

# THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO Cookie Decorating

Easy Techniques  
and Expert Tips  
for Designing and Icing  
Colorful Treats



The Beginner's Guide to Cookie Decorating - available now!

**MARY VALENTINO** Founder of Emma's Sweets and Food Network *Christmas Cookie Challenge* Winner

# SANTA CLAUS

---

Turn the pumpkin-shaped cookies on their side and you have Santa Claus with a pom-pom on his hat!

**Note:** Very little black icing is needed for this design, so make a small amount.

## MATERIALS

---

Baked and cooled pumpkin-shaped cookies

---

Edible food pen, light brown

---

Tipless piping bags

---

Flood-consistency royal icing, flesh color, red, and white (see page 47)

---

Medium-consistency royal icing, flesh color, red, white, and black (see page 47)

---

Scribe tool

1. Rotate the pumpkin cutter to the left. Using an edible food pen, draw an outline of the hat and face.

*(continued)*





2. Fill tipless piping bags with all of the icings (see page 50). Use the medium-consistency flesh color to outline and flood the facial area. Then use medium-consistency red icing to outline and flood-consistency to fill the top of the hat. If the cookie is smaller, use a medium-consistency for the hat. Let these areas crust over for at least 30 minutes before moving on to the next sections.

3. Use medium-consistency white icing to outline and flood-consistency white icing to fill the beard. If the cookie is on the smaller side, use a medium-consistency for both outline and flood. Allow to crust over for at least 30 minutes. Be careful while handling the cookie as the other sections are not fully dry.

4. Use the medium-consistency white icing to outline and flood the brim of the hat. Allow the cookie to completely dry for at least 8 to 12 hours prior to moving on to the next step.



5. Use medium-consistency flesh color icing for the nose. Use the medium-consistency white icing for the brows. Pipe on two small black dots for the eyes with medium-consistency black icing, then immediately pipe smaller white reflections into the eyes using the medium-consistency white icing and the wet-on-wet technique (see page 58). (You can use a scribe tool to mark the placement of the eyes first, if desired.) Ice the pom-pom with medium-consistency white icing. Let the nose dry for 1 hour prior to piping on the moustache.

6. Using medium-consistency white icing, pipe one side of the moustache and allow to completely crust over for at least 30 minutes.

7. Pipe the opposite side of the moustache. The cookie is now complete and should fully dry for at least 6 hours prior to packaging (see finished cookie, page 153).



The Beginner's Guide to Cookie Decorating - available now!

# ROYAL ICING RECIPE

Royal icing is a frosting made of icing sugar and meringue powder, and sometimes flavorings are added. Because it dries hard, it's a preferred choice for decorative cookies. You'll use a variety of consistencies of royal icing throughout the book for the various techniques, as well as for decorative floral accents.

DECORATES APPROXIMATELY 4 DOZEN  
3" (7.5 CM) COOKIES

---

8 tablespoons (98 g) meringue powder  
(found in baking supply stores)

---

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 ml) water

---

8 cups (1 kg) powdered sugar

---

1 teaspoon vanilla extract (I use Wilton Imitation Clear Vanilla Extract so it doesn't darken the icing)

1. Add the meringue powder to a small bowl. Add the water and mix well with a paddle attachment. The texture should be smooth and not grainy.
2. Sift the powdered sugar before adding it to the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or a large mixing bowl. Add the meringue mixture. Combine on low speed for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.
3. Add the vanilla and continue to mix on medium-low speed for 5 minutes, scraping down the bowl as needed. The icing is ready when it turns bright white and is thick enough to hold a stiff peak.



This is how the icing should look when it's ready—glossy and able to hold a stiff peak. Note that if you don't use clear vanilla, the icing may look off-white.

# STORING ROYAL ICING AND ICED COOKIES

Royal icing begins to set quickly when exposed to air. Follow these instructions for storing it properly so it does not harden.

## Storing Royal Icing

Once the icing is out of the mixing bowl, cover it immediately. Portion out the required amounts into small bowls and cover them until they're ready to be tinted. Alternatively, you can leave the icing in the mixing bowl, then soak a large cloth or tea towel with water, wring it out to remove excess liquid, and use it to cover the mixing bowl. If the cloth dries out, repeat the process. If you allow the towel to dry, the icing will begin to harden.

Icing can be stored in the refrigerator in an airtight container. After transferring the icing to the container, lightly press a piece of plastic wrap onto the surface and cover it with the lid. Icing can be stored in the refrigerator up to 2 weeks and in the freezer for up to 6 months.

For some techniques, you'll need to store icing while decorating the cookies. Icing can remain in the piping bags; place the bags in an airtight container and store in the refrigerator. Later or the following day, remove the bags from the refrigerator and allow them to come to room temperature. Before using, massage the bags with your hands to remix the icing. This will also remix icing if it separated while chilling. If massaging the bag doesn't bring the icing back to a smooth consistency, you may need to place the icing back in a mixing bowl and mix it with a spatula.



Alternatively, you can empty the icing from piping bags into a mixing bowl, place a lid on the bowl, and place it in the refrigerator. Later or the following day, allow it to come to room temperature and remix it with a spatula.

If freezing the icing, allow it to come to room temperature and follow the instructions above if the icing has separated.

The Beginner's Guide to Cookie Decorating - available now!



### STIFF

Icing that's just been mixed has a stiff consistency that holds a peak. It won't flow out of a piping bag and it's not ideal for icing the base of a cookie. The look and consistency of this icing is similar to cake frosting.

You cannot count stiff icing in seconds; it does not settle when you cut through it with a knife. The icing doesn't settle within itself.

**Best for:** Making petalled flowers, leaves, ruffles, stenciling, brushed embroidery, and shell borders



### PIPING

This consistency is comparable to that of toothpaste and should flow nicely out of a piping bag. To achieve this consistency, use a spray bottle to spritz some water in a bowl of stiff-consistency icing and mix it in. The icing should create a soft peak once piped, with the peak quickly losing its form once it settles. If the icing snaps or breaks while piping, it's too thick and more water should be added. If piped lines don't keep their form, the icing is too thin and will need to be thickened (see page 44).

**Best for:** Outlining shapes with sharp edges/corners and piping letters

**Icing consistency count:** 25 seconds



### MEDIUM

Add more water with a spray bottle to piping-consistency icing to achieve a medium consistency. Always add the water in increments, mix thoroughly, and add more if necessary. The texture should be between flood (see right) and piping (see opposite) consistency. This allows you to outline and fill shapes with the same icing, eliminating the separation between them.

**Best for:** Filling in small sections, preventing dips in the design, royal icing transfers (see page 61), script writing, bead borders, flowers with flat petals, a puffy look

**Icing consistency count:** 12 to 15 seconds



### FLOOD

Add enough water to stiff-consistency icing so it's a little runny but doesn't lose its shape. When spread on a cookie, it should stay on top, not run off the sides. If it does, the icing is too thin and air bubbles may appear. Add more stiff-consistency icing to the mixture and stir.

**Best for:** Filling larger cookie surfaces, wet-on-wet technique (see page 58), and flooding large cookies

**Icing consistency count:** 5 to 10 seconds

#### A NOTE FOR BEGINNERS ON ICING CONSISTENCY

Although I prefer using one consistency for both outlining and flooding cookies, I don't suggest that combination if you're new to royal icing. Using a medium consistency to outline and a flood consistency to fill will be easier to work with while you're learning. As you become more familiar and comfortable with the consistencies, you can create a single consistency to use for most designs that's somewhere between medium and flood.

The Beginner's Guide to Cookie Decorating - available now!