

# Covered Cupcake Stand

by Lauren Smith

A covered cupcake stand is probably not a necessity; however, they're very fun to make, especially if they're frilly and over-the-top fancy. I like to imagine that mine are going to a tea party with the Mad Hatter or perhaps more likely a birthday party or even a surprise proposal. Whatever the occasion, it's sure to make a great conversation piece.

## Weights for Each Piece

I make this form from three pieces; the stem, plate, and lid. Begin by weighing out three balls of clay. The stem is 1½ pounds, the plate is 2 pounds, and the lid is 2 pounds.

## Throwing the Plate, Lid, and Stem

Begin by throwing the plate, leaving it ⅜ inch thick and opening it up to 5 inches wide, with the rim flared out and pulled up to 1½ inches tall. Don't pull the walls up too high or this will visually hide the stem when attached and overall lead to a frumpy form (1). Don't cut the plate off of the bat, leave it attached and set aside.

Next, throw the lid as you would a bowl that's taller than it is wide and round out the inside. A lid that's taller than it is wide will appear to be more elegant when it's all together. Don't worry about leaving clay at the bottom as though you were going to trim out a foot ring, because it will all be trimmed off. Use calipers to measure the diameter of the rim (2). Compare this measurement to the diameter of the plate (see finished plate). Make the plate about ½ inch wider in diameter than the lid to allow for alterations around the perimeter of the plate. Set aside to allow the lid to set up.

The last item thrown is the stem. I use 1½ pounds of clay and open the center all the way down to the bat. Open the bottom to about 2½ inches wide on the inside and begin to pull up the wall. Leave the base of the stem a bit thick and make the outside 5 inches wide, which allows for stability and gives it a nice flare. Taper in and narrow the mid section and pull the wall to about 6 inches tall.

Make sure to flatten and widen the rim to allow for a good connection to the plate. Leave it at least 3–3½ inches wide at the rim of the stem, which will help support the plate and prevent it from warping in the kiln. Set the stem aside and let it set up (3).

Once everything is thrown and has set up but isn't quite leather hard, I move back and forth between the three pieces, working on them all simultaneously. I use my damp box to keep the pieces at a nice consistency between stages.

## Trimming and Adding a Knob to the Lid

Trim the outside of the lid to a dome-like shape mimicking the inside curve (4). Smooth out the trim lines with a rib. Next, throw a knob on top using a small ball of clay. Score both areas of attachment and secure the ball to the lid then shape it into the desired form (5). I usually trim the knob a little to get the exact shape and curve that I want (6).

## Adding Scallops to the Lid

Begin by outlining the clay scallop shapes using a dull pencil on the area just below the knob. Next, score the area and roll out a small coil, angling the rolling pin to taper one side to be thinner. Using the yellow rainbow-shaped Mudtools rib as a cutting tool, bend it into a U shape, matching the angles of the scallops you've traced on the lid, and press down at the tapered side to cut out scallops (7). Once they're all cut out, begin to attach them. First dip the scallop in water and then lay the thin, tapered end toward the top, overlapping the scallops at the corners and compressing well (8). There's no need to score the scallops as they will be worked on

further. I usually make attachments while the clay is pretty wet to avoid cracking and allow the pieces to dry out slowly. Work over each scallop with the rounded handle end of a paint brush and smooth out the tapered end, blending the clay into the lid. Clean up





1 Throw a plate that is  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch thick, 5 inches wide, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches tall.



2 Throw the lid as you would a bowl. Use calipers to measure the width of the lid.



3 Throw a stem that is bottomless and tapered in at the middle.



4 Trim the lid to match the inside curve. Smooth over any trimming lines with a rib.



5 Throw a knob on top of the lid using a small piece of clay.



6 After it sets up to soft leather hard, trim the knob to the desired shape.



7 Roll out a tapered coil, then cut out each scallop by bending a yellow Mudtools rib and pressing through the clay.

and smooth out any marks with a sponge then go over the scallops with a soft rib. Use a soft Mudtool sponge and bend it in half, using the fold to smooth and round out the thick end of the scallops. Use your finger and press into the scallops to create an area for the glaze to collect (9). Add scallops around the bottom and on the knob, too. Once it reaches the leather-hard stage, use a rubber-tipped tool to clean the underside of the scallops and to make sure of a clean attachment.

### Finishing Plate

Returning to the plate (still attached to the bat); use a dull pencil to trace a scalloped line just below the rim (10). Next, fol-

low along the lines with a wire cutter. Round off and smooth the edges with a rib and sponge. Make sure you don't wait too long to cut the scallops (cut before it reaches leather hard) as this can lead to cracking between the scallops in later stages. And don't cut a deep angle between the scallops; leave the area rounded or else you might get cracking, depending on your clay body. Lastly, use a crimped wire tool to cut the plate off of the bat, giving a textured design when flipped over. Flip the plate over and rest it on a foam bat. Add the scallops the same way as you did on the lid. For the next part, roll out a coil and add it around the edge of the plate, making sure it's attached well (11). While it's on the foam bat, put it back on the wheel to smooth out the coil and ensure a good connection. Pinch the coil every inch to give it a scalloped edge and set the plate aside (12).

### Attaching the Stem

Once the plate has set up and you can flip it back over without damaging the added coil, then you're ready to attach the stem. Make sure the rim of the stem is level where it connects to the plate or your stand will lean. Set the rim of the stem on the plate and find the center. Trace a line around the stem so you know where to score. Score both the bottom of the plate and the stem, then attach the two. Clean up the bottom of the stem by cutting off excess clay and trimming a little (13). **Tip:** Don't cut off too





Attach each scallop one at a time and blend it into the lid.



Press your finger into each scallop to create a concave area for the glaze to collect.



With a wire tool, cut out scallops along the edge of the plate.



Flip the plate over and add a coil around the rim.



Gently pinch and pull the coil about every inch to create a ruffled edge.



Attach the stem and remove any excess clay form the inside.



Give the foot a little lift by pressing down around the edges.



Using a scalpel, draw thin, vertical lines between the scallops.



Set the lid on top of the plate and stem to see the finished product. Dry separately.

## Ina Garten's Carrot Cake Cupcakes

**Cake Ingredients**

2 cups sugar  
 1½ cups vegetable oil  
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
 3 large eggs  
 2 cups all-purpose flour  
 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
 2 teaspoons baking soda  
 1½ teaspoons kosher salt  
 3 cups grated carrots  
 1 cup raisins  
 1 cup chopped walnuts plus extra for garnish on top

**Frosting Ingredients:**

¾ pound cream cheese, at room temperature  
 ½ pound unsalted butter, at room temperature  
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
 1 pound powdered sugar

Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C).

Beat the sugar, oil, and vanilla together in a bowl with an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Add the eggs 1 at a time. In another bowl, sift together the flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt. With the mixer on low speed, add ½ of the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients. Add the grated carrots, raisins, and walnuts to the remaining flour, mix well, and add to the batter. Mix until just combined.

Line muffin pans with paper liners. Scoop the batter into 22 muffin cups until each is ¾ full. Bake for 10 minutes then reduce oven temperature to 350°F (177°C) and cook for a further 20 to 25 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool on a rack.

For the frosting, combine the cream cheese, butter, and vanilla in a bowl using an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Add the sugar and beat until smooth.

When the cupcakes are cool, frost them generously, sprinkle chopped walnuts on top of the frosting, then serve on your handmade cupcake stand.



much because this weight can help keep the stand from tipping over. Add a ruffled edge around the foot to give it some lift off the table and to relate to the overall scallops and frills of the entire piece (14). Now that the stem is firmly attached, flip the stem and plate right-side up and make sure the plate is level and not leaning to one side. Use a makeup sponge to clean up the entire form once it's finished and stacked together.

**Drawing the Lines**

The last part of the process is drawing thin vertical lines on the surface, beginning in the space between the scallops (15). I use

a small scalpel knife for this and sometimes draw three lines, sometimes two. For my cupcake stands, I choose to draw them only on the lid but you can experiment with them in any way you'd like (16). Sometimes the lines get covered up with glaze and sometimes the glaze breaks nicely over them resulting in a subtle variation around the piece.

*Lauren Smith completed her MFA at the University of North Texas (Denton) in 2011 and has participated in multiple artist residency programs, including the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, Montana, and Red Lodge Clay Center in Red Lodge, Montana. See more at [www.laurensmithpottery.com](http://www.laurensmithpottery.com).*