

# Royal Icing Free-hand

By David "Cakes" MacCarfrae

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NETWORK MAGAZINE

How to decorate with

**DAVID**  
*Cakes*

## ROYAL ICING *Free-hand*

A tutorial by  
David "Cakes" MacCarfrae



The Royal Wedding Cake  
for HRH Prince Andrew  
and Miss Sarah Ferguson.



The Royal Wedding Cake  
for HRH Prince Edward  
and Miss Sophie  
Reece Jones.

Cake maker to British Royalty, David "Cakes" MacCarfrae has enjoyed over thirty five years of cake decorating with royal icing. Living in Liverpool, England, UK, David shares the secrets of his trade as he shows you how to decorate free hand with royal icing, embracing old school, free-hand techniques combining the centuries old traditional approach with his own modern ideas.

With emphasis on 'creating as you feel', 'creating through your emotions', the David Cakes method encourages piping directly onto the cake surface without the use of any stenciled pattern guides or templates. Totally unrestricted in its approach, this technique allows the creation of unique patterns, resulting in an individual signature style created by the decorator.

As the piping is applied in a more random manner, the patterns created are always slightly different. Piping more layers on top of each other and around each other creates more lavish patterns that can become more complex.

This style of cake decorating can be very challenging, but with practice and self-confidence, everyone can enjoy free hand piping to create something completely different and, ultimately, a unique work of art.



### Tools & Supplies

Royal Icing • Piping Tips  
Piping Bags



In this tutorial, David is focusing on creating a pattern extracted from the base tier of the wedding cake design.



## WHICH PIPING TIPS DO I USE?

Large Star Tip  
Medium Star Tip  
Small Plain Tip  
Fine Plain Tip

**PIPING TIPS:** David says, "Many manufacturers produce piping tips that are coded differently. It is a case of using the brand that you like. Generally No.4 and No.2 plain tips seem to be universal when I have checked out different brands available in the market. With regards to the star tip numbers, check out the manufacturer's selection and make your choice".



## SUGGESTIONS ON PREPARING ROYAL ICING

Royal icing is made from egg whites and icing sugar with a drop of lemon juice and glycerine (depending on what you are creating).

If royal icing comes into contact with anything that contains fat such as buttercream, ganache, etc., it will breakdown and will not be suitable for use.

There are so many approaches to making royal icing, so whether you are using royal icing made with pasteurized egg whites, meringue powder or an instant royal icing mix, it is very important to make sure that all equipment you are using, i.e. food mixers, piping tips, palette knife, are grease free.

Once mixed, you can color royal icing to your desired shades using liquids or gels. Some gels contain glycerine. Adding powder colors directly to royal icing could result in clogged piping tips.

## FREE HAND PIPING RIGHT HANDED — FREE HAND PIPING LEFT HANDED

The piping patterns demonstrated can be adapted for either right-handed cake decorators as well as left-handed cake decorators.

Since the techniques demonstrated embrace the old school bakery approach, realistically you have to experiment to find out which way works best for you.

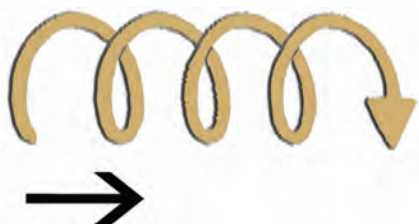
Right  
handed  
piping  
position



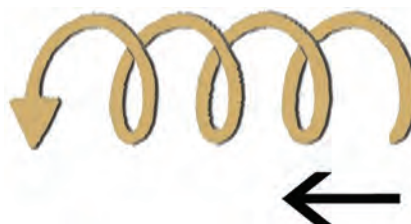
Left  
handed  
piping  
position



To start the project pattern which direction do I pipe my Royal Icing?



Left to right for right handed piping



Right to left for left handed piping

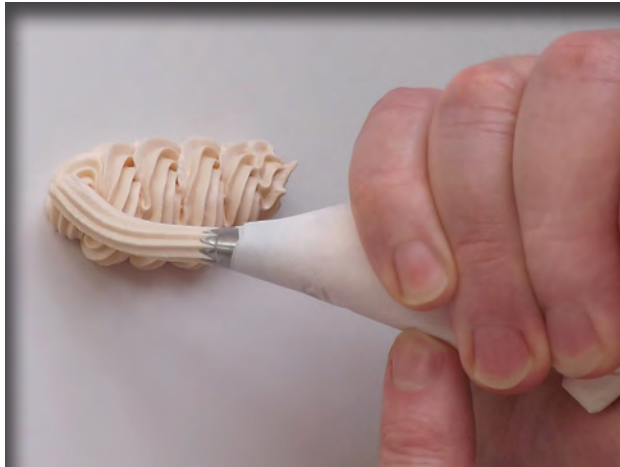
1. Using a piping bag filled with your desired color of royal icing and fitted with a large star tip, pipe a spiral pattern. This pattern is known as a 'barrel scroll'.

(David demonstrates with the right handed approach).

DAVID  
SUGGESTS:  
Use a firmer  
consistency of  
Royal icing when  
piping large  
patterns.



2. While the barrel scroll is still wet, using the large star tip, over-pipe a curved line around the base of the barrel scroll pattern. You can leave this pattern to dry before applying the next layer.



Piping layers of icing on top of each other is known as 'over-piping.'

Bear in mind that piping too many layers at once can result in your pattern collapsing.

Over-piping large ornate layered patterns onto the side of a cake could be the most vulnerable due to gravity, so restrict how many layers you pipe at one time.

With experience you will be able to gauge when a layer is ready for more over-piping.

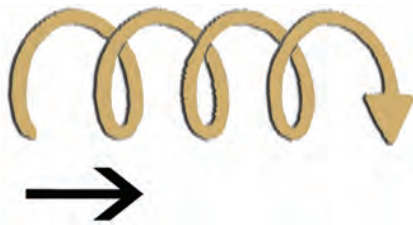
3. Using a piping bag fitted with a medium star tip, pipe a smaller barrel scroll on top of the larger barrel scroll pattern.



You can create exciting effects by over-piping and layering subtle shades of colored royal icing.



4. Using the same medium star tip, over-pipe a rope pattern to join both barrel scrolls together.



## GLYCERINE

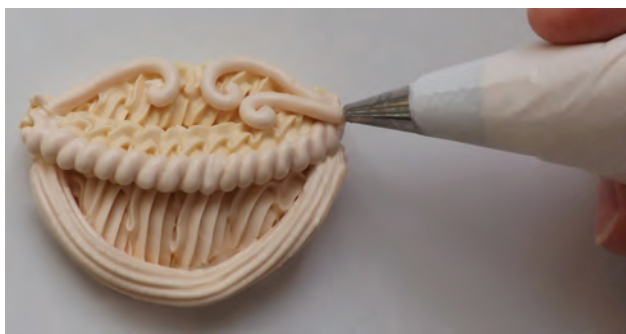
Glycerine is derived from plants and acts a moisturizer when added to royal icing which means the set icing can be cut and easily eaten.

The amount you add to royal icing depends on many factors including the humidity and atmospheric of where you are in the world.

Thicker layers of royal icing will usually need glycerine adding. In extreme humidity, glycerine may not even be required.

Experiment using a few drops in your royal icing mix. If a sample dries too hard to cut or eat, add a few more drops.

5. Using a piping bag fitted with a small plain tip, over-pipe a smaller rope pattern on top of the larger rope pattern. Then over-pipe spiral patterns each side of the top barrel scroll.



David says,  
"What makes free hand piping  
so exciting is that the creative  
possibilities are as endless as our  
imagination!"

"Let yourself be free and experiment  
piping the demonstrated techniques with  
different patterned tips, and smaller tips.  
Try changing the piping directions to  
create your own exciting patterns!"

It really is up to you!

6. Using a piping bag fitted with a medium star tip, over-pipe small shells at the end of the spiral patterns.

Then pipe a new barrel scroll over the original barrel scroll pattern.



7. Using a piping bag fitted with a small plain tip, pipe heart shaped patterns.



8. Using the same piping tip, you can surround the created pattern with random piping.



9. Finally, with a piping bag fitted with a fine plain tip, over-pipe your design, adding additional fine piping accents and embellishments as and where you choose to complete your design.





To enhance the piping patterns, edible roses can be secured to the cake design with royal icing piped leaves.

### **EMBRACING' OLD SCHOOL' FREE HAND TECHNIQUES IN THE MODERN WORLD**

When David was trained in the art of free hand royal icing (over 35 years ago), cake decorating equipment was very limited, unlike today when everything is available in abundance.

David says, "I feel the cake decorating world is getting bigger and better with so many wonderful new and innovative products being developed every day. I believe we have to embrace the old with the new in order to evolve, so besides solely piping a free-hand pattern with royal icing, we can now embellish, for example, fondant molds with additional free-hand piped patterns."

"Having knowledge in free hand piping means the technique can be applied to many other creative mediums including fresh cream, buttercream, piping gels, chocolate, ganache, even piping savory mediums such as cream cheese and embellishing a dinner plate with decoratively piped savory sauces."

For more information about David Cakes free-hand cake decorating techniques visit [www.davidcakes.co.uk](http://www.davidcakes.co.uk)

