



Types of Pastes, Gums, Glaze and tips

There are various types of paste and the type you use will depend on what you are making. E.g. sugarpaste is not suitable for wired flowers, as no gum to aid drying and shape. Sugarpaste models without gum may start off tall and elegant, but end up short and fat. The type of paste you use could mean the difference between success and failure.

Outside factors can affect the paste you are using; very hot conditions, damp humid weather and even the cold. E.g. When covering a cake with sugarpaste on a hot day with hot hands, you may get sticky paste that just won't behave. If possible cover first thing in the morning or later in the day. Consider fans but not directly on the paste, or if a regular problem consider air-conditioning or a dehumidifier.

Always knead any paste before use to warm it up, make it pliable and ready to use. Cracks or elephant skin can be caused by not kneading enough. Using too much icing sugar/cornflour to rollout on will make the paste dry out. Add a small amount of white fat to the paste if it becomes dry.

Gum - comes in a powder form and is used to strengthen sugarpaste, make edible glue and is added into flowerpaste and Mexican paste.

Carboxymethyl cellulose known as CMC or, E466, Sugrcel, Tylose or Tylo – may be used instantly. It is used in many products in the food industry as a thickener and a stabiliser. They are all a manmade version of natural gums and are usually cheaper than Gum Tragacanth due to its chemical nature. Using CMC in cake decorating allows for instant use, so great for last minute requirements and class situations. Synthetic gums will carry on stiffening the paste after the original mixing. Gum Tragacanth – is a natural gum obtained from the dried sap of several species of Middle Eastern Legumes of the genus *Astragalus*. It's common names are "Goats Thorn and Locoweed". Gum Tragacanth stays at the same strength and is best made a couple of hours or the day before required, as it needs time to take effect. This gum is less commonly used in products because of where it is grown. Both groups of gums do virtually the same job and there is very little difference in their results.

You can make your own pastes or try ready-made, there are many pastes so it is best to try several to see which one suits your hands and house the most.

Sugarpaste (also known as fondant) – can be used to rollout and cover cakes or for basic modelling with added gum. There are a variety of makes and colours available. You may have to try several brands to find the one that suits you. If you are colouring your own sugarpaste you can use coloured pastes (e.g. Sugarflair) or edible dusts. Liquids should not be used as they impact on the consistency. Cut the paste in half to check to see if the colouring is fully incorporated, before the final knead.

Flowerpaste (also called Gum Paste) - this paste has a lot of stretch which is needed when making flowers, plus a reasonable length of working time and allows the paste to be rolled out very thinly. This paste dries completely hard. Petals for wired flowers may be enhanced by using a veiner, friller and ball tools. This paste allows petals to be put together soft or dry depending on the method being used. Individual petals can be cut out and dried in formers, also allowing you to attach them to the side of a cake or on a board. Paste can be coloured with dusts and glazed by dipped/spraying or steamed to keep the colour on the petal. *See glazing and steaming below.* Flowers can also be coloured by using an airbrush and edible colours like copykake.



Mexican paste - a firm paste (holds its shape), which has a small amount of stretch and great workability. It is fast drying and dries rock solid. Often used in figures, modelling or building constructions. Great for Patchwork Cutters and FMM Tappits as it is less stretchy than Flowerpaste and holds its shape well and dries quickly.

Modelling paste - Add 1 tsp Tylose/CMC/Gum Tragacanth to 250g sugarpaste, to create a firm paste that holds its shape, or add either a 50/50 mix of flowerpaste or Mexican paste with sugarpaste. This type of paste does not always dry rock solid.

Pastillage - suitable for flat cut outs - as it dries very quickly. Used for some models and rigid sugar pieces that extend above or to the side of a cake or cupcake. This paste has no stretch, dries rock solid and allows a short working time. You may choose to use Mexican paste until you become more proficient. It is an extremely useful paste as it is not affected by moisture the way other pastes are, as it will withstand a certain degree of humidity and is often used on buttercream or fresh cream cakes. This paste was first used in the 1700's. Pastillage can sometimes shrink as it dries, so ensure you make all of your pieces at the same time.

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Edible Glue – can be made with any of the above gums. This can be used for joining sugar pieces together or dipping wires for your sugar flower making. Gum added to paste or royal icing will add stretch and strength. Be sparing as excess glue marks will always show.

Put 1/5th tsp of gum in a small bowl or container, add 2 tbs of boiled but cooling warm water and stir, breaking up as many lumps as possible. Check in approx 1 hour, if still lumpy stir again and the lumps will disappear. When it has set, the glue should have a syrupy consistency. If it's too thick, add a little more water or if too thin, add more gum powder. If you mix this in a bottle or jar with a lid, leave the lid off as it cools. If lumpy when checked replace the lid on and shake or just leave in an air tight pot overnight.

Gunk – This is any paste let down with boiled cooled water or alcohol to create a thickish spreadable consistency. Used for attaching heavier items to a cake or indeed filling gaps where necessary.

Glaze - Confectioners' glaze is also known as pharmaceutical glaze or shellac. It is an edible varnish ideal to use wherever a high gloss finish is required or simply as a protective coating for sugar, chocolate or marzipan pieces. It is essential when making shiny leaves or petals, to use the full strength glaze for a high shine, or dilute it with dipping solution/paintmate/IPA (Isopropyl alcohol, food quality) etc. This is known as half strength glaze and is often used to seal colours and strengthen flower petals. It is occasionally brushed on but mainly the sugar piece is dipped into the solution and blotted off with a wad of tissues. Do not use kitchen roll as it may mark the petal. It will dry at different rates dependant of the strength of the glaze, temperature and house conditions. Spray glazes are also available but different makes work in different ways and some clear glazes still have a pale yellow tinge. Glazes can sometimes be used on cakes too e.g. cars or elements required to be shiny and sprays are more often used for this. Note: in competitions with marzipan this is often not allowed.

Steaming – This can be used to set colours on sugar flowers as an alternative to glaze. Steamers are now sold but this can be done over a pan of water or from the kettle spout. Pass the flower through the steam until all areas have been touched by it. Do not go too slowly or the petals will get too moist and lose their shape or fall off wires. A little obvious but make sure you do not burn yourself.



Piping Gel - is a clear, shiny, smooth gel used in cake decorating which always remains slightly tacky. It can be coloured with paste/liquid/gel colours or dusting powders. It is often used to coat a dummy before attaching sugarpaste but you can do this just with cold water. Small to medium items made of wafer paper or flowerpaste can be glued together with it. Other uses:

- ❖ Stained Glass effect.
- ❖ Glue as above.
- ❖ Writing: for a quick, easy message write with Piping Gel in a parchment bag and a 1 or 2 nozzle.
- ❖ Piping gold or silver: just mix the piping gel with lustre dust gold or silver for a lovely finish.
- ❖ Liquid effects: themes like fishing, pirates, Halloween, swimming pool, pond, sea, tea, coffee or blood.
- ❖ Buttercream: to give more stretch to buttercream when piping leaves for example, just add half a teaspoon of piping gel to one cup of buttercream icing.
- ❖ Wafer Paper: preventing the wafer paper from cracking while cutting.
- ❖ Glaze fruit: give them an attractive sheen, professional –looking finish, preserve the freshness of fresh or cooked fruit and seal the artfully arranged fruit topping in place.

Liquid Glucose - It helps keep food products soft and fresh and acts as a preservative. It is used in royal icing ONLY when it is going to be used as a coating of a cake to ensure it cuts easily. Add 1 tsp of glycerine to 1lb of royal icing after it has been brought to peak, to create a cutting consistency. It is a thick clear syrup, that controls the formation of sugar crystals; which is particularly important when making frozen desserts and confectionery. It can also be used in a variety of sweet recipes including desserts, cakes, icings and jam making.

Glycerine - is a viscose, clear, odourless liquid with a slightly sweet taste. It is mainly used to soften icing but can also be added to cake recipes where flour is used to create a softer finish Vegetable glycerine is also known as glycerol or glycerine, typically made from soybean, coconut or palm oils.

Painting on Cakes - You can mix dust food colours with a few drops of Confectioners' Glaze or cocoa painting or IPA to paint freehand directly onto a cake. Clear alcohol like gin and vodka are used for painting too. However, should you wish to have a colour run into grooves then use something like IPA, dipping solution or paintmate. Gin, vodka, Bacardi etc do not have the same viscosity.

Recipes on separate handout