



Silicone Simplicity

Modern art with minimal effort

Susan Notter, Pastry Chef Consultant

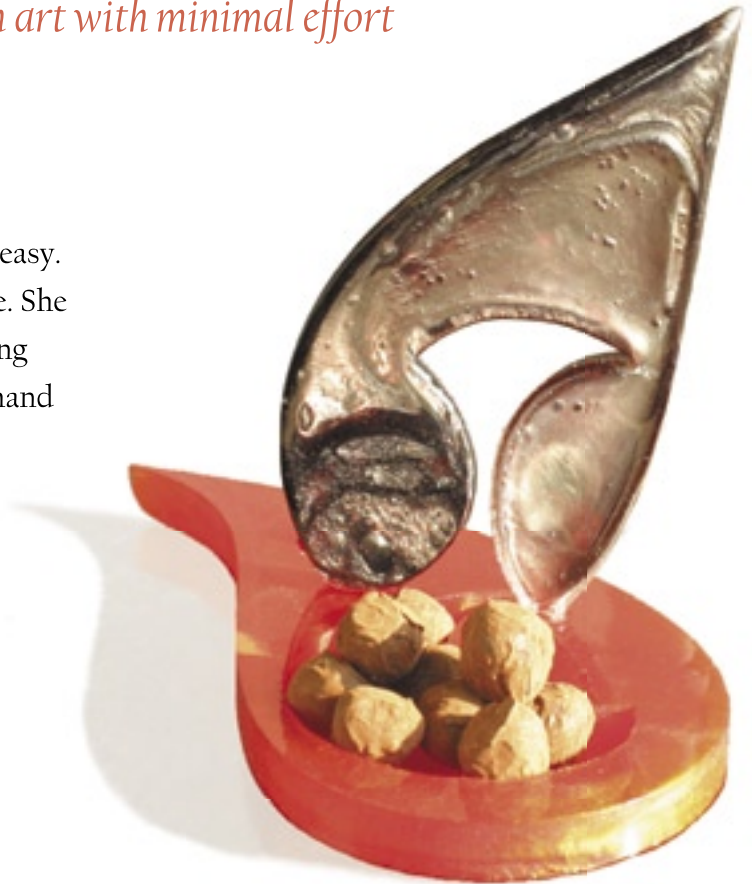
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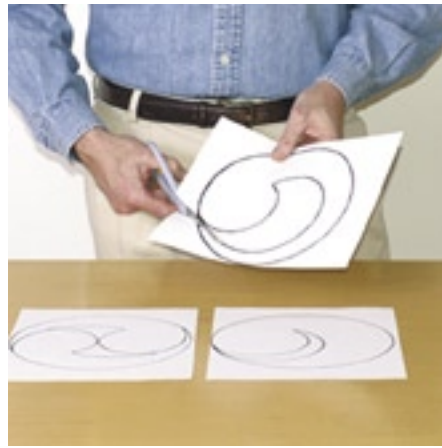
Some chefs have the ability to make things look easy. Pastry Chef Susan Notter is one of these people. She is among a growing number of pastry chefs being asked to provide an artistic bridge between classical hand skills and innovative new casting techniques. As a seasoned competitor, Susan knows judges want to see strength in hand skills such as pulled and blown sugar. She also recognizes that they want to be surprised with new designs and techniques.



Chef Notter has coauthored several books and travels the world teaching a wide range of pastry classes. She knows first hand the creative challenges today's chefs face in professional kitchens. With less time and higher expectations as the norm, we want to help bring some balance back into the equation. To help chefs meet this challenge, Chef Notter and I will demonstrate two versatile techniques. The first is a quick and easy way to make custom silicone shapes and the second is a fast-track casting technique. The results will startle you with how easy it is to achieve individual, creative results in a short period of time.



1. Primary materials needed:
Flex & Bake silicone, ½" thick foam core, Elmer's glue, Vaseline®, scissors, X-Acto knife, acetate sheet.



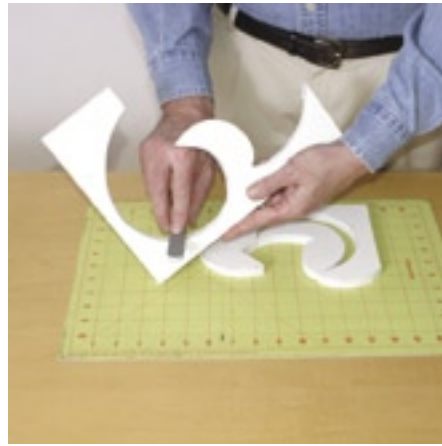
2. Cut out the paper shapes.
Three designs (from a book of symbols) are copied and enlarged. Next, the inside shapes are cut out.



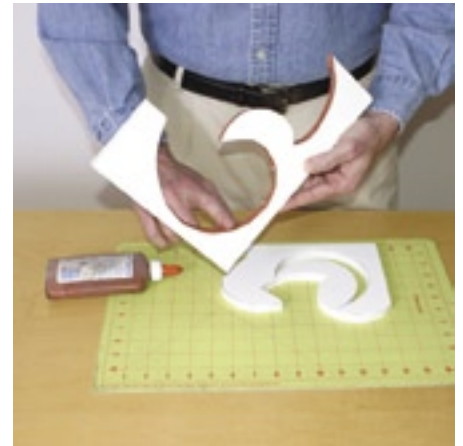
3. Transfer the images to foam core.
Before transferring the images, cut the foam core into a manageable 8½" x 11" section. This is the same size as the acetate you will place beneath it in photograph 8.



4. Cut out the shapes.
With a new blade, cut out the foam core shapes. Next, cut connecting lines between all three shapes. This will create a multi-piece template that can be separated to release your silicone shapes.



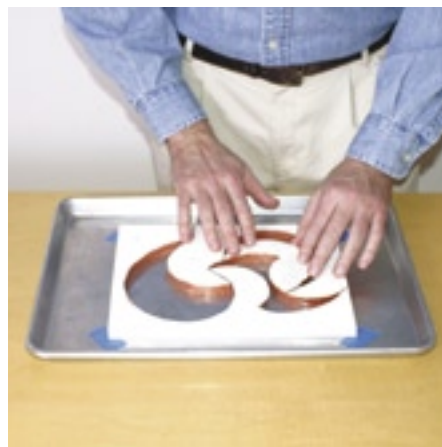
5. Sand the edges smooth.
Using an emery board or sand paper, smooth the inside surfaces. The edges don't have to be perfect, but they should not be jagged or rough. (Do not sand in an area where food is prepared.)



6. Seal the foam edges with glue.
Use Elmer's craft glue to seal the inside foam edges. Feed the glue onto the edge and then smooth it with your finger. When dry, the layer of glue will reduce the porosity of the foam. (Glue has been pigmented for clarity.)



7. Apply Vaseline as a release agent.
Once the glue has completely dried (two hours or so), apply a thin layer of Vaseline to the inside surfaces. Only a thin 'glaze' of Vaseline is needed. Do not apply a thick gloppy coat or it may inhibit the cure of your silicone.



8. Reassemble the template.
Not shown: A sheet of acetate is taped into a new sheetpan. Next, apply drops of Elmer's glue to hold down the foam core to the acetate surface. (Without acetate, the silicone will stick to the sheetpan.)



9. Press the foam core flat.
To ensure a tight contact surface between the foam core and acetate, small bags of rice are used to weigh it down. Allow the glue to dry for several hours.



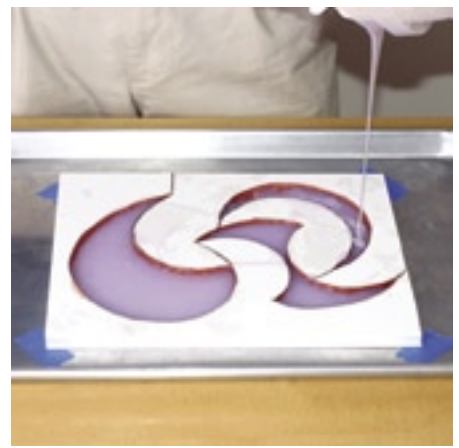
10. Mix the silicone.

From the Flex & Bake starter kit, 200 grams of 'base' are weighed out. When using liquid silicone materials, gloves and safety glasses should be worn. Do not mix or pour in areas where food is prepared.



11. Add the catalyst.

Flex & Bake silicone is mixed in a ratio of 10:1 by weight. To complete the batch, 20 grams of catalyst (purple) are added to the base. Mix until a uniform violet color is achieved.



12. Pour the silicone.

To reduce air bubbles, pour the silicone in a slow, thin stream (needling). Most bubbles will stretch and burst before entering the form. It is alright for some small air bubbles to remain on the surface.



13. Allow the silicone to cure.

24-36 hours later, the foam is flipped over and unmolded. If the silicone is still tacky (cold rooms can slow the cure), do not unmold. Place entire sheetpan in a 100°F oven (or warm area) for several hours. Leave alone until silicone firms.



14. Clean up the silicone shapes.

Fiskars® curved-tip craft scissors are the best for trimming flash (excess silicone) from the edges. Remember to save your foam core template. It can be used again.



15. Post-cure the silicone.

Before using your silicone shapes, wash them in warm soapy water and bake them in an oven at 300°F for 3 hours. This is necessary to complete the cure of Flex & Bake silicone.



16. Prepare for casting.

On a sheet of vinyl, two silicone Noodles™ are contoured around the silicone shapes. When casting on vinyl, always put parchment paper beneath it. Otherwise, the vinyl will stick to your table.



17. Pour the black Isomalt.

First, Chef Susan Notter cooks and pigments the Isomalt. Next, she adds a teaspoon of pearlescent powder and swirls it into the pot before pouring the Isomalt into the Noodle forms.



18. Add clear Isomalt for a special effect.

Chef Notter pours a small amount of clear Isomalt into the forms. The clear Isomalt will enhance the metallic effect. At the same time, she fills the (back right) corner shape with clear Isomalt.



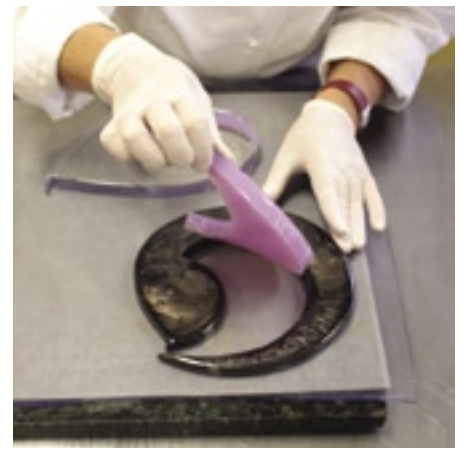
19. Pour the red Isomalt.

Isomalt is cooked and pigmented red. Next, a teaspoon of white pearlescent powder is swirled into the pitcher. While pouring very slowly, Chef Notter completely covers the silicone shapes.



20. Unmold the Noodles.

The Isomalt is allowed to cool for at least thirty minutes before the silicone Noodles are removed.



21. Remove the silicone shapes.

Chef Notter carefully removes the silicone inserts.



22. Remove the embedded shapes.

The red casting is flipped over to expose the encapsulated silicone inserts (see step 16). Chef Notter uses a scissor tip to help pry the shape out.



23. Peel the vinyl off the casting.

Since the black casting is more delicate, Chef Notter pulls the vinyl downwards off the edge of the table. Pulling the vinyl down and away from the sugar is better than trying to pry it up off the vinyl.



24. Compose the sugar elements.

When working with bold, geometric shapes, Chef Notter comments, "Don't be overly fussy with extra decoration. Beautiful results can be had quickly when you keep your designs clean and simple."



25. Second composition.

With the remaining elements from the pour, Chef Notter builds a second amenity. Once again, it is a simple, non-fussy design that creates a strong effect.



26. Result!

Notice how Chef Notter placed a bright red sugar sphere to draw your eye to the front of the piece. Add a few truffles and the result is first class. Look at that metallic effect when the light hits it!



27. Encore !

Two simple shapes + two simple colors = one VIP amenity ready to go! Thank you, Chef Notter for sharing your artistic skills. To learn more about casting, visit [Tips & Tools at www.ChicagoMoldSchool.com](http://www.ChicagoMoldSchool.com).