



## Decorating Cookies: Tips & Tricks

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- Shortbread cookies are tasty, but sometimes causes oil spots in royal icing. I like this best for fondant. It's also a little crumbly for decorated, bagged cookies with pointy edges. You can use it with royal icing as long as it's thicker than an 8 count, but you may want to test one and let it sit for 6 hours first.
- Cookies with royal icing can be very sweet. Start with a less-sweet cookie (such as Country Kitchen's recipe) and consider adding a tart or buttery flavoring to your icing.
- Royal icing dries very quickly – keep bags and bowls covered with damp towels when not in use.
- Royal icing with dried egg whites can be left on the counter for a day or so or refrigerated for a week; re-beat to re-use.
- Royal icing flowers can be kept for years in a dark, dry place.
- Cookies with royal icing can be tasty for two weeks when sealed well. Marshmallow Fondant cookies may develop mold after a few days – refrigerate in an airtight container. Not everyone considers that fresh ingredients can spoil – remind your recipients that these are not made with preservatives and are not meant to be held onto for weeks before consuming.
- Ideally, cookies should be rolled on parchment paper, transferred to a cookie sheet THEN have shapes cut out. Pull away excess dough. If you want perfectly straight cookies (no puffing) CHILL OR FREEZE on sheets before baking!! Preheat the oven, pop in the cookie sheet, and watch until the edges are just barely golden. Pull parchment off onto wire racks to cool.
- Typically, iced cookies are created with a border (dam) that is piped, dried, then filled-in with softer icing. This requires two steps/drying times and a third for adding details like eyes. To save time you can “dip” the cookie in thin icing or spread a medium-thin icing all over the cookie and outline on top of this icing.
- Glazes and royal need no outlining. Works really well in a squeeze bottle (ketchup bottle, small or large Wilton bottles). Details can be piped into the icing while wet (little squeeze bottle or piping bag) or ONTO the icing after light crust has formed (10 count is best for this -- add slightly more sugar and mix in well, move to piping bag with removable tip). To be certain you don't have any clogs in your tips you can A) Squeeze the icing through a clean nylon stocking before loading bottles or B) take a small piece of nylon and attach it before the tip and coupler ring. When you add the tip and tighten the coupler ring it stretches the nylon tight and makes a barrier that lumps cannot get through. MAY cause some air in icing -- test first : )
- There are different consistencies of icing; the most accurate description for these are measured in “counts”. An 8-count means you stir the icing and pick it up with a spoon. Let it smooth out then drizzle some icing from the spoon. Count how many seconds it takes for the icing to be perfectly smooth again... 1... 2.... 8 is perfect for cookies because it spreads smoothly but won't flow over the edge. 10 is perfect for decorating because it's smooth and fluid but doesn't lose its shape when piped. If you're not sure: 8 is "cake batter" consistency and 10 is like "stirred sour cream". For outlining use a 10-count, for flow-in use a 6 or 7-count.
- You can “mix” icing with the same consistencies for creating patterns or dots in one thickness of icing. To create dimensions dry or partially dry (crust) the bottom icing and then pipe fresh icing on top. Example: eyeballs are made by creating a “bubble” of 10-count icing then piping blue or black 10-



count icing into the bubbles before they dry. If the bubble dried first the black/blue pupil would be a dot on top of the bubble, like a snowman.

- It's best to decorate only three cookies at a time when piping into a glaze so it doesn't crust too quickly.
- To "dip" cookies you can make a huge tray of soft/thin icing, dip the cookie's front in, scrape off just the excess on the side, then turn it right side up and "jiggle" it until smooth. Linda Moreno (Spun Sugar, Berkeley) taught this method in a class -- along with the "sour cream" and "cake batter" consistencies. She's also the one who convinced me that it's ok to decorate cookies before the base icing is totally dry. Her cookies take one hour to complete a batch, not two days -- and her cookies stay fresh :) "cake batter" consistency works well -- you can also thin the icing down even farther so that it creates a very thin coating of icing when dried. Dip entire front of cookie and sides and set onto a cooling rack to drip and dry.
- When creating an outline on top of a dipped cookie it's best to work in batches of 6 or more.