



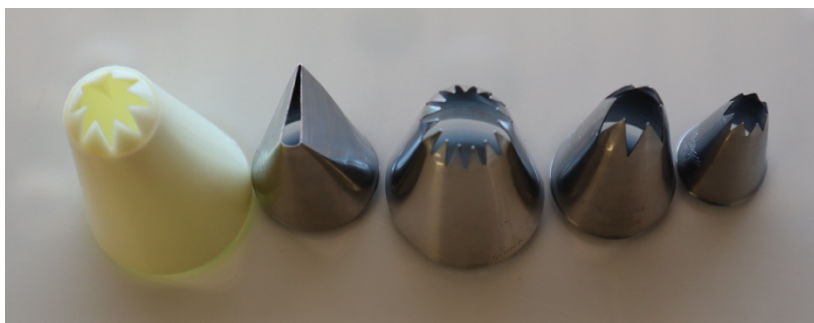
## Cupcake Decorating Basics

You will need:

- Your favourite cupcakes, baked & cooled
  - I use the cupcake trays from IKEA and size 750 cupcake liners for full sized cupcakes
- Buttercream – I normally allow 30g of buttercream per cupcake
  - As a basic recipe, per 12 cupcakes you will require approximately 400g of buttercream (I always prefer to have slightly more than what I need).
  - This recipe creates 420g SMBC = 70 g egg whites, 140 g sugar, 210 g butter.
  - In warm conditions I have used 50:50 ratio of butter to vegetable shortening to achieve a more stable buttercream in the above recipe.
- Oil based food colours
  - I find oil based colours blend much more easily with buttercreams due to the high butter content. The brands I use most often are Colour Mill and Creative Cake Decorating.
- Piping bags – I find small (30 cm) piping bags the easiest to work with and most comfortable to hold when piping cupcakes
- Piping nozzles – having a variety of nozzles and sized piping tips will allow you to have plenty of variety in your piping styles and allow you to be more creative with the designs
- Soft silicone spatulas make handling, mixing, blending and scooping the buttercream really easy
- Sprinkles or any other decorations that you'd like to use on your decorated cupcakes. Mini macarons, meringues, edible blooms or dried petals and chocolate shards would all look beautiful on decorated cupcakes.

Before getting started:

- Organise everything you will need ahead of time and position it so it's handy at the time you need it. A lot of the work is in the preparation, when you begin to decorate you will hopefully find the designs come together quite quickly.
- Allow your icing colours to develop, either overnight or even for 5-10 minutes before piping, this will allow the colour to achieve its truest tone
- Buttercream that is slightly chilled is best for piping designs as the edges remain crisp and the design looks clean.



Piping nozzles that I love (from above, in order)

- **Plain plastic star nozzles** - these can be purchased in all different sizes and are great for piping rosettes and rosette ropes
- **Ateco 125** - perfect for piping plain zigzags, roses and rosettes
- **Wilton 6B** - this nozzle can be interchanged with a 'French Star Tip' and is great for piping drop stars
- **Loyal 1M** - creates beautiful roses, rosettes and piped star ropes
- **Ateco 21** - this is really similar in shape to the Wilton 6B, but in miniature scale, I love this for piped rosettes and rosette ropes.

I definitely recommend having multiples of the piping nozzles that you love.

Using a coupler can allow you to change piping nozzles during decorating to use different colours with different nozzles, but is not always efficient and may not be achievable depending on the nozzle size.



Tips for piping practice

- Secure the selected piping nozzle to a piping bag
- Colouring the buttercream is not essential for piping practice
- Only fill your piping bag ½ to 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s full, if the piping bag is overfull it will be uncomfortable to hold and manoeuvre while piping, it will also mean that the piping can become really soft from the warmth of our hands while handling the piping bag. It's always better to use just what is comfortable and re-fill more frequently.

- Use the piping practice sheet covered with a sheet of baking paper to practice different techniques. Covering the printed sheet with baking paper will make it easy to scrape away the buttercream, pop it back in the piping bag and try again
- Using buttercream that is slightly chilled will give a nice crisp and clean look to your piping.
- Piping practice will help you feel confident and even practice the design you'll use on your cupcakes before icing your cupcakes

### When you're ready to pipe on your cupcakes

- Make sure the cupcakes are baked in advance and completely cooled. Any warmth from the cupcakes will melt / soften the buttercream and effect the end result
- I don't normally prepare my cupcakes with sugar syrup but a gentle brush of syrup can help keep cupcakes from drying out, especially if they're being made in advance.
  - I normally make sugar syrups in advance and keep them stored in the fridge, I use equal quantities water to castor sugar, brought to the boil stirring gently to make sure the sugar is all completely dissolved, then once boiling, left to simmer gently for 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Sugar syrups can also be flavoured with essences / extracts / juice from fresh citrus / vanilla extract to add flavour to cakes & cupcakes.
- Have everything prepared and ready to go in your work area., including coloured icing, piping bags, cupcakes, decorations, sprinkles, cupcake boxes etc. This will make decorating & storing your cupcakes efficient.
- Keep your work area / room cool (especially on hot days) to keep the buttercream at a nice consistency for piping. I normally work with SMBC but ABC or using a 50:50 ratios of butter and vegetable shortening may be needed in hotter climates.
- Store iced cupcakes in a cake / cupcake box in the fridge to set the designs and make it less likely to accidentally bump / disturb the icing.
- Bring cupcakes back to room temperature for 30 – 40 minutes before serving for the best flavour and texture.

Most importantly, **have fun!** Try not to overthink designs, experiment with colours / combinations / nozzles and decorations to find the style that best suits you.