VANILLAGOODS BAKING ACADEMY · FROSTINGS, FILLINGS & ICINGS

Course workbook

Buttercream & Piping

Buttercreams, piping, glazes



Beginner · 5 video lessons · 53 minutes of video · Notes, quizzes and a practice log

By the end you'll be able to

- Make American and Swiss buttercream
- Fill and hold a piping bag
- Pipe rosettes, stars and borders

Inside

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Lesson videos by Preppy Kitchen, Tatyana's Everyday Food, Icing On Top - Becky's Cakes and JuliaMUsher, watched on YouTube from the course page.

This workbook belongs to _____

START HERE

How to use this workbook

This workbook goes with the free video course **Buttercream & Piping** on vanillagoods.com. Watch each lesson there, then use these pages to keep what you learned and to track what you have practised.

1

Watch

Open the lesson page and watch the creator's video. Jot quick notes on the lined space as you go.

2

Read and tick

Read the VanillaGoods notes, then tick each key point once you can explain it in your own words.

3

Check and practise

Answer the three questions, compare with the answer key on page 13, then log your bake.

Your lesson plan

	LESSON	VIDEO	WATCHED	QUIZ	PRACTISED
1	**American vanilla buttercream** Video by Preppy Kitchen	13 min	☐	☐	☐
2	**Swiss meringue buttercream** Video by Preppy Kitchen	8 min	☐	☐	☐
3	**Cream cheese frosting** Video by Tatyana's Everyday Food	4 min	☐	☐	☐
4	**Piping tips for beginners** Video by Icing On Top - Becky's Cakes	9 min	☐	☐	☐
5	**Royal icing** Video by JuliaMUsher	19 min	☐	☐	☐

Tools you'll see

Stand mixer · Sifter · Offset spatula · Piping bags and tips · Instant-read thermometer · Saucepan · Hand mixer · Turntable and decorating kit · Large French star tip · Round cutters

Any brand works. The lessons show what each tool is for.

Keep track online too

On each lesson page, "Mark complete" saves your progress in your browser, with no account. Finish every lesson and the course page lets you print a free certificate of completion.

American vanilla buttercream

Video by **Preppy Kitchen**: *"The Best Buttercream Frosting Recipe"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/buttercream-and-piping-1-american-vanilla-buttercream

Make smooth, fluffy American vanilla buttercream and adjust it for spreading, piping or a white finish.

Key points

- [ ] Beat the butter first until pale
- [ ] Sift powdered sugar and add it gradually
- [ ] Adjust consistency with cream a spoonful at a time

Step by step

- Beat softened butter 3–5 minutes until pale and creamy
- Add sifted powdered sugar gradually on low speed
- Add vanilla, a pinch of salt and a splash of cream or milk
- Beat on medium until fluffy, then on low for a minute to remove air bubbles

Adjusting it

- Too stiff: add cream a teaspoon at a time
- Too soft: add more powdered sugar or chill briefly
- Too sweet: a pinch of salt balances it
- Whiter frosting: beat the butter longer

VanillaGoods tip

Use vanilla bean paste or scraped bean seeds for a speckled vanilla bean buttercream. Pure extract tints buttercream slightly ivory, which most people love.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Stand mixer · Sifter · Offset spatula · Piping bags and tips

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 What is the first step of American buttercream?

- (A) Mix the sugar and milk
- (B) Melt the butter
- (C) Beat the softened butter alone until pale, 3 to 5 minutes

2 The buttercream is too stiff. What do you add?

- (A) Cream, a teaspoon at a time
- (B) More powdered sugar
- (C) More butter

3 Why finish with a minute on low speed?

- (A) To warm the frosting
- (B) To remove air bubbles
- (C) To dissolve the sugar

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Swiss meringue buttercream

Video by **Preppy Kitchen**: *"How to Make Swiss Meringue Buttercream"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/buttercream-and-piping-2-swiss-meringue-buttercream

Make silky Swiss meringue buttercream, the less-sweet frosting decorators love, and rescue it if it turns soupy or curdled.

Key points

- [ ] Heat whites and sugar to 160°F
- [ ] Cool the meringue completely before adding butter
- [ ] Soupy means too warm; curdled means too cold

Step by step

- Whisk egg whites and sugar in a bowl over simmering water until the sugar dissolves and the mixture reaches 160°F (71°C)
- Whip to stiff, glossy peaks and keep whipping until the bowl feels cool
- Add soft but cool butter a piece at a time
- Whip until smooth and silky, then add vanilla and salt

Rescue it

- Soupy: chill the bowl 10–15 minutes, then whip again
- Curdled or lumpy: warm the outside of the bowl briefly and whip
- Keep whipping; it nearly always comes together

Watch for

A completely grease-free bowl helps the whites whip to full volume.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Stand mixer · Instant-read thermometer · Saucepan · Piping bags and tips

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 The egg whites and sugar are heated over simmering water until...

- (A) They turn into stiff peaks in the bowl
- (B) They start to boil
- (C) They reach 160°F and the sugar has dissolved

2 When can the butter go in?

- (A) Once the meringue is completely cool
- (B) As soon as the meringue is stiff
- (C) Before whipping

3 The buttercream looks curdled and lumpy. It is...

- (A) Too warm: chill it
- (B) Too cold: warm the outside of the bowl and keep whipping
- (C) Ruined

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Cream cheese frosting

Video by **Tatyana's Everyday Food**: *"The BEST Cream Cheese Frosting Recipe - Just 5 Ingredients!!"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/buttercream-and-piping-3-cream-cheese-frosting

Make a cream cheese frosting that's tangy, smooth and firm enough to pipe.

Key points

- [ ] Use full-fat block cream cheese
- [ ] Don't overbeat once the cream cheese goes in
- [ ] Keep frosted cakes refrigerated

Step by step

- Beat room-temperature butter until creamy
- Add cool block cream cheese and beat just until smooth
- Add powdered sugar gradually, then vanilla and a pinch of salt
- Mix until combined; stop before it turns soft and runny

Why it gets runny

Tub-style or reduced-fat cream cheese contains more water, and overbeating breaks down the cream cheese's structure. Both make frosting too soft to pipe.

Watch for

Chill the frosting 20–30 minutes if it's too soft. Cakes with cream cheese frosting should be stored in the fridge.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Hand mixer · Sifter · Offset spatula · Piping bags and tips

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 Which cream cheese gives a frosting firm enough to pipe?

- (A) Tub-style spread
- (B) Reduced-fat cream cheese
- (C) Full-fat block cream cheese

2 Why stop beating soon after the cream cheese goes in?

- (A) Overbeating breaks down its structure and makes it runny
- (B) It gets too cold
- (C) The sugar turns grainy

3 A cake with cream cheese frosting is stored...

- (A) At room temperature
- (B) In the fridge
- (C) In the freezer only

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Piping tips for beginners

Video by **Icing On Top - Becky's Cakes**: *"Basic piping - how to hold and use a piping bag and tips"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/buttercream-and-piping-4-piping-tips-for-beginners

Fill and hold a piping bag correctly, use a coupler and pipe basic stars, rosettes and borders.

Key points

- [ ] A coupler lets you swap tips on one bag
- [ ] Even pressure gives even shapes
- [ ] Stop squeezing before you lift away

Setting up

- Fit the coupler in the bag and screw the tip on
- Fold the bag's top down over your hand and fill it halfway
- Twist the top closed and hold the twist with your thumb and finger

Piping basics

- Hold the bag straight up (90°) for stars and rosettes
- Hold it at 45° for borders and writing
- Squeeze with your whole hand and guide with the other
- Stop squeezing, then lift; that gives clean ends
- An open star tip such as the 1M makes swirls and rosettes

Practice

Pipe on parchment or a practice sheet first. Medium-consistency buttercream gives the cleanest shapes.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Piping bags and tips · Turntable and decorating kit · Large French star tip · Offset spatula

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 What does a coupler do?

- (A) Keeps the bag from leaking
- (B) Lets you swap tips on one bag
- (C) Colors the frosting

2 For stars and rosettes, hold the bag...

- (A) At 45 degrees
- (B) Flat against the cake
- (C) Straight up at 90 degrees

3 How do you get a clean end on a piped shape?

- (A) Stop squeezing first, then lift
- (B) Pull the bag away while squeezing
- (C) Twist the tip

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Royal icing

Video by **JuliaMUsher**: *"How to Make Royal Icing (Plus, Coloring and Consistency Adjustments)"*
vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/buttercream-and-piping-5-royal-icing

Mix royal icing, color it and adjust its consistency for outlining, flooding and detail work on decorated cookies.

Key points

- [ ] Royal icing dries hard and smooth
- [ ] Consistency decides how it behaves
- [ ] Cover it; it crusts quickly

Consistencies

- Stiff: holds peaks, for flowers and fine details
- Medium or outline: holds a line, for borders
- Flood: a line drawn through it disappears in about 10–15 seconds, for filling cookies

Step by step

- Beat powdered sugar with meringue powder (or egg whites) and water until thick and glossy
- Color with gel food coloring; colors deepen as they dry
- Thin portions with water a few drops at a time for each consistency
- Keep bowls covered with a damp towel or plastic wrap

Watch for

Let flooded cookies dry 6–8 hours or overnight before stacking. A drop of vanilla or almond extract adds flavor; clear vanilla keeps white icing bright.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Piping bags and tips | Stand mixer | Round cutters | Sifter

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 How do you test flood consistency?

- (A) A line drawn through it disappears in about 10 to 15 seconds
- (B) It holds a stiff peak
- (C) It drips off the spoon instantly

2 Why keep the bowls covered with a damp towel?

- (A) To keep it cold
- (B) Royal icing crusts quickly
- (C) To stop the color changing

3 How long should flooded cookies dry before stacking?

- (A) About 30 minutes
- (B) About 2 hours
- (C) 6 to 8 hours or overnight

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

ANSWER KEY

Check your answers

One correct answer per question. If you missed one, the note explains why, and the lesson page has the full notes and the video.

1. American vanilla buttercream

1 **C** Beating the butter first until pale and creamy makes a lighter, whiter frosting before the sifted sugar goes in.

2 **A** Loosen stiff buttercream with cream a teaspoon at a time; firm up soft buttercream with more sugar or a brief chill.

3 **B** A minute on low knocks out air bubbles for a smooth finish and clean piping.

2. Swiss meringue buttercream

1 **C** Whisk over simmering water until the sugar dissolves and the mixture reaches 160°F, then whip to stiff, glossy peaks.

2 **A** Keep whipping until the bowl feels cool; warm meringue melts the butter and turns soupy.

3 **B** Curdled means too cold, so warm the outside of the bowl briefly and whip; soupy means too warm, so chill 10 to 15 minutes. It nearly always comes together.

3. Cream cheese frosting

1 **C** Tub-style and reduced-fat cream cheese hold more water, which makes the frosting too soft to pipe.

2 **A** Beat just until smooth; overbeating breaks down the cream cheese and the frosting turns soft and runny.

3 **B** Cakes with cream cheese frosting belong in the fridge; chill the frosting 20 to 30 minutes if it is too soft.

4. Piping tips for beginners

1 **B** A coupler fitted in the bag lets you screw different tips on without emptying the bag.

2 **C** Hold the bag straight up for stars and rosettes and at 45 degrees for borders and writing.

3 **A** Stop squeezing, then lift away; that gives clean ends instead of tails.

5. Royal icing

1 **A** Flood icing is thin enough that a line drawn through it disappears in about 10 to 15 seconds; stiff icing holds peaks for details.

2 **B** Royal icing dries hard and crusts quickly, so cover it whenever you are not using it.

3 **C** Let flooded cookies dry 6 to 8 hours or overnight before stacking them.

WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED

Three things to do next

1

Mark each lesson complete

The "Mark complete" button on every lesson page saves your progress in your browser. No account, nothing to sign up for.

2

Print your certificate

Once all 5 lessons are marked complete, the course page prints a free certificate of completion with your name on it. It records what you finished; it is not an accredited qualification.

3

Bake it

Practice with VanillaGoods recipes that use what this course teaches.

vanillagoods.com/pages/recipes?q=vanilla%20frosting

NEXT ON THE LEARNING PATH

Home Barista Basics

Beginner · Brewing, espresso, milk drinks

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-course/home-barista

Free guide for this course: “Frosting quantity guide”, How much frosting to make for cupcakes and every cake size. Get it from the course page.

Baking with real vanilla? VanillaGoods keeps Madagascar, Uganda and Tahiti vanilla in stock, along with coffee and tea, at vanillagoods.com.

✧ Key points from every lesson

1. American vanilla buttercream

- Beat the butter first until pale
- Sift powdered sugar and add it gradually
- Adjust consistency with cream a spoonful at a time

2. Swiss meringue buttercream

- Heat whites and sugar to 160°F
- Cool the meringue completely before adding butter
- Soupy means too warm; curdled means too cold

3. Cream cheese frosting

- Use full-fat block cream cheese
- Don't overbeat once the cream cheese goes in
- Keep frosted cakes refrigerated

4. Piping tips for beginners

- A coupler lets you swap tips on one bag
- Even pressure gives even shapes
- Stop squeezing before you lift away

5. Royal icing

- Royal icing dries hard and smooth
- Consistency decides how it behaves
- Cover it; it crusts quickly

The lesson videos are by independent creators (Preppy Kitchen, Tatyana's Everyday Food, Icing On Top - Becky’s Cakes and JuliaMUsher) and play in YouTube's own player on the lesson pages; this workbook links to them and copies nothing. Notes, key points, questions and this workbook are written by VanillaGoods for home bakers.

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