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Lesson

1

BASIC PIPING SKILLS

Basic Border and Floral Skills

You will need the following equipment and recipes to complete this lesson:

Swiss Meringue Buttercream Icing (page 262)

Small paper cones

12-in. (30 cm) flex or lightweight pastry bag

coupler

piping tips: #18 star, #2 round, #67 leaf, and #352 leaf

gel food colors

toothpicks

full-sheet parchment paper

masking tape

scissors

rubber spatulas

small offset metal spatulas

small metal bowls

plastic wrap

Equipment

Before practicing cake decorating, it is important to be familiar with the equipment used by cake decorators. The right equipment is crucial to getting the best results; you need the right-size cake pan for baking the cake, the right parchment paper for lining the cake pan, and the right metal tip for each type of piped decoration. Having the right tools at the right time pays off both in the early stages of your training and as you move on to more difficult tasks.

The equipment in Illustrations 1.1–1.4 is grouped into four sections. These items are by no means all of the equipment you could use in professional cake decorating. Many other tools are shown throughout the book.



Illustration 1.1
Cake decorating equipment (counterclockwise from left): 28-gauge white florist wires, 24-gauge green florist wires, pack of white plastic stamens, two sable paintbrushes, cone and serrated tool, dogbone tool, Xacto knife, modeling stick, Chinese paintbrush, quilting tool, angled tweezers, metal ball tool, scissors, small offset metal spatula, large offset metal spatula, yellow cell pad, wire cutters, white plastic smoothers, nonstick rolling pin, ruler, electronic scale, and large plastic disposable pastry bag.



IIllustration 1.2
Cake decorating equipment (counterclockwise from left): PME 0 tip, clay gun with changeable disks, assorted crimpers, florist tape, icing nail, couplers, and assorted metal tips. The items are sitting on a ½-in. (1.3 cm) foil-covered corkboard.



formers, assorted plunger flower set, embossed leaf cutter, white plastic plunger blossom cutter and small leaf cutter, large silicone leaf press, small silicone leaf press, assorted metal cutters (for petit fours or cookies), tiger lily cutter, calla lily cutter, and medium-size metal calyx cutter.



Illustration 1.4
Cake decorating equipment (counterclockwise from left): squeezer bottles, color wheel, assorted ribbons, assorted petal dusts, adding machine paper, and assorted gel food colors. The items are sitting on a ½-in. (1.3 cm) foil-covered corkboard.

Introduction to Basic Border and Floral Skills

Welcome to your first lesson on basic border and floral skills. These essential skills are the bread and butter of our industry. The importance of learning them well can't be stressed enough. The more you practice these skills, the easier it will be for you to learn advanced skills. This book is designed to take you step by step, lesson by lesson, through learning this extraordinary art. Patience and practice must become your way of life if this is your passion.

New Skill: Paper Cones (Cornets)

Quick Prep

Small triangle-cut parchment paper
Small offset metal spatula
Masking tape

Before you can begin piping, you must learn how to create paper cones, or cornets, which are essential to the decorator and pastry chef. These quick piping bags allow you to decorate cakes, plaques, cookies, petit fours, or any other medium that calls for piping. Paper cones provide control when piping; the smaller the bag, the greater the control. These cones are also quick to clean up because you just throw them out when the project is complete. Let's begin.

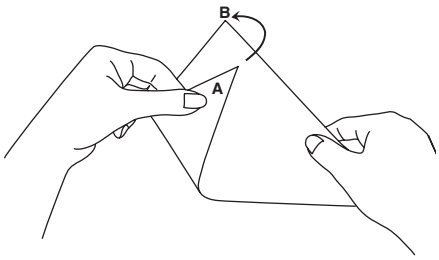
STANDARD CONE

The standard cone is used when a metal tip is to be placed inside the cone. This allows for accuracy and control when piping all sorts of icings. To begin, cut parchment paper into an equilateral triangle—that is, with the three sides of the triangle of equal length. Alternatively, fold a large piece of parchment paper in half lengthwise and then fold one end of the folded paper to the opposite corner, forming a triangle. Crease the paper with an offset metal spatula. Turn the paper over and fold the triangle shape upward to double the number of shapes. Continue turning the paper over and folding until you have used all of the parchment. Carefully cut each triangle with a pair of scissors or use an offset metal spatula. To cut with an offset spatula, place the spatula at the center crease of the folded triangular parchment. The spatula should be angled at 45 degrees with your opposite hand as a weight on the triangles. Move the spatula in a sawing motion—keeping your opposite hand firmly on the triangle until the triangles are separated. A full sheet of parchment paper measures 24 × 16 in. (60 × 40.6 cm). You can get 12 small paper cones from one full sheet of parchment paper. Let's make the cone.

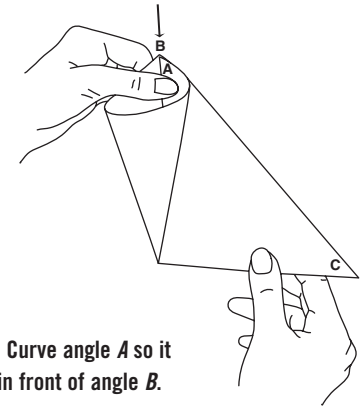
If you are right-handed, mark the letter *A* at the left corner of the triangle, *B* at the top, and *C* on the right side. If you are left-handed, reverse the letters *A* and *C* only. The location of the *B* remains the same.

In your writing hand, hold the triangle-cut paper like a pyramid, supported by four fingers under the paper and your thumb on top. With your other hand, move angle *A* to angle *B* (see Illustration 1.5a). Once *A* reaches *B*, turn angle *A* around so it is in front of angle *B*. The angles should meet at the center without overlapping (see Illustration 1.5b).

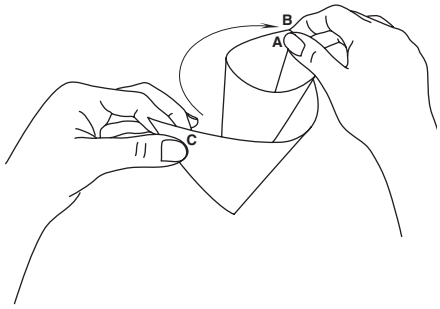
Illustration 1.5
Making a standard paper cone.



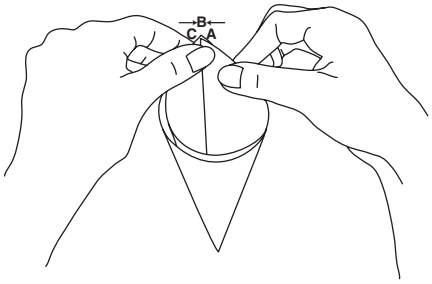
(a) Move angle *A* to angle *B*.



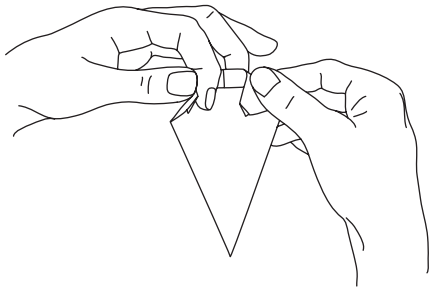
(b) Curve angle *A* so it is in front of angle *B*.



(c) Move angle *C* around and up the back of angle *B*.



(d) Angles *A*, *B*, and *C* should not overlap.



(e) Turning the cone so the seam faces you, fold the flap and seal the edge.

Hold the top of *A* and *B* in your writing hand and use the other hand to move angle *C* around and up the back of angle *B* (see Illustration 1.5c). Adjust the cone so angles *A*, *B*, and *C* are dead center and not overlapping (see Illustration 1.5d). Turn the cone around so the seam faces you. Carefully fold about 1 in. (2.54 cm) of flap inside the cone and seal the edge of the cone with your fingernails (see Illustration 1.5e). The standard cone is complete.

When you are ready to use the cone, cut off about ½ in. (1.3 cm) of the point and drop a standard metal tip inside the cone. Add your piping medium and fold the left side of the cone toward the seam. Overlap the seam with the right side of the cone and then fold the top of the cone once or twice to secure the medium inside.

Decorator's Hint

Secure the seam of the paper cone with masking tape on both the inside and outside seams. Then, fold the top edge about 1 in. (2.54 cm) inside the cone.

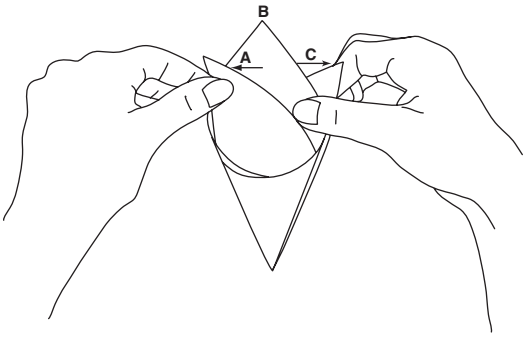
THE TAPERED CONE OR FRENCH CONE

The tapered cone is invaluable to the pastry student or decorator. This cone is tightly wrapped and more pointed and angular, so a metal tip is not required. This allows the decorator to pipe extremely fine lines.

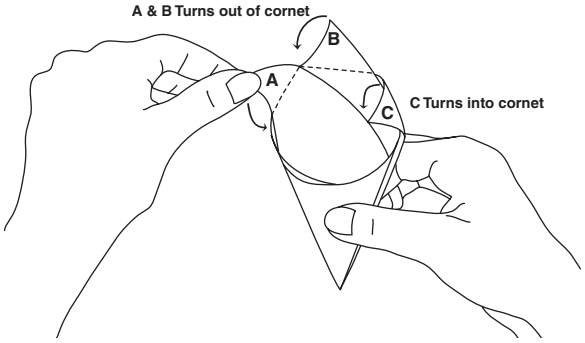
To begin, mark the corners of an equilateral triangle as you did for the standard paper cone. Continue exactly as you did for the standard cone, with *A* on the inside, *B* in the middle, and *C* on the outside (see Illustrations 1.6a and b).

Turn the cone around so the seam faces you. Place your thumbs on the outside of the seam and your middle fingers on the inside seam. Begin to overlap seams *A* and *C* only. As you overlap seams *A* and *C*, pull up on the angles to

Illustration 1.6
Making a French cone.



(a) Overlap angles *A* and *C* until angle *A* locks.



(b) Fold angles *A*, *B*, and *C* to complete the French cone.

shape the point at the bottom of the cone. Angle *B* remains still. Continue to pull up on angles *A* and *C* until angle *A* locks and you can't adjust it any more (see Illustration 1.6a).

Fold angle *A* outside the cone and seal it by pressing the fold with your fingernail. Fold angle *B*, which is on the inside, to the outside and seal with your fingernail. Then fold angle *C*, which is on the outside, to the inside and seal with your fingernail. The cone is complete (see Illustration 1.6b).

When you are ready to use the cone, place your piping medium inside the cone and fold the top to secure it. Cut the tip as small or as large as you wish and begin piping.

Icing Facts

For this lesson, you will prepare Swiss Meringue Buttercream (page 262). This classic icing is rich in texture and taste. It requires a great deal of butter and thus is considered a true buttercream. This icing is perhaps the most frequently used by pastry chefs, with Italian Meringue Buttercream as a close second. The flexibility and stability of both Swiss Meringue and Italian Meringue buttercreams mean you can use them to ice cakes and pipe borders with relative ease. In addition, you can use these icings as the base for other icings, including white and dark chocolate buttercreams, amaretto mocha, and praline mocha, to name a few.

The ingredients of Swiss Meringue Buttercream are butter, granulated sugar, egg whites, and flavoring. This is a cooked icing and must be carefully prepared. The egg whites and sugar are heated to 140°F. Heating them accom-

Special Note

In the commercial cake industry, this icing is rarely used, or it is prepared with a combination of butter and solid vegetable shortening. All-purpose vegetable shortening contains little or no water and leaves an aftertaste on the back of your palate. While this is acceptable in the baking industry, other types of solid vegetable shortenings can be used that do not have an aftertaste. High-ratio shortenings are used in the baking industry to replace butter or margarine. High-ratio shortening is considered an emulsifier and can be substituted for butter in recipes that call for butter or margarine. That is because it contains the same amount of water as butter and margarine. Additionally, it does not leave an aftertaste. You must add water to the regular solid vegetable shortening sold in supermarkets to make it a substitute for butter or margarine. Remember, however, high-ratio shortening is no substitute for actual butter or margarine.

Different types of high-ratio shortenings are covered in Lesson 3 (page 36): Buttercreams made largely with vegetable shortening are generally used in the commercial baking and cake decorating industry. This is discussed further in Lesson 2 (page 26), which introduces Decorator's Buttercream Icing.

plishes two goals. It allows the egg whites and the heat of the stove to dissolve the sugar granules. If they are not dissolved, the buttercream will taste crunchy and look unattractive. The second reason for heating the egg whites and sugar is that you will get more volume when you whip the mixture. The result is light and creamy icing that melts in your mouth. With it, you can ice a cake extremely well, pipe borders, and even write on the cake's top.

Color Facts

When coloring icings, remember that people eat with their eyes as well as their mouths. A soft pastel icing with accents of stronger colors is more eye-appealing than a cake iced entirely in electric blue or Christmas green. When coloring icing, remove a tiny amount of color using a toothpick. Add just a portion of the color on the toothpick to the icing and stir until you begin to see signs of the color. If a deeper shade is desired, add more color to the icing bowl. If you need a lot more color, use a clean toothpick to remove additional color, as fat or oil from the icing can contaminate the food colors. Remember, it is easier to add color than to take it away. If the color is stronger than you want, add uncolored icing to soften the deeper color.

Prepare the icing for this lesson. If working in teams of two, prepare a medium batch. If working alone, prepare half of the small batch. Once the icing is prepared, remove 16 oz (454 g) from the batch. Color it a soft pastel tone if you like. Remove an additional 2 oz (57 g) from the batch and color it moss green or mint green. Place the rest of the icing in a plastic container with a lid or in a zippered bag and refrigerate until the next session.

In the pastry industry, for both baking and cake decorating, professional-strength food colors are used. These colors come in gel, paste, and powder. Gel colors blend easily but may require a little more color. Paste colors take a longer time to blend but require a little less food color. Powder food colors require a lot of color, as they are not as concentrated.

The different forms may yield different results. For example, a truer red is obtained from gel than from paste.

Prepare your pastry bag and load the coupler into the bag. Attach a #18 star tip to the end of the coupler. Place the cap over the tip. Your pastry bag is now ready. Prepare a small paper cone. Cut ½ in. (1.3 mm) from the tip and drop a #2 round metal tip into the bag. Load the cone with ½ oz (14 g) moss green icing and seal the paper cone. Both bags are now ready for this lesson.

Decorator's Hint

If you don't have moss green food color, use leaf green food color with a hint of chocolate brown to achieve a moss green.

Warm-up Exercises

Be sure to relax before you begin. Remember, learning a fascinating art takes a great deal of time and practice.

You will now be introduced to the pastry bag and the art of pressure control piping. You will find that by applying steady pressure, you can pipe amazing designs. Steady pressure improves your results for all piping tasks.

Anyone can squeeze a bag and watch icing squirt out all over the place. However, when you learn to control the squeeze, your icing will flow out of the bag with ease and will hold the shape of the bag's tip.

Next, determine your position in relation to the table or surface you are going to practice on. In a professional environment—bakery, restaurant, hotel, or specialty shop—space is limited, and you will almost certainly have to stand. In a classroom environment, where space permits, it is best to sit while practicing basic skills. Sitting helps you relax and develop control as you learn these crucial first stages of cake decorating. Later, after you have mastered basic skills and techniques, you should practice standing and piping, which is the norm in a busy kitchen.

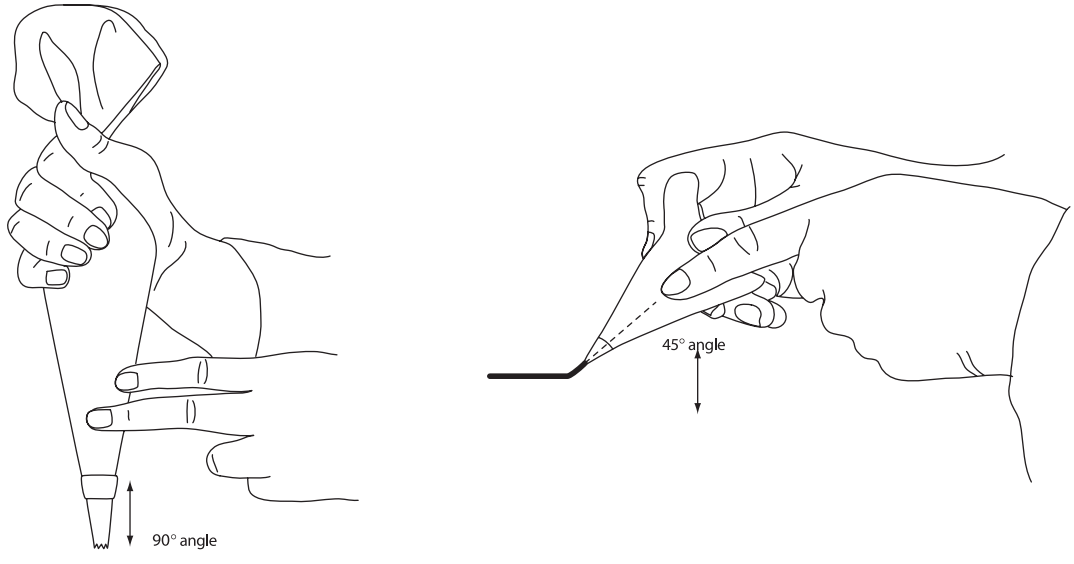
Cake decorating contains many aspects of fine art, and standing is not appropriate for many of the tasks and techniques in this book. A cake decorator

45-degree angle from the forward position. Variations on these two angles are occasionally needed for fullness or shape. These variations are discussed with the associated border piping techniques.

The type of border determines the direction in which to begin. If you are piping shells, ovals, reverse shells, rope, garlands, or any other borders that decorate the top or bottom edge of a cake, then you should start at the 9 o'clock position if you are right-handed and 3 o'clock if you are left-handed. As you begin to pipe, rotate the cake in the opposite direction. That is, if you start at the 9 o'clock position and begin piping counterclockwise, turn the cake clockwise as you make your way around it. You will start and end at the 9 o'clock position. Now, let's begin.

Pick up your pastry bag and position the star tip at a 45-degree angle to the surface. If you're not sure what a 45-degree angle is, place the tip perpendicular to your work surface, with the pastry bag straight up and down and the tip touching the surface. This is a 90-degree angle. A 45-degree angle is half the distance from 90 degrees to the surface. Move your hand and bag toward you, half the distance from 90 degrees. You are now at a 45-degree angle (see Illustration 1.7).

Illustration 1.7



(a) A paper bag at a 90-degree angle. **(b) A paper cone at a 45-degree angle.**

Hold the pastry bag in your writing hand and use your opposite hand for control. This is crucial to good decorating. With one or two fingers of the opposite hand, touch the pastry bag or tip for control. Apply an even amount of pressure and allow some of the icing to expel from the bag. Gently lift the bag about 1 to 2 in. (2.5 cm to 5 cm) as you continue to apply pressure. Allow the icing to flow through the tip to form a line (see Illustration 1.8). Gently pull the bag to-

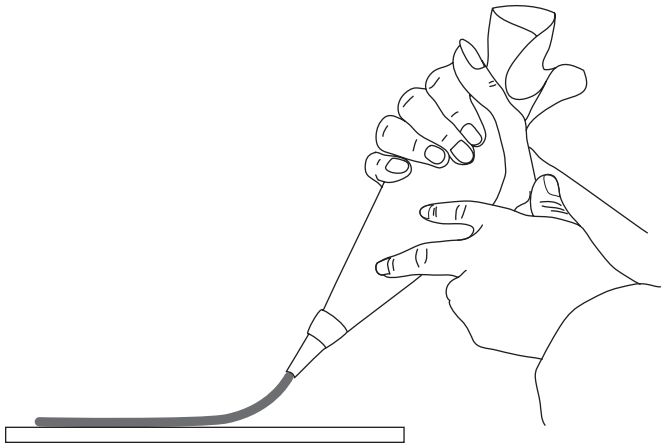


Illustration 1.8
A straight line is piped by lifting the icing tip from the surface and applying even pressure.

ward you as you continue to squeeze. By lifting and squeezing with even pressure, you can pipe a straight line. When you want to end the line, gently lower the tip toward the surface and start easing off the pressure. Touch the surface and stop the pressure. Drag the tip toward you. If the piped line is bent or shows no control, keep practicing.

Next, practice piping a curved line using the same technique. The higher you lift the tip, the better you can see the line or curve as it is piped (see Illustration 1.9). As long as you continue to squeeze, the line of icing will not break. If the line breaks, you know you stopped squeezing without noticing it. Continue practicing until you can pipe straight and curved lines perfectly.

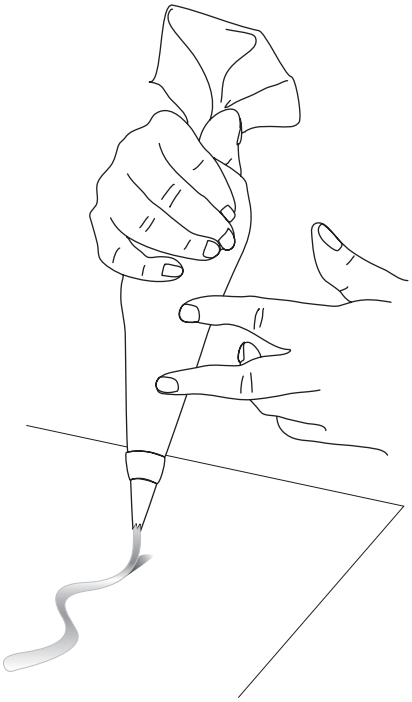


Illustration 1.9
Piping a curved line.

Now, let's practice the circle. Draw some circles on your parchment paper. Using the same technique as for straight lines and curves, touch the surface at either the 9 o'clock or 3 o'clock position. Raise the tip as you squeeze with even pressure. The higher you raise the tip, the better you can see the circle (see Illustration 1.10). When you are ready to close the circle, gently lower the tip and bag as you ease off the pressure. Try this a few more times until you can pipe perfect circles. (See examples of a piped circle, curved line, and straight line in Illustration 1.11.) You are now ready to begin border skills.

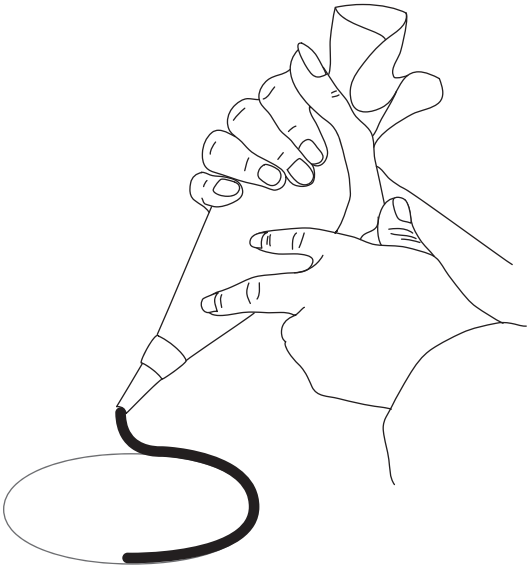


Illustration 1.10
Piping a circle.

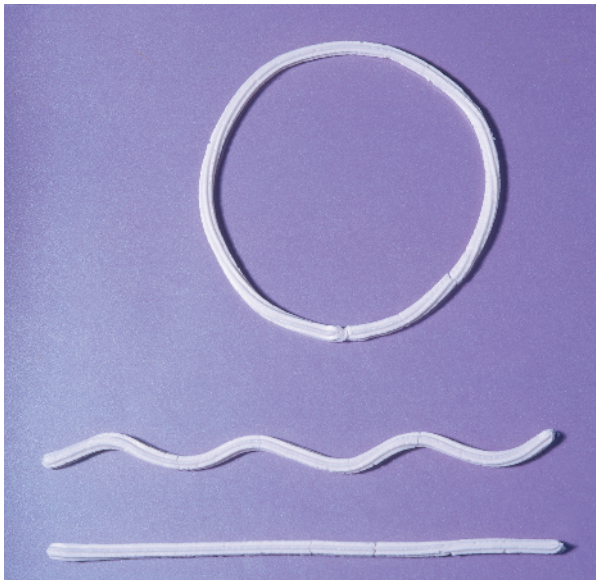


Illustration 1.11
A piped circle, curved line, and straight line.

Practicing Border Skills

New Skill: Star Flower

The star flower is the most basic piped flower. While it is extremely easy to do, it can be done poorly and look awful. Repeated star flowers form a border when piped along the top edge of a round or rectangular cake. However, this flower looks best piped in clusters of three and with tiny leaves between each seam. You will learn to pipe leaves toward the end of Lesson 1.

To begin a star flower, position the #18 star tip and pastry bag at a 90-degree angle to the surface. The tip should touch the surface and should not be lifted until the flower is formed. If you are piping on a buttercream-iced cake, refrigerate the cake first to harden the surface. Apply a burst of pressure, allowing the icing to protrude about ¼ in. (6 mm) from the tip. Stop the pressure immediately and ease the tip straight up. This forms an attractive flower with an open center. If you jerk the tip up too quickly, it will injure some of the petals as

you exit. Continue to pipe this flower in clusters of three. Alternatively, pipe lines of this flower, allowing ¼ to ½ in. (6 mm to 1.3 cm) between each.

To complete the flower, add a center in a contrasting tone with a #2 round tip in a small paper cone. To do this, position the tip at the flower's center, between a 45-degree and 90-degree angle, barely above the surface. Apply a small amount of pressure and stop. Move the tip to the left or right to exit the piping. Stop and ease the tip from the center of the flower.

VARIATIONS

You can also pipe the star flower without a center. To achieve this, position the #18 star tip at a 90-degree angle to the surface of the cake or practice surface. Apply a burst of pressure and allow the icing to extend about ¼ in. (6 mm) from the tip. Before you stop the pressure, gently raise the tip about 1/16 in. (1 mm). Next, stop the pressure and pull the tip straight up to exit the flower. The center of the flower is now closed and requires no center.

Another variation is the commercial star flower seen in many bakeries. This type is achieved by raising the tip about ¼ in. (6 mm) from the surface at a 90-degree angle. Squeeze the pastry bag and allow the icing to touch the surface. Stop the pressure and pull the tip straight up. The flower has a puffy look and is acceptable when doing fast decorating in a busy environment.

Last, try piping a star flower with a slight twist. Position the tip at a 90-degree angle with the tip touching the surface. Apply a burst of pressure as you form the flower, but before you stop the pressure, lightly twist your wrist to the left or right. Stop the pressure and ease the tip up. You now have a star flower with a twist (see Illustration 1.12).

Decorator's Hint

1. If the icing is too soft, it is difficult, but not impossible, to give the star flower an open center. Simply stop the pressure when the flower is made and gently ease the bag straight up. Centers are easier using Swiss and Italian Meringue Buttercreams than other buttercreams.
2. If you are right-handed, move the tip to the right to complete the flower's center. If you are left-handed, move the tip to the left.

Decorator's Hint

If the icing is too soft, the center automatically closes when you exit the flower. To stiffen Swiss Meringue Buttercream, refrigerate the buttercream or place it over a bucket of ice. To stiffen other buttercreams, add 10x confectioners' sugar to the individual bowl. This should correct the problem.

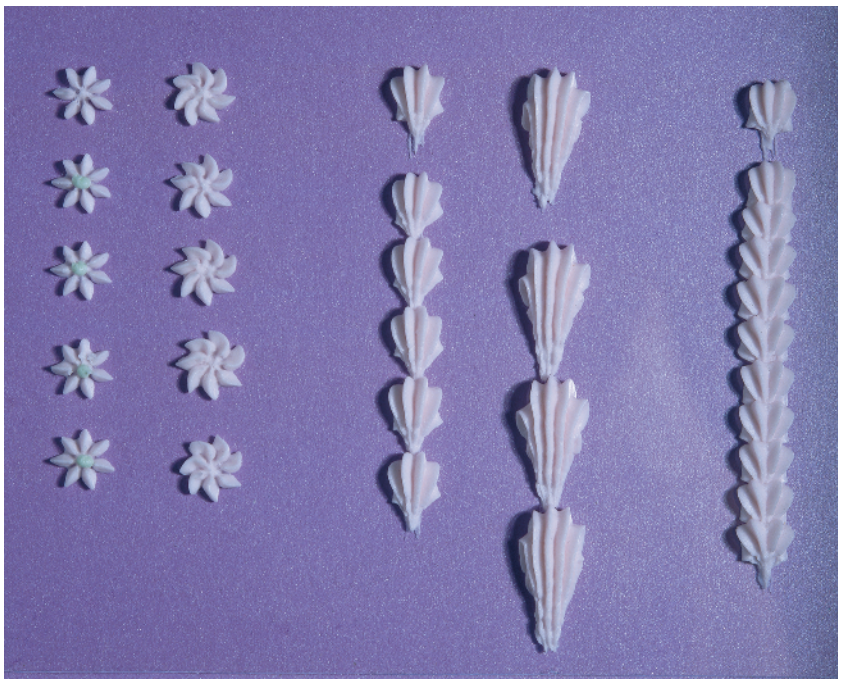


Illustration 1.12
From left to right: star flower variations, small and large shells, and ballooning.

New Skill: Small Classic Shells

Shells are the bread and butter of cake decorating. You cannot pass a bakery without seeing shell borders on the top or bottom of a cake. It is simply the most widely used border. Unfortunately, it is often not done well, so practice and patience will put you in front of your competitors.

Small shells or classic shells can look striking and tailored. Use these shells on cakes ranging from 4 to 7 in. in diameter (10 to 17.8 cm). Use a #18 star tip for small shells.

To begin a classic shell, position your star tip at a 45-degree angle and touching the surface. (Be sure to refrigerate iced cakes first to firm the surface before using this technique. A firm surface is essential to achieving the desired results.) Apply a burst of pressure, allowing a small amount of icing to protrude from the tip. Push the tip forward slightly and apply more pressure, building up the head of the shell. Then, slightly pull the tip toward you, easing off the pressure. Stop the pressure and pull toward yourself to exit the shell.

To connect the next shell to the first, place the tip about ¼ in. (6 mm) behind the previous shell. Repeat the instructions for the classic shell. When you move forward, touch only the tail of the previous shell and continue to pull the tip toward yourself. Practice this until you have perfected the technique (see Illustration 1.13).

Decorator's Hint

If condensation builds up on an iced cake after it is removed from the refrigerator, the only thing to do is to let the cake sweat. Eventually, the moisture will be reabsorbed by the icing. However, if a lot of fine pipe work in royal icing was on the cake when it was refrigerated, some of it may collapse. You can purchase special refrigerators that zero out the humidity, but they are expensive. Cakes iced with buttercream should not sweat. If they do, the only solution is to let them rest at room temperature and allow the icing to reabsorb the moisture.

New Skill: Large Shells

Large and sumptuous shells are magical. Although making them is a basic skill, doing it well can be one of your strongest assets in the cake decorating industry. These shells take on a form of their own. They are wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. The sides of the shells have a lovely scroll.

To begin, position your tip and pastry bag at an angle between 45 degrees and 90 degrees. If you want the sides of the shell to look scrolled, the angle should be closer to 90 degrees. Raise the tip slightly from the surface. Apply a burst of pressure and allow a small amount of icing to protrude from the tip. Move the tip slightly forward and continue with pressure as you build up the head of the shell. Then, gradually pull the tip toward you and lower the tip to scratch the surface. Ease off the pressure and stop. This isn't easy! Learning to pipe large shells takes a lot of practice and a looser grip on the pastry bag (see Illustration 1.13). Continue practicing for a good 15 minutes and then go on to the next border—but come back later and practice this again.

Decorator's Hint

The type of icing used for piping large shells will vary in the way the shells look. For instance, if you pipe these shells using Swiss Meringue Buttercream, you need less pressure to form them than if you use the Decorator's Buttercream Icing, which is firmer. Firmer icing allows more control as you build your skills and accomplish beautiful large shells.

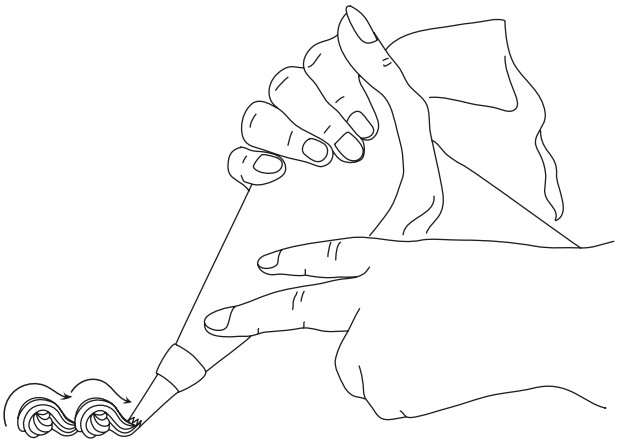


Illustration 1.13
Shells can be piped one after the other for a seamless effect.

New Skill: Ballooning

Ballooning is the technique of piping small classic shells without tails and then piping the next shell directly in back of it. These shells look like herringbone. This is a nice technique that can be used to adorn the top edge of a cake. If you are careful, they can be used at the bottom edge too.

Position the tip and pastry bag at a 45-degree angle. Apply a burst of pressure, allowing some of the icing to expel from the tip. Slightly push the tip forward to build the head of the shell and then pull toward you. Stop the pressure. Immediately repeat this step, pushing the head of the shell into the back of the previous shell so they are piggybacked. Repeat to form a beautiful pattern that resembles herringbone (see Illustration 1.12).

New Skill: Zigzag

The zigzag is perhaps one of the easiest bottom borders to create. A zigzag border gives the illusion that the cake is larger than it really is. That is because only one side of the border actually touches the cake, while the bulk of the icing decorates the cake board.

To begin a zigzag border, position the tip and pastry bag at a 45-degree angle. Apply a burst of pressure as you drag the tip to the left or right side about ½ in. (1.3 cm). Then move the tip slightly down and drag it in the opposite direction (see Illustration 1.14). Continue piping and dragging the tip back and forth until you complete the border. For a larger or thicker border, slightly raise the tip from the surface as you move it back and forth.

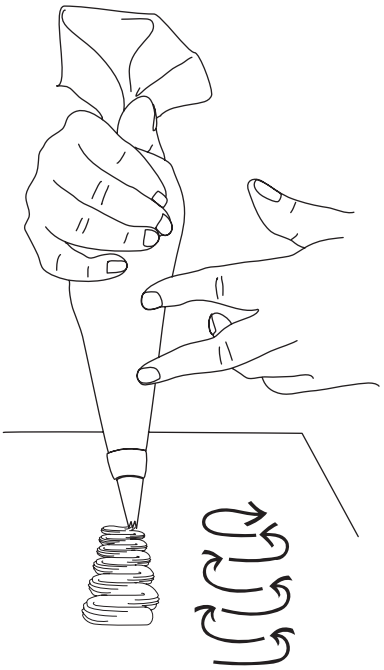


Illustration 1.14
The piping tip is moved in one direction and then in the opposite direction for a zigzag effect.

VARIATIONS

For a lavish, formal look, pipe shells directly on top of the zigzag. To do this, first pipe the zigzag. Then position the tip at the rightmost edge of the zigzag. Pipe the large shells directly on top, but be careful not to injure the zigzag (see Illustration 1.15.)



Illustration 1.15
From left to right: zigzag variations, small and large rosettes, and reverse shells.

New Skill: Rosettes

Rosettes are a staple in the world of cake decorating. They are typically piped from whipped ganache but can be made from buttercreams or whipped sweetened cream. Twelve very large rosettes adorn a 10-in. (25.4 cm) round cake. These often have cocoa powder sifted over them and a coffee bean or a candied violet placed on top. Like star flowers, rosettes look best in clusters of three with small leaves between each seam. You will learn to pipe leaves at the end of this lesson.

To pipe a small rosette, position the #18 star tip and pastry bag at a 90-degree angle. Remember, a right-handed person will start at the 9 o'clock position and a left-handed person at the 3 o'clock position. Raise the tip slightly from the surface. Pipe a tight circle without any space in the center. Once you pipe this one circle, stop the pressure but continue to move the tip in a continuous motion. Ease the tip away from the rosette.

To pipe a large rosette, you can use the same tip that you used for small rosettes but apply greater pressure, or you can use a #22 star tip or any giant star tip. Position the tip exactly, as if you were piping a small rosette. When you pipe the first circle, leave a space in the center. Once you complete the circle, move

Decorator's Hint

When piping rosettes, it is important to gently ease the tip away once the flower is completed. Otherwise, you leave a take-off point. This is undesirable.

the tip in a continuous circular motion inside the center of the rosette. Ease off the pressure and gently move the tip away from the rosette (see Illustration 1.15).

New Skill: Reverse Shells

When piped on a round or rectangular cake board, reverse shells give the appearance of beautiful sculpted scrolls. While they are invaluable as a quick technique to dress up a cake, they do require strict attention to make them lush and uniform.

For practice, draw a line down the middle of your work surface with a nontoxic pen or pencil. Position the #18 star tip and pastry bag at an angle between 45 degrees and 90 degrees to the left of the line. Raise the tip slightly from the surface and apply a burst of pressure. Move the tip in a clockwise direction. When you reach the 11 o'clock position, apply more pressure and swing the tip around and down to the 6 o'clock position. The tail end of the reverse shell should be about ½ in. (1.3 cm) long.

Next, position the tip to the right of the just completed reverse shell, with the tip again at an angle between 45 degrees and 90 degrees. The tip should be close to the tail end of the shell but slightly to the right of it. Raise the tip slightly from the surface and apply a burst of pressure. Move the tip in a counterclockwise direction. When you reach the 1 o'clock position, apply more pressure and swing the tip around and down to the 6 o'clock position, overlapping the previous tail. Extend the tail to ½ in. (1.3 cm). Repeat in the opposite direction to continue the reverse shells (see Illustration 1.16).

Decorator's Hint

The purpose of piping reverse shells in a straight line is to emphasize the elegant length of the tail. This detail is often missing when reverse shells are piped in a curve on a round cake. A short tail end is overwhelmed by the top portion of the shell.

When you pipe reverse shells on a round cake, swing the tail end toward the center of the round to form the left side of the shell. When piping the right side of the reverse shell, end the tail about ¼ in. (6 mm) from the circle's edge.

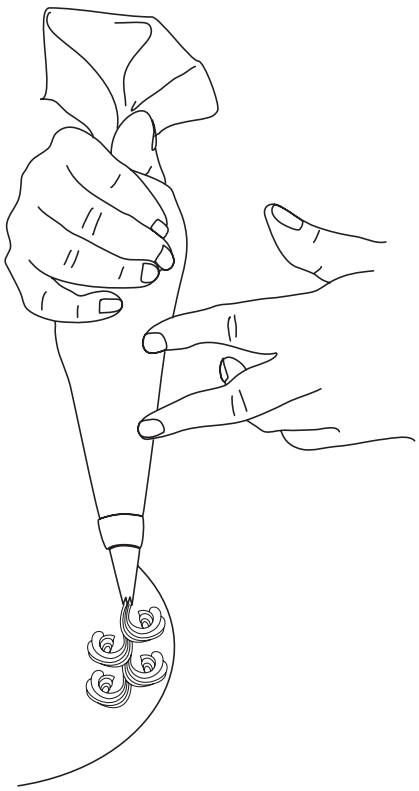


Illustration 1.16
Piping reverse shells.

New Skill: Fleur-de-Lis

This beautiful border flower is not used in the same way as the star flower or rosette. It is typically formed at the top edge of the cake and extends down the sides. A fleur-de-lis is simply a large centered shell with two reverse shells—a perfect wedding cake border design.

If piping on a flat surface, first position the #18 star tip at an angle of 45 to 90 degrees. If applying this technique to an iced cake, position the tip at a 90-degree angle at the top edge of the cake (see Illustration 1.17). Raise the tip slightly from the surface and apply a burst of pressure, allowing some of the icing to extend from the tip. Move the tip forward slightly. Continue with pressure as you build up the head of the shell, then gradually pull the tip toward you. Extend the tail of the shell about ¾ in. (1.9 cm) or ¼ in. (6 mm) longer than a regular large shell. Ease off the pressure as you scratch the surface.

Decorator's Hint

The fleur-de-lis is usually accompanied by drop strings that connect one fleur-de-lis to another. This technique is covered in Lesson 4.

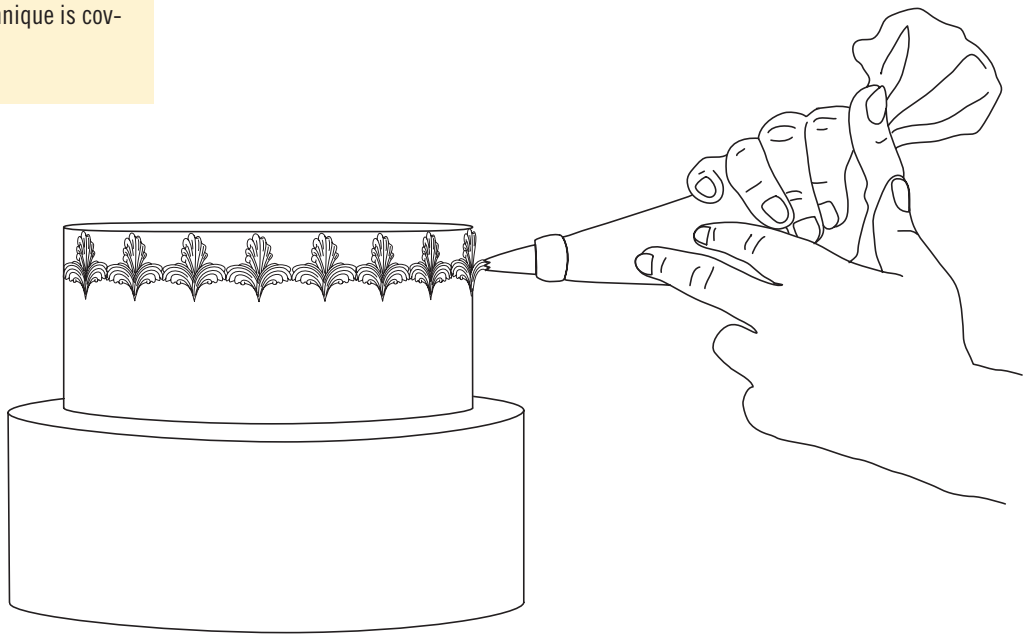


Illustration 1.17
When piping along a cake edge, hold the piping tip at a 90-degree angle.

Next, position the tip at the bottom of the shell. Move the tip ¼ to ½ in. (6 mm to 1.3 cm) to the left of the shell. Then move the tip upward ¼ to ½ in. (6 mm to 1.3 cm). Position the tip and pastry bag at an angle between 45 and 90 degrees. Raise the tip slightly from the surface and apply a burst of pressure. Move the tip in a clockwise direction. When you reach the 11 o'clock position, apply a burst of pressure and swing the tip around and down to the 6 o'clock position. The tail end of the reverse shell should overlap the centered shell. Stop the pressure and ease away. Move the tip to the right ¼ to ½ in. (6 mm to 1.3

cm) and then upward ¼ to ½ in. (6 mm to 1.3 cm). Raise the tip slightly from the surface and apply a burst of pressure. Move the tip in a counterclockwise direction. When you reach the 1 o'clock position, apply a burst of pressure and swing the tip around and down to the 6 o'clock position. The tail should overlap the left and centered shell. Stop the pressure and ease away (see Illustration 1.18).

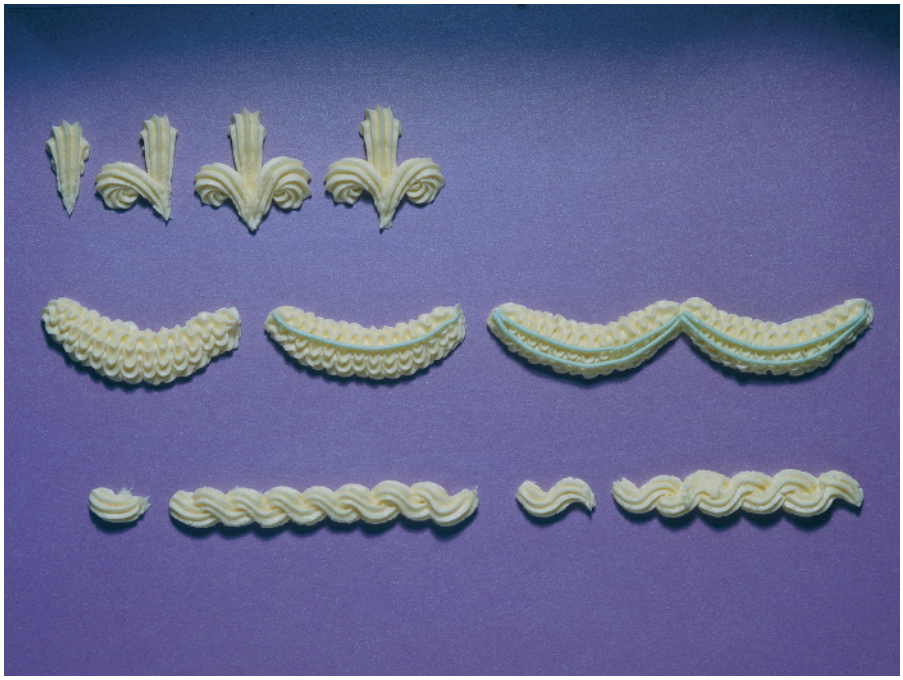


Illustration 1.18
From top to bottom: the steps to create fleurs-de-lis, steps to create connecting garlands, and *C*-shape and *S*-shape rope variations.

New Skill: Garlands

While the most common name is garlands, in the United States they are sometimes called scallops, and in Great Britain they are called crescents. By any name, the look is lush and lavish if carefully done. This cake decorating technique perhaps works best on the side of the cake, near the top edge. It can also be used near the bottom of the cake just above the bottom border. The technique is similar to the zigzag bottom border, but tighter. Variations can make this border spectacular!

To practice, measure equal distances on your work surface. For example, use a graphite #2 pencil to draw the shapes on parchment paper. Each part of the garland should be shaped in a half-circle about 2 in. (5 cm) long. Mark five connected half-circle or scallop shapes for practice.

When ready, position the #18 star tip and pastry bag at an angle of 45 degrees. For right-handers, position your body at the 9 o'clock position. For left-handers, position your body at the 3 o'clock position. Apply a burst of pressure as you

drag the tip to the surface in a tight zigzag motion. Start out with light pressure, increase as you reach the center of the scallop, and decrease as you approach the end of the scallop. Repeat this technique to form the pattern (see Illustration 1.19).

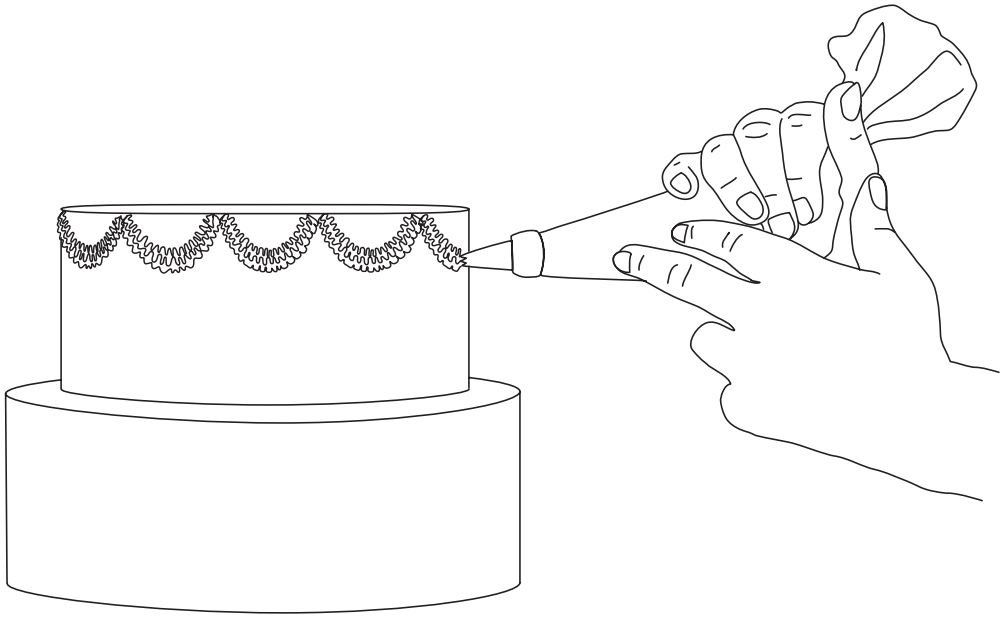


Illustration 1.19
Piping garlands on a cake adds a beautiful effect.

VARIATION

For a more ornate look, use a #2 round metal tip and a contrasting icing color to pipe lines on top of the completed garlands. This striking addition upscales a plain garland to a real beauty. To begin, load the pastry bag or a small paper cone with a #2 round metal tip and the contrasting icing. Position the tip at the top edge of the first finished garland at a 45-degree angle. Apply pressure to the bag as you slowly raise the tip about ½ in. (1.3 cm) above the garland. Allow the icing to form a scalloped shape as it lies across the center of the garland. Lower the tip and reduce the pressure as you reach the end of the scallop. Repeat for additional garlands. For a double string line, repeat this procedure, starting with the first garland, but let the second line drop below the centered line. Taper the end of the string to the garland (see Illustration 1.18).

New Skill: Rope

The rope border is a perfect finish for an iced cake. It is often seen as a top border on a basket weave cake. It is also sometimes seen as a top and bottom border, although piping it at the bottom is a little sticky. There are two ways of piping this border: the half-*C*, or open quotation mark, and the *S* shape.

C shape: For a right-handed person, position the tip and bag at a 45-degree angle. Slightly raise the tip from the surface. Pipe a small curve that looks like an open quotation mark or a half-*C*. For a left-handed person, pipe a closed quotation mark, or a backward half-*C*. Next, hold the tip perpendicular to the surface in the center of the curve. Apply steady pressure as you raise the tip and

end the stroke slightly in front of the first curve. The pipe stroke should look like a backward *S*. Position the tip in the center of the next curve and make another backward *S* (see Illustration 1.20).

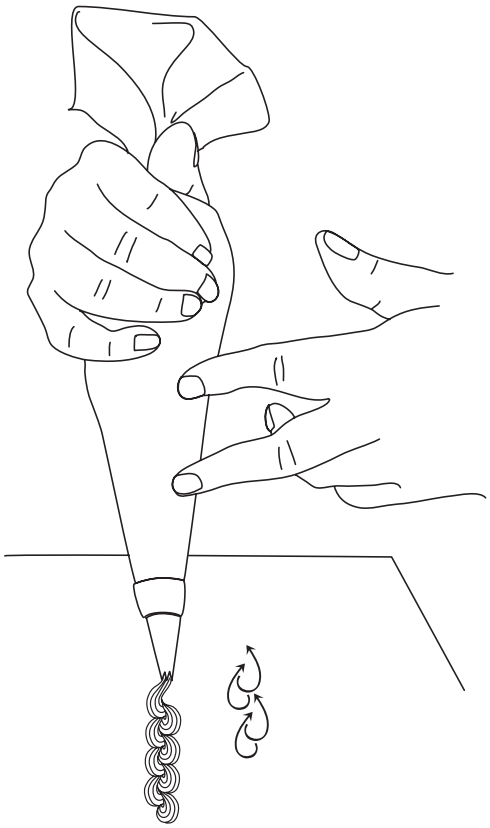


Illustration 1.20
Backward and forward half-*C*s are used to create this rope effect.

S shape: For a right-handed person, pipe a small elongated *S* at a 45-degree angle. For a left-handed person, pipe an elongated backward *S*. Position the tip perpendicular to the center of the bottom curve. Apply pressure as you raise the tip slightly and pipe an *S* shape. Repeat this pattern until you have piped the rope (see Illustration 1.18).

New Skill: Leaves

Leaves complete a floral spray by adding fullness and lushness. They can also be used alone as a decorating motif for a fall cake, and they are especially impressive when used with grapes and sweet pea clusters (see Lesson 3).

Several tips are used for leaf piping. The most common are the #67 (small leaf) tip and the #352 leaf tip. Both tips produce realistic-looking leaves; however, the #352 is the favorite of most decorators and designers because it pipes a quick and easy leaf without any fuss. The #67 tip requires extra-soft icing or royal icing, and the leaves tend to split unless your pressure control is precise. In this exercise, you will practice with both tips (see Illustration 1.21).

Load a small paper cone with a #67 tip and second small paper cone with a #352 leaf tip. Add 1 tsp of moss green buttercream icing to each cone and carefully fold them closed. Practice using the #67 tip first.



Illustration 1.21
From left to right: leaves piped with a #352 leaf tip and a #67 small leaf tip.

To begin, position the #67 tip and small paper cone at a 45-degree angle. Position the pointed side of the tip at a 45-degree angle. You should be able to see the open side of the tip through the sides. Because the cone is quite small, place your thumb on one side of it and your fingers on the other. Touch the surface and apply a burst of pressure. Build-up the top of the leaf and gently ease-off the pressure. When you stop, the end of the leaf should come to a point. If it doesn't, the point of the leaf splits apart. Should the point of the leaf come apart, use a toothpick to push it together. The icing is too stiff and needs more liquid in the icing. The leaf should be ½ to 1 in. (1.3 to 2.54 cm) in length. Swiss Meringue Buttercream should be soft enough to do this with good results. Buttercream that is too soft (or too stiff) will result in a distorted leaf shape. If you are using a stiffer buttercream, add ½ tsp (2.5 ml) of liquid to 4 oz (114 g) of buttercream for a softer consistency.

With the #352 leaf tip, piping leaves is much easier, even with stiff icing. Position the open side of this tip at a 45-degree angle. Apply a burst of pressure and leave the tip in place for a few seconds to build up the head of the shell, then pull the tip toward you. Stop the pressure. The leaf ends in a pointed tip, which is what you want. Leaves made with a #352 tip should be ¼ to ½ in. (6 mm to 1.3 cm) in length.

END-OF-LESSON REVIEW

Pipe the following exercises on a rectangular cardboard or a parchment half-sheet. The presentation of these borders is extremely important.

1. Pipe two rows each of classic and large shells (20 shells each).
2. Pipe 20 rosettes (10 small and 10 large).
3. Pipe a line of reverse shells (a total of 8 left and 8 right shells).
4. Pipe 6 fleurs-de-lis.
5. Pipe 6 garlands with strings.
6. Pipe a rope line using the *C* and *S* shape techniques.

PERFORMANCE TEST

Choose two of the three following items:

1. Pipe small or large shells around a 10-in. (25.4 cm) cake circle.
2. Pipe reverse shells around a 10-in. (25.4 cm) cake circle.
3. Pipe a rope border around a 10-in. (25.4 cm) cake circle using the *C* or *S* technique.