

Cupcake Bead

A beadmaking tutorial by Laura Sparling



Introduction

This tutorial shows you how I make my Cupcake beads.

I'm not the first or only person to make cupcake-shaped beads but this tutorial shows you how I make them. I've made literally hundreds and hundreds of these little beads and there is much fun to be had choosing colours and decorations.

This tutorial shows you how to make a basic Cupcake bead and how to add a cherry to the top. I don't cover the decorative elements in this tutorial. Decorating your cupcakes is up to you - you can add sprinkles in the form of raised dots, flowers, hearts or whatever else takes your fancy. This tutorial just gives you the low-down on how to make a basic cupcake shape.

Just so you know, I have a Carlisle Mini CC torch.

For this tutorial you will need some glass in your chosen colours, a graphite paddle or marver and a razor tool. I use enamel for my Cupcake beads but this is optional and not imperative.



Before You Begin Baking Cupcakes

Before you get going you'll need to get a few things together. You need to pick two glass colours - one for the cake part of the bead and one for the icing (or 'frosting' if you're American!). If you're going to add a cherry to your cake you'll also need a rod of red glass too.

For my demonstration beads I'm using CiM Butter Pecan for the cake, Effetre White for the icing and Effetre Dark Red for the cherry. I'm also using Thompson 'Brown Beige' enamel.

As I said at the start, I'm just showing you how to make the basic cupcake shape here but if you want to decorate your cake you'll need to get all your decorating bits and pieces together before you begin.

I use enamel to give a bit of colour variation to the cake part of my Cupcakes but this isn't totally necessary. Obviously if you're using enamels you will need adequate ventilation and a dust mask. I roll my warm bead in the enamel here so there are less airborne particles than if I were sifting it but like I say, the enamel part is personal choice.

I make my Cupcakes on a 2mm (1/16) mandrel.

You'll also need a graphite paddle or marver and a razor tool or something similar.

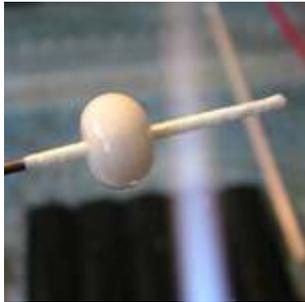


Before you start you'll need to pull a thick stringer from the glass that you're going to use for the icing. If you're adding a cherry to your cake you'll also need to pull a thick stringer of red glass too.



Making A Cupcake Bead

Step 1 - The Cake Base

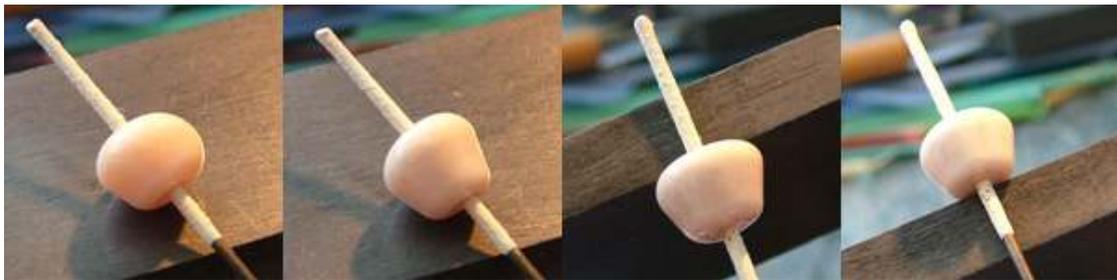


Make a basic donut-shaped bead in your chosen glass. My bead is about 12mm diameter. When you make your bead make sure that you leave enough room on the mandrel for the rest of the cake. I make the base on the left hand side of the bead-release-dipped area with room to the right for the icing (and optional cherry).

Step 2 - Shaping The Cake



Bring your bead to an even, soft glow. We're going to start shaping it now so we need it to be pliable but not so molten that everything will get out of control and messy.



Using your marver gently roll your bead at an angle (about 40 degrees) to coax the round bead into the start of your cake shape. Imagine an un-iced actual real life fairy cake and that's what we're aiming for. Keep reheating and shaping your bead until you're happy with the shape. Use the edges of your marver to neaten up the top and bottom edges of needs be.



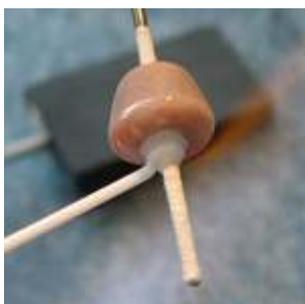
Step 3 - Adding Enamel



I use enamel to add a subtle colour variation to the cake. If you're not fussed about enamel skip to Step 4.

Heat the surface of your cake shape to a soft glow and then roll in a metal tray or spoon of enamel. Return the bead to the flame and gently melt the enamel into the surface of the bead. Reshape your cake if you need to.

Step 4 - Preparing For The Icing



Now we're going to lay down the foundations for the icing. Using the thick stringer of icing-coloured glass that you pulled earlier, add a wrap of glass right next to the wider end of the cake. Get your stringer really molten and push the glass right up next to the cake. This step ensures that there will be no gaping holes between your cake and the icing. The reason for using a stringer is that it enables you to get into the area next to the cake much easier than you would be able to with a full-size rod of glass.



Using the full-size rod of icing colour glass melt a gather and wrap it over the small amount of glass you've just applied. Knock it right up to the wide edge of the cake and taper it down into a narrower, blunt end. In effect you're making a mirror image of the cake base.

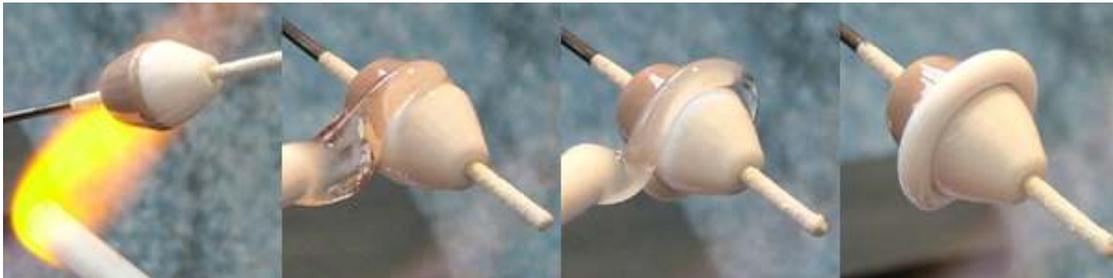


Step 4 - A Touch Of Shaping

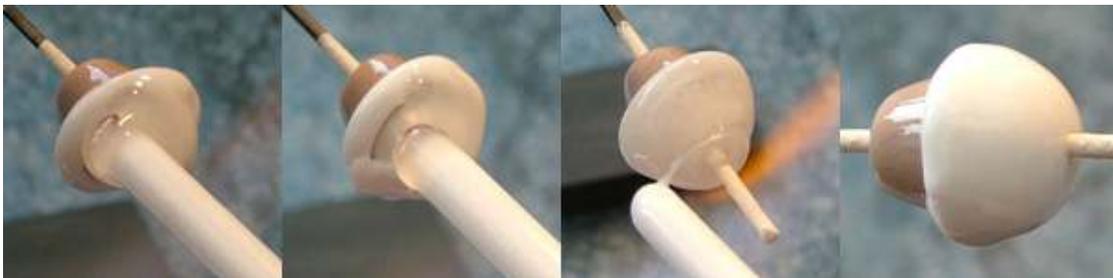


Using your marver shape your freshly-applied icing glass into a cone. Don't be tempted to make the end really pointed. If you do this you will end up with a jagged area around the bead hole. Every bead you make, no matter what the shape, needs to have neat and tidy bead holes or the bead could cut through beading thread or wire or possibly someone's finger.

Step 5 - The Icing On The Cake



Melt a gather of icing-coloured glass and wrap a neat and even band around the centre of the bead where the cake and icing meet. I say neat and even because if it's not then your icing, and eventually the bead, will be wonky and off centre.



Now using really molten glass, 'paint' stripes from the top of the cake down towards the band you've just applied. Go right around the cake repeating this glass application. You need to make sure the glass is really gloopy so that you can push it into any crevices without forming air bubbles. You can also dab the glass on. Basically you're adding bulk to the top half of the bead to create the rough shape of the icing mound.



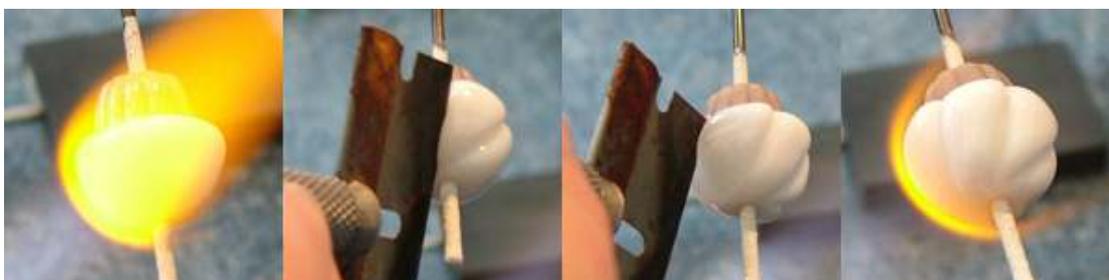
Step 6 - Adding Indentations To The Cake



Once you're happy with the shape of your cupcake, gently heat part of the cake area and using a razor tool (or brass shaper or Exacto knife or whatever) add some vertical indentations to the base. Move around the diameter of the cake heating and adding lines. These lines simulate the ones that are left by a paper cake case. Don't get the glass too hot and just apply gentle pressure with your shaping tool or you will force the bead out of shape. Cool your metal tool down every now and then by dipping it in a jug or bowl of cold water. This will prevent the metal sticking to the glass. It's also the reason why part of my razor tool is a tad rusty!

When you've finished adding lines to the cake, gently heat the bottom edge and marver it so it's straight and level.

Step 6 - Adding Indentations To The Icing



Gently warm an area of icing. Don't overheat the bead or everything you've done will splurge into one glassy mess. This whole sculpting thing is about good heat control. Take your shaping tool and gently add an indentation from the middle of the bead to the top of it. It's almost a rocking action as opposed to a cutting or slicing one. Don't go right up to the bead hole or you could break the bead release. The angle that you add the indentation at determines the look of your icing. I add five indentations at a slight angle to give that piped-from-a-piping-bag swirl effect. You could try more or less indentations or you could score a spiral 'Mr Whippy' style line into your icing. Experiment and see what you like best.



Step 6 - The Finished Cupcake



And that's your basic un-decorated Cupcake bead. How you decorate it is up to you. You could add a raised flower, some Cubic Zirconium, some Pixie Dust or frit, some pretty hearts or maybe some sprinkles.

Don't forget that any decoration you add needs to be firmly attached to the bead. If you are adding dots as sprinkles make sure that they're melted in enough so that they won't ping off if the bead is accidentally knocked against a hard surface.

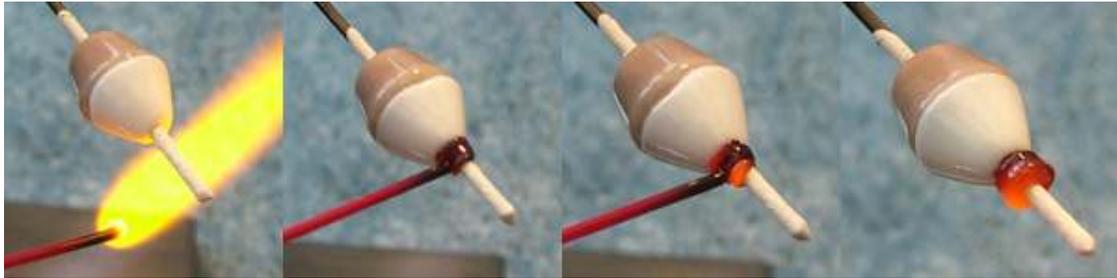


Or perhaps you'd like to top your Cupcake bead with a delicious red cherry? If so, read on for details of how I add cherries to my Cupcake beads.



Adding A Cherry To Your Cupcake

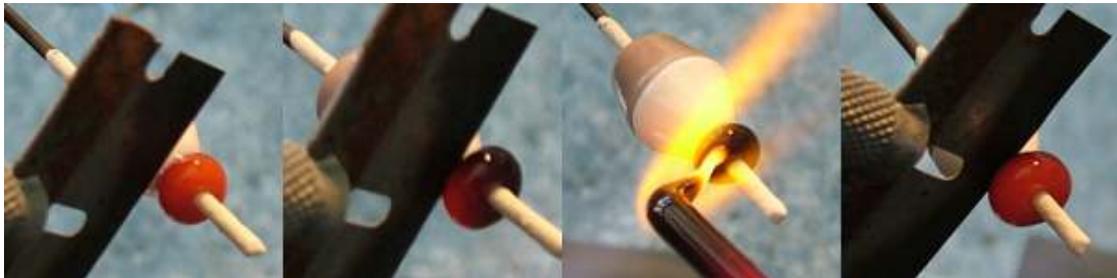
Follow Steps One through Four of the Cupcake Tutorial above. Then using your thick red stringer add a small, thin wrap of glass right next to the top part of your icing foundation.



In effect we're building a regular small donut-shaped bead except that it's joined on to more glass. So imagine you're making a normal round bead. Make sure you keep the rest of the bead warm by occasionally flashing it through the flame otherwise it may crack if it gets too cold.



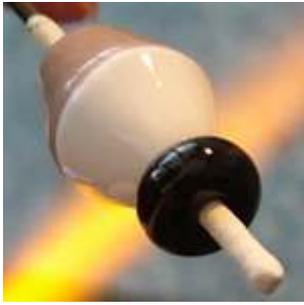
Once you've added the first initial wraps of your cherry bead, take the full rod of red glass and add more bulk to it. Heat the bead into a rough round shape. It won't be perfect at this point.



With your shaping tool gently make an indentation around the top of the cupcake where the icing glass and the cherry glass meet. Push right into the glass but not all the way through to the mandrel. You will probably need to add a touch more glass to the cherry to even up its shape. Then reheat and reshape until you're happy with the cherry.



Adding A Cherry To Your Cupcake (Continued)



Again, you need to make sure that the cherry has a nice dimpled bead hole. Once your cake base and cherry is complete go back to step 5 of the Cupcake Tutorial and work through to the end. When you add the rest of your icing in Step Five go careful that you don't touch the cherry with the icing glass.



Hints & Tips

~ Always make sure that you keep your entire bead warm, not just the part you're working on, by wafting it in and out of the flame. This will help to ensure that it won't get too cold and crack.

~ If your bead looks as if it's getting too warm bring it out of the flame and let the glow in it subside. You need good heat control for any kind of sculptural bead because if parts of the bead get too molten then you will lose definition and shape.

~ A nice chocolate cake base can be created by using Effetre Dark Brown with a coating of Thompson 'Dark Coffee' enamel.



Some Of My Cupcakes

Here's a few of the Cupcake beads that I've made in the past. Cupcake beads look great turned into pendants, mobile phone charms and bookmarks and they look particularly good en masse as a cupcake-themed charm bracelet.



Thank You

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