icing you are building. Think of blowing up a balloon with a straw. Stop pressure when you have the size you want – then lift the tip just to the surface and slide to the right to “cut” the icing. To correct “points” that will form on your icing dots, simply let the icing dry or “crust” for a few minutes and return with a finger dipped in **cornstarch** or sugar to flatten them down -- (a damp, but not wet, **paintbrush** works as well).

It is important to remember that the images in these books have been created by professionals and they have done this thousands upon thousands of times. If your first attempts do not look this uniform, do not despair. Just keep practicing until you’ve got it!

Bag Striping Add a line of **icing color** directly to the inside of your bag with a **paintbrush** (**disposable bags** are great because you can see your line!) or use your small **offset** spatula to apply a ribbon of icing to the side of your bag before filling it.

The Rose – Part 3 Common Problems and Corrections:

- Lifting the tip away from the mound keeps icing from attaching and leaves holes. Remember to keep the base of your icing tip (the wide part) right next to the mound as you pipe the icing.
- Remember to keep the flower nail level like a turntable and tilt your tip and bag to produce petals that spread out away from the mound.
- Try not to move the tip around the mound; instead, turn the flower nail. This can be difficult at first, but will become easy with practice.
- Let the icing and your tip work with your pressure to create your petals.
- You can build a taller, arch-shaped petal by raising the tip up and down as the nail is turned; this too will become easier with practice.
- Keep your petals small, especially near the top of the rose. Additional petals may always be added.

Key Points:

- All Rows: The icing consistency must be stiff, but not so stiff that the petals tear. If you have this problem be sure to add some piping gel to your icing (about 1 tsp per cup) to allow some “stretch” in the icing. Also, mix your icing with your spatula, spreading and scraping it against the side of your bowl, working all of the air bubbles out. This will also create a nice, smooth petal.
- Top Row: These three petals should overlap each other slightly. All petals should be about the same length (about ½” long) Top of petals on this row should be about the same height or slightly higher than the rose center.
- Middle Row: Pipe this row of petals slightly lower on the base than the previous row. These five petal edges are more open than the top row. All petals in this row should be the same length (about ½” long)
- Bottom Row: Pipe this row of petals slightly lower on the base than the previous row. These seven petals are even more open than those in the middle row. All petals in this row should be the same length (about ½” long)

Sweet Pea Common Problems and Corrections:

- Not lifting tip as you pipe petal; not lowering tip as you complete petal. This is a very similar move to the shell border. Practice position, squeeze and lift, lower and stop and pull to a point.
- Squeezing too long will make a very tall or very wide petal. Use medium pressure here – if a larger petal is desired, switch to a larger size tip.
- Be sure to join all three petals at the base.
- When creating the calyx, be sure to insert the tip into the base of the flower and build up icing to create a calyx that is wide at the base of the petals and tapers to a point.

The Bow Common Problems and Corrections:

- Remember to keep the wide end of the tip lightly touching the surface; do not lift the tip.
- Keep it slow so you can regulate the movement of the icing and your pressure.
- Use your entire arm to create your curves.
- You may be able to have better control if you raise your cake to your eye level. You can use a large box as a stand for your turntable.

Leaves Add ½ tsp Piping Gel to 1 cup of icing for stems and leaves; add liquid to form medium-thin consistency. Check tip to be sure prongs are open – sometimes leaf tips come from the factory all closed up. Vary pressure to make different sizes of each type of leaf.

Common Problems and Corrections:

- If your leaves fall over: be sure your base is the right size to support the size of your leaf
- Stopping pressure abruptly will cause the end of your leaf to break off; Practice tapering icing to a point. Points may be “pinched” together with fingers after they’ve dried a little. Check your icing consistency as well – it may be too stiff.
- Be sure your leaf tip’s opening is clear. If it becomes blocked, use a toothpick to clear the way or remove tip and rinse.

Vines Common Problems & Corrections:

- Stems should have a graceful curve; straight stems look unnatural
- When creating stems be sure to leave space for a message, or a border (if desired)
- Move bag slowly and maintain even pressure to ensure your lines are not broken. If you do break a line you can try joining the two halves together by using a toothpick; or perhaps use a small leaf to cover your mistake.
- When adding secondary vines be sure to insert tip into main stem and pull secondary vines out and away.
- Remember that laying down vines or stems is a little like laying down strands of yarn – if your stems overlap one will appear to be on top of another. This can create a little hill where the stems overlap. To make a smoother focal point pay close attention to where the lines meet – or be sure that they all intersect where a detail, such as a bow, will be added.



I thank you so much for taking my classes!

If there is anything I can ever do to help you out, or if you'd just like to keep in touch, please feel free to email me or call me anytime. I have formed a Cake Decorating Club and Yahoo Group for cake decorators, called *Sweet Things of Silicon Valley* for my students and other enthusiasts in our area. If you'd like to join, please be sure to send me an email at laurie_clarke@yahoo.com, or go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/sweetthingssv/>. I will also add your email to my student newsletter – opt out at any time by following the instructions in the emails.

I hope you've enjoyed this class and I hope to see you in my future classes. If there is another technique you would like to learn, please let me know. Candy making, cookie decorating – the sky is the limit! I am always interested in teaching new things to new people.

Please be sure to let your friends and family know about this class.

I sure hope to see you again soon!

Sincerely,

Laurie Clarke

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