How to make beautiful blooming peonies...

Perfect Peony

made easy with Natalie Porter's Rapid Rose

For more information, tutorials and tools visit
www.immaculateconfections.co.uk

Rapid Rose Registered Design No. 5004428

About the Author....

Thank you for purchasing this tutorial and a set of five-petal Peony cutters… you'll also need a Rapid Rose—the five petal rose support pad.

I am so pleased to share with you my latest tutorial for making peonies! The techniques and methods used are similar to the Rapid Rose, but there are some differences to look out for...

Peonies are big, beautiful, fully bloomed flowers, with lots of delicate frilly petals. Making them with individual petals is a long and arduous task as there are so many pieces to cut and shape… the five petal cutters make this easy and with the Rapid Rose to help, you can have the petals on the bud and blossoming in no time!

I hope you enjoy this tutorial and find it easy to follow. I will be releasing more tutorials soon so follow the page on facebook or Instagram to keep up date and let me know if there is something you would like me to feature.

Thanks again and Happy caking!

Natalie

Natalie Porter is the owner of Immaculate Confections, based just outside London in the UK. She has been making cakes for local customers for years and is pleased to be recommended by some of Hertfordshire's top venues and wedding planners.

Her most noteworthy achievement to date is winning Gold five times at the prestigious Cake International competitions. She is also a regular contributor to Cake Decoration and Sugarcraft Magazine, Cake Craft Guides and Cake International Magazine.

Natalie loves to teach and demonstrate, passing on the techniques and lessons learnt over years of practice, trial and error. She loves cats and all things Sci-fi & fantasy—she always has a soft-spot for any cakes that are based on geeky things.

You can find Immaculate Confections online at:

www.immaculateconfections.co.uk
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Equipment:

- **Perfect Peony - five-petal peony cutters** ~ to cut the petals
- **Rapid Rose - the five petal rose support pad** ~ to construct the peony
- **Work board or non-stick rolling mat** ~ to roll the paste out on
- **Small rolling pin with rounded ends** ~ to roll out the flowerpaste and soften the edges
- **Set of ball tools** ~ to soften and shape the edges of the petals
- **Cutting knife** ~ to cut individual petals
- **A veining stick** ~ to add veins and details
- And/or **a cocktail stick or skewer** instead of a veining stick
- **Water brush pen** ~ to wet the petals for sticking
- **Prepared bud or Poly-bud** ~ 40mm poly-bud used in this tutorial
- **Plastic wallet** ~ to keep cut paste fresh, a punched pocket for paper will do
- **Firm foam former pad** ~ to use with the rolling pin or ball tool to soften the petal edges
- **Approx. 60g flowerpaste** ~ makes one large full peony, using the 120 & 150mm cutters

This tutorial is based on making a full, large peony, using the 120mm & 150mm cutters and a 40mm poly-bud. For info on other sizes see Pg.15

All the tools used in this tutorial are available to purchase online at www.immaculateconfections.co.uk

Perfect Peony Tutorial...

Step 1

Colour your flower paste and knead it well so that it's properly warmed and pliable.

The first thing to do is cut a circular shape to cover the top of our poly-bud. To do this, roll some out to around 1mm thickness and using the 120mm cutter (second biggest), cut out only part of the peony shape as shown...

Step 2

Turn the cutter 180° and cut again, to make a circular petal-edged shape.

Top tip!
Flowerpaste dries very quickly - make sure that any spare paste that you're not using is smooshed up and placed in bag or wrapped in cling film.

Step 3

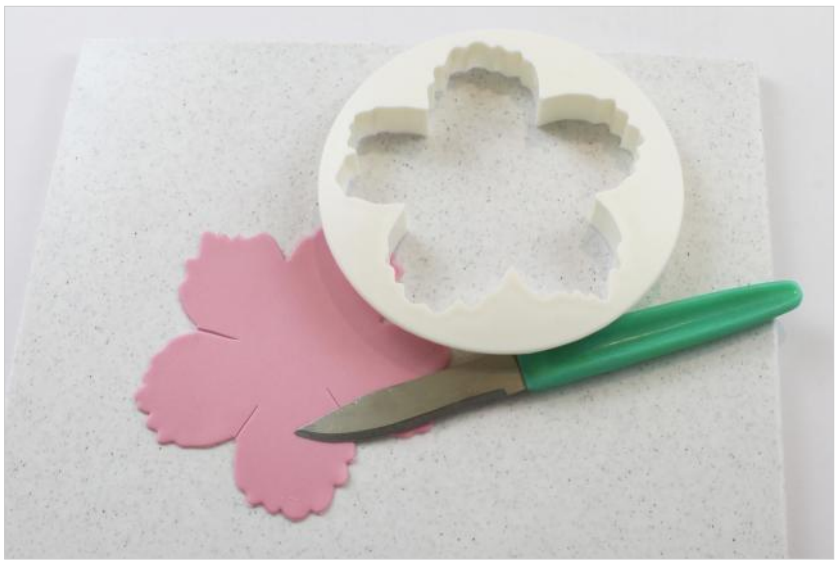
Press the edge of one of the petals of the cutter onto the circle gently, to leave an impression of petals. Change the petal you're using and repeat, turning the circle so they don't overlap… you want it to look like the top of a peony bud, where the petals meet and have not yet opened.

Step 4

Wet the top of the poly-bud and attach the circle , smoothing it down so it covers the top of the poly-bud.

Step 5

Roll out some more flowerpaste fairly thin - around 1mm thick at most. Using the 120mm cutter cut the first set of peony petals. Use a knife to cut a slit in between each petal, making them more individual and giving more movement.



Step 6

Place the petals onto a foam pad and use a medium sized ball tool to soften the edge of the petals.

Step 7

Use the veining stick to add veins and detail to the petals: place the stick on the petals, with the tip in the centre. Keeping the tip in place, move the rest of the stick back and forth to add veins in a fan shape to each petal.

Step 8

If you don't have a veining stick you can use a cocktail stick Instead. The method is the same, but to achieve a detailed look you'll need to vary the pressure on the stick so that some of the veins are lighter/deeper…

I would recommend getting a veining stick - it's a small investment and they're *super* useful!

Step 9

After veining, pop the peony shape back onto the flower foam and run round the edges with the ball tool to re-soften and frill the edges. It will also fade the veins towards the edge of the petals, so they don't just stop dead at the end of the petal.

Step 10

The final step before beginning to form the peony is to use a larger ball tool to cup each petal slightly - rotating the ball tool in little circles in the centre of each petal will give a slightly cupped and curved shape that will help form the flower in the next step...

Step 11

Use a water brush pen or wet paint brush to wet the centre of the peony shape and a line up each edge and the centre of each petal.

*If you're used to making Rapid Roses this is one of the differences... **do not** flip your shape over!! The peony stays the same way up for every layer!*

Step 12

Place the peony shape onto the Rapid Rose pad and insert the prepared bud through the centre.

Step 13

Lift a petal up and attach it to the bud, keeping it tight to the bud and curled over...

Step 14

Continue adding petals, attaching them to the bud and keeping the tops tight and curled over. There is no particular order in which to attach them - unlike roses peonies don't have a particular structure being more a jumble of frilly petals.
Just keep an eye on the top as you go making sure it looks right.

Step 15

Once all the petals are in place, remove the Rapid Rose, press the base so the petals are firmly attached and gently curve the tops in to form a tight bud.

If you only want a small peony bud, you can stop here.

Step 16

Cut another 120mm peony shape and repeat Steps 6 - 10 to prepare the petals. Place on to the Rapid Rose, wet and attach the petals as before, this time placing them so they're a little more open… again there is no particular order to add them.

Step 17

Having attached all the petals remove the Rapid Rose and gently press the tops of the petals so they are curved over the bud, without being pressed in too tightly.

Step 18

This is where you can stop for a bigger peony bud. You can see the first the peony shape inside curled over tight and the second one a little looser… as if the petals are opening away from the centre. Note also that you can't really see which petal is from which row - as mentioned above peonies aren't very structured, being rather more free form and frilly looking.

Step 19

Cut a third peony shape with the 120mm cutter. Use the large ball tool, working out from the centre of each petal to make them a little bigger. (Do this before you slit the back together again!)

Now repeat Steps 6 - 10 again to prepare the petals...

Step 20

Place your petals onto the Rapid Rose, wet as before and attach them… place them less tightly than before, so that the petals are opening away from the centre.
Flip and press down on the back so everything is firmly attached at the base.

Step 21

If you need to, use a pokey tool (the fat end of the dresden is my favourite) to go in gently and re-position the petals so the third row are more open than those inside - you want the petals to cup and curve around the ball shape in the centre.

Allow to dry for around 10mins before adding the next row of petals.

Step 22

Cut one more peony shape with the 120mm cutter, prepare and attach to your flower as before.

Make sure the petals are continuing to 'open' so that the flower increases in size and blooms. Go in with a pokey tool if you need to nudge the petals out a bit.

Allow to dry for around 10 mins before adding the next layer.

Step 23

Stopping at this stage will give you a large bud/half open peony. These work well in combination with buds and full peonies, or where you've not quite enough space for a fully bloomed flower.

Top Tip:
Before going any further, make yourself one of these…
It's a cake dummy with a drinking straw in it!

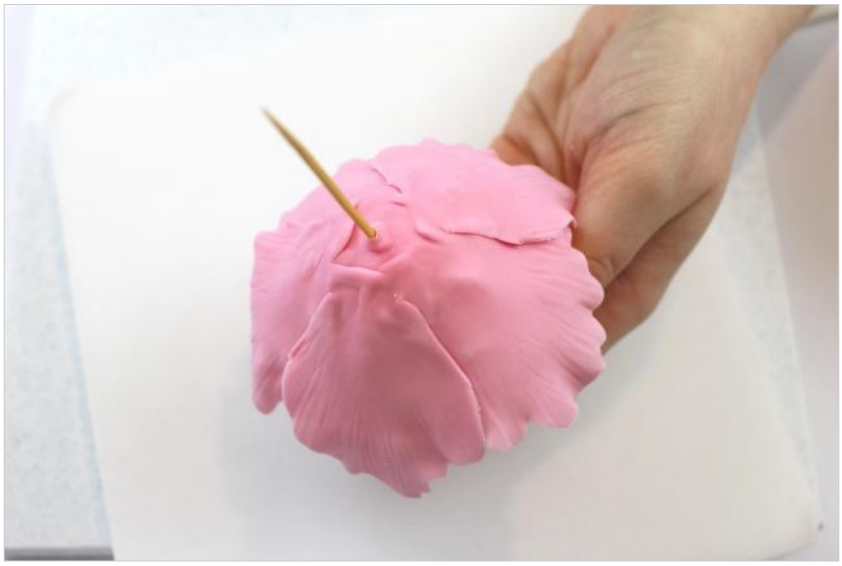
The reason for this so you can put your peony down and build a couple of supports around it without having to fight the polystyrene to get it in/out and risking damage to the flower.

Step 24

Switch to using the 150mm cutter and follow steps 6 - 10 to prepare the petals. Wet the centre and edges of each petal and place onto the Rapid Rose, as before begin attaching the petals, making sure that they're left fairly open and at an appropriate height in comparison to the inner petals - if you need to tuck them downwards a little that's ok as we'll sort that in the next step...

Step 25

As the petals have been tucked down a little, when you flip it over you may need to press down the wrinkles that have formed - you can see where I've done this in the centre, close to the cocktail stick.



Step 26

Place the peony into the straw/ dummy and use your fingers to enhance the shape of the petal tips, making them curl inwards, without squashing them or compacting the whole flower.

Step 27

Tear a piece of kitchen towel into strips and roll them up. Place under the peony to prop the petals up whilst drying. You can create a great shape for the flower by varying the height of the supports so the petals have a natural wave to them.

Leave it to dry for ten minutes or so before adding the final layer. If you're working in damp or humid conditions it may take a little longer to dry.

Step 28

Cut a final peony shape using the 150mm cutter. Prep the petals and attach as before, this time using the petals at their full height.

Place back into the straw/ dummy and once again prop the petals up with rolls of kitchen towel. Now that the peony is finished, you can also add some smaller rolls of paper to spread the petals out, tweaking as necessary to get a natural spread and look for the petals.

Step 29

If you want add some petal dust to your peony, giving added depth and realism to the colour, use a wide soft brush. Only add a little a time - you can always add more, but once it's on you can't take it off!

Step 30

Begin adding the colour to the centre, focusing on the edges of the petals and tucking a little colour down in between the petals.

Step 31

Keep adding colour slowly, working towards the outside of the peony. You can see how the veins catch the dust, giving the petals a lovely combination of high- and low-lights.

The Finished Peony….

Peony sizes and Poly-buds:

Five-petal peony cutters are available at immaculateconfections.co.uk as a set of four cutters. I use the two smaller ones to make a small peony with a 30mm Poly-bud and the larger two to make a big peony with a 40mm Poly-bud, as shown in this tutorial. (If you want to make a smaller peony, swap the 120mm cutter for the smallest 90mm cutter and the 150mm for the 105mm cutter.)

Left: Large peony, made with 40mm bud, with 120mm & 150mm cutters
Right: Small Peony, made with 30mm bud, with 90mm & 105mm cutters

A note about Poly-buds:
The Poly-buds are nothing more complicated than a polystyrene ball attached to a cocktail or tooth pick, using a hot glue gun! I do it this way as they're ready to use immediately and can go straight into a cake - we eat food on cocktail sticks all the time so I'm personally happy to do this… whether or not you're comfortable doing so too is your choice.

You can totally make your own, and in fact I recommend that you do as it's far more cost effective… and I'm kinda bored of gluing little balls to toothpicks!

I get my polystyrene balls from a shop online called the Craftmill—they do a whole range of sizes and have always provided great service.
You can go direct to: http://www.craftmill.co.uk
Or find them on Ebay: https://www.ebay.co.uk/usr/dougarts

Toothpicks come from the supermarket…

...And you can pick up a Low-melt hot glue gun at Hobbycraft, the Range or Amazon for little more than a fiver.

Et voila! Your very own poly-bud factory! =0)

Hints, Tips & Troubleshooting:

- Remember to use corn flower, petal base or a white vegetable fat when rolling out your flower paste as it will stop it sticking to the board. If you find that corn flower is drying your paste out, swap to something fat based, eg. Crisco, Trex, White Flora or a purpose made petal base.

- If you are in a very humid or damp climate you may need to wait a little longer for the flowerpaste to firm up in between adding layers of petals .

- If you are making lots of peonies, set up a production line. Prep all your buds, cut a bunch of petals and do the first layer… then the second… then the third… etc… this way you should be able to make a fair few in an hour, working on the next one whilst the previous one is drying.

- Have a good look at the pictures and close-ups of both real and sugar peonies - see how the petals are shaped and arranged, mimicking them for a realistic shape.

- If you want to make a very dark coloured peony, or any other flower for that matter, it's best to either buy pre-coloured flowerpaste or to make a paler version of the colour and then darken the finished flower with petal dusts. If you try to make a dark colour yourself you run the risk of altering the consistency of the paste by having to add a lot of colour.

- Try a couple of different brands of flowerpaste - they don't all work and feel quite the same so if you try a few out you'll be sure to find a favourite that works for you.

- If your flowerpaste has become a little dry and is cracking when you roll it or use the ball tool, you can try kneading in a little white vegetable fat to re-moisten it. Fresh paste is the easiest to work with, so if you have been using the same piece for some time to practice, it may be best to start again with a fresh bit.

- If your petals crack or tear when your assembling the peony and sticking them on, it's probably because they have become too dry. If this happens at the base it doesn't matter too much as it won't be visible, especially within the initial rows. If it happens at the visible top of a petal it may be best to make that part again.

- For larger arrangements, try making flowers in a variety of shades, eg. deep pink peony buds paired with paler pink full blooms.