

WILLIAMS-SONOMA

Halloween Decorating



Cutout Sugar Cookies

In the midst of autumn's richness lies the whimsy of Halloween. What better way to celebrate the day than with cookies that are decorated to be hauntingly beautiful and frightfully delicious? We invite you to make our scarily simple sugar cookies and, with our decorating kit, transform the cookies into scary cats, swooping bats, flying ghosts, screeching owls and lurking spiders. Give them as treats, hang them as decorations and enjoy their ghoulish glee. Happy Halloween!

Sugar Cookies

2¼ cups all-purpose flour

¼ tsp. baking powder

¼ tsp. salt

12 Tbs. (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature, cut into tablespoon-size pieces

¾ cup sugar

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 egg

1 batch royal icing (recipe follows)

Halloween Treats Decorating Kit*

In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder and salt; set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Beat in the vanilla and egg. Reduce the speed to low and add the flour mixture in three additions, scraping down the sides of the bowl after each addition. Mix just until combined.

Form the dough into a ball, wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or as long as overnight.

Preheat an oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper or Silpat nonstick liners.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to ¼-inch thickness. Cut out desired shapes. Transfer to the prepared baking sheets, spacing cookies about 2 inches apart, and bake until just golden around the edges, 10 to 15 minutes, depending on size of cookies. Cool pans on wire racks for 5 minutes, then remove cookies from pans and cool completely. Decorate as desired with royal icing, colored sugars and decorating pens. Makes 12 to 18 cookies.

BAKER'S NOTE: For best results with the more detailed cutters, roll out cookie dough directly on a Silpat-lined cookie sheet. Remove the excess dough from around the cutouts, wrap dough and refrigerate. Bake cookies as instructed above. Repeat with the reserved dough.

Royal Icing

10 oz. (about 2¼ cups) confectioners' sugar, sifted

2 egg whites

½ tsp. vanilla extract

¼ tsp. cream of tartar

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the confectioners' sugar, egg whites, vanilla and cream of tartar on high speed until the mixture is glossy and stiff peaks form, about 5 minutes. It is best to use the frosting immediately. Or cover tightly with plastic wrap and store at room temperature for up to 6 hours. Makes 5 to 6 cups.

*Available at Williams-Sonoma



Decorating Halloween Cookies

What You'll Need for Decorating

- Royal icing, some of regular consistency and some thinned (see "Flowing" below)
- Food-coloring paste*
- Pastry bags, with a small round tip (#2 size is good)
- Icing pens*
- Colored sanding sugars and confetti*

TINTING: If you're making icing in several colors, first divide the plain icing among small bowls. Then add food-coloring paste, a tiny bit at a time, stirring each mixture with a toothpick or small whisk until it achieves the desired hue. To prevent a crust from forming, keep the icing tightly covered with plastic wrap while not in use.

FLOWING: Before icing is flowed from a pastry bag over the top of a cookie, make a border of royal icing around the area to be filled. Then thin the icing that will be flowed to ensure it spreads smoothly: Transfer a portion of the thick icing to a bowl and stir in warm water, 1 Tbs. at a time, until a drop of the icing slowly spreads outward without being watery.

The thinned icing is best applied using a pastry bag fitted with a #2 tip. To fill in the outlined area, work from the perimeter toward the center, letting the icing flow while gently maneuvering it with the tip. Tiny air bubbles on the icing's surface indicate that too much air was whipped into it. Simply prick the bubbles with a straight pin while the icing is still moist.

FLOCKING: While the thinned royal icing is still wet, sprinkle its surface with colored sanding sugars or confetti. (These will also adhere to a border of thick icing if it is still moist.) Be sure the icing is completely dry before shaking off the excess decorations.

BORDERS & LINES: Royal icing has the ideal consistency for creating borders, lines and calligraphy. It can be applied easily using a pastry bag fitted with a small pointed decorating tip. Or you may use colored icing pens.

Decorating Ideas

SCARY CATS: Outline and fill cat-shaped cookies with black-tinted royal icing. Place dots of icing for the eyes and sprinkle orange sanding sugar over the dots while still wet. Your cats' eyes will glow!

PRETTY PUMPKINS: Outline and fill pumpkin-shaped cookies with orange-tinted royal icing and let harden. Melt the orange decorating pen according to the package instructions and use it to outline the cookies and to paint curved lines suggesting the pumpkin's shape. Sprinkle the lines with sanding sugars while still wet.

GHOST PLACE CARDS: Outline and fill ghost-shaped cookies with white royal icing and let harden. Melt the orange or black decorating pen according to the package instructions and use it to write the names of your guests. While writing is still wet, sprinkle with sanding sugars, if desired.

*Included in the Williams-Sonoma Halloween Treats Decorating Kit

Joni German, Pastry Chef and Owner, Old River Road, contributed to these tips.

Making Caramel Apples



Homemade caramel apples are a delicious way to welcome the fall season, and making them at home is easier than you might imagine. Simply melt the caramel in a double boiler over low heat on the stovetop or in the microwave. Insert a wooden stick into the stem end of each apple, dip the fruit into the caramel, and roll in chopped candy and nuts. That's all there is to it.

For a variety of tastes and colors, try a combination of sweet red and tart green apples. Farm stands are a great source for unusual heirloom apples, such as the wine-like Baldwin or the fragrant Cox Orange Pippin. Use these heirloom varieties for caramel apples that could only be made in your kitchen.

HELPFUL EQUIPMENT

- Wooden sticks*
- Caramel*
- Roasted peanuts, toffee, Halloween sprinkles*
- Double boiler
- Wooden spoons for stirring caramel
- Sheet pan to hold caramel-dipped items
- Parchment paper or Silpat nonstick liner to line pan
- Bowls for holding candies and nuts

*Included in the Williams-Sonoma Caramel Apple Kit

Carving Pumpkins & Squash



HELPFUL EQUIPMENT

- Carving tools*
- Sculpting tools*
- Stencils*
- Sharp knife for removing pumpkin top*
- Newspaper for spreading under pumpkins
- Large spoon for scooping out seeds

*Included in the Williams-Sonoma Pumpkin Carving Kit

There's more to carving a pumpkin than simply making a face. With the help of a stencil, you can create haunted houses, ghosts and even graveyards. And pumpkins aren't the only vegetables ripe for carving: Squashes (blue hubbard, pale-orange butternut and dark-green or bright-orange acorn varieties) and most gourds can easily be hollowed out and carved.

Here's an idea: Gather ten or twelve pumpkins in graduated sizes and carve them to suit your fancy. Place the largest nearest your door, then align the rest in descending size along the walkway. With candles lighted inside, these glowing symbols of Halloween will welcome guests and beckon trick-or-treaters.

For a grown-up Halloween party, create a festive mood with candlelight throughout the house. Luminous carved pumpkins and squash nestled among colorful fall leaves are beautiful on a mantel or down the center length of a buffet table. (Take care to keep any dried plant material away from candle flames.)