

Colour Theory:

How to get the best from your colour combinations, with colour blending and mixing using gel colours, air drying clay and dusts.

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Using gel and paste colours with the help of a colour wheel or colouring chart will help you understand colour combinations and mixing to achieve different shades, such as adding purple to pink to produce magenta.



General Information

Remember, not all colours and brands offer the same shades, especially pinks, reds, greens, blues and purples / violets. However, many of the standard colours, such as lemon yellow, leaf green and royal blue, will not vary much between brands. If I want to colour paste yellow, there won't be a huge difference in the shade using Rainbow Dust ProGel Lemon or Wilton Lemon. The difference will be in the consistency, which is why we avoid using food colours from supermarkets as they are usually liquid and diluted colours, which will affect the paste consistency too much, as discussed in *Episode 13 Pastes and Colouring*.

Also consider the brand of flower paste / gum paste or sugar paste / rolled fondant, as pH balance will affect the colour. For example, if you add purple or violet colouring to some brands they will turn blue! You can add a pinch of baking soda to help but it might mean choosing certain brands for certain colours. At The

French Pastry School we use the Swiss brand of rolled fondant, Massa Ticino, which we know from experience will turn an inky blue when adding purple colouring due to a chemical reaction.

Commercial flower paste / gum paste sometimes contains titanium dioxide. If you coloured both scratch / homemade paste and commercial paste with same amount of colour, they will look different due to the titanium dioxide making the commercial paste more opaque. As discussed in *Episode 13 Pastes and Colouring*, you can add white gel or powder to your homemade paste as well.

Flower Pro Book Volumes 1-3 contain paste colouring charts. This is how I can standardise my colour choices, using say Renshaw Brand as I add sugar paste / rolled fondant anyway, so I developed my colours based on that, such as the dark blood red for my roses: 85g of red flower Paste / gum paste, then add 10g of purple and 5g of brown sugar paste / rolled fondant, or similarly, if colouring white paste you can use red colouring then a little purple and touch of brown colouring.

At my website, www.nicholaslodge.com click on Recipes – Templates. There you will see my Renshaw Colour chart PDF, although this is based on sugar paste / rolled fondant, it will help understand mixing and blending colours. Many companies provide colour charts, such as Satin Ice, Squires Kitchen, etc. Colour theory charts are readily available online, or in crafts shops or school supply stores.

Below is a list of brands I use here in the USA for certain colours if colouring from scratch for flowers:

- Chefmaster Ribbon – will not fade, especially good for making pale pink roses or cherry blossoms.
- Chefmaster No-Fade Purple – beautiful amethyst colour I use for Ondina rose colour.
- Chefmaster Burgundy Wine – ideal for grapes and chrysanthemums.
- Wilton Moss – best moss green colour for leaves.
- Wilton Juniper – nice grey green.
- Wilton Creamy Peach – I prefer this to Americolor Peach which is very orange.

- Wilton Delphinium Blue – good for blue hydrangea and forget-me-nots.
- Americolor Gold – I use for a cream colour for maple and ginkgo. Alternatively use ivory / little lemon.
- Rainbow Dust ProGel – I love the Grey for making muted colours like adding to blue and green for foliage like eucalyptus. I use ProGel for all my basic colours but they only offer 11 FDA compliant colours in the USA.

UK colours:

- Sugarflair Red Extra and Black Extra – very concentrated colours.
- Sugarflair Pink – light stable so won't fade.
- Rainbow Dust ProGel – over 30 colours available in the UK, Europe and Canada, so colours like Gooseberry are a suitable alternative to Wilton Moss in the USA.

Dusting powders

As discussed in *Episode 19 Colouring*, dusts can be mixed together usually by a ratio of 1:1 or 3:1, for example, for the stargazer lily I use 3 parts American Beauty and 1 part Plum.

I use a small pinch, or spoons or a small coffee stirrer to calculate formula then can be done with $\frac{1}{8}$ – 1 teaspoon measures. Keep in a container and mark on which flower you used the mixture for.

Air Drying Clay

You can use a chart available online from Padico for Hearty Clay. It uses a similar concept to the size guide to measure paste to create different colours and shades!

The fondant charts are not ideal for clay, as air drying clay colours are more saturated.

Pantone colour chart

I would recommend buying a new or used Pantone colour chart as this is the global standard of colour!

It is a reference used by the printing industry (my NL green is Pantone 375). This can be very helpful if a client confirms a Pantone colour for invitations, or if a company has specific corporate colours, making it easier to match.

Also it will give you the breakdown of colours, helping you to achieve a close match.

Suggestions

Never tell a client or bride you will match a colour exactly, as when colouring with food colours some colours are just not possible. Sometimes on a wedding cake I would add a colouring surcharge for time taken to develop colour.

To test your colours, mix your desired shade, take a small piece, and wrap the rest of the paste and store away from light. Place the piece by a window for 24 hours and see how colour has changed! You may need to make the colour stronger due to fading. Natural daylight and fluorescent lights are the worse culprits so keeping flowers away from direct light is the best option! Dusting powders also will fade a little over time but not as much as paste.

Have fun and enjoy your colour blending!