

Cake Decorating Supplies

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My first exposure to really good (useful) cake decorating supplies was when I was a kid and used to watch my grandmother baking and decorating. She would bake and cool a set of cakes, ice the layers and the cake in completion, then—the moment of greatest delight for me—reach into a special cabinet and retrieve cake decorating supplies in a package that looked like a gift box: the cake decorating supplies were kept stored in parts, each part fitting into its own cardboard cutout form. Gram would pull out the metal barrel, the plunger, the washer, and one or more of the tips—the tip to make leaves, to make flowers, to do tubing, to set stars.

She would assemble the pieces and spoon one color frosting at a time into the cool metal tube, screw on the plunger, and set to work decorating, which took hours that were probably grueling, though she never expressed a single complaint and I never moved, enthralled as I was by the process, till she was done.

When I had my own home, years later, she sent me a set of cake decorating supplies that were just like her set. I practiced occasionally, and found these decorators to be remarkable things of beauty—in form and function (and durability).

Somewhere along the way, I lost or loaned and never got back my cake decorating supplies, and replaced them with the ultra-professional frosting bags and decorating tips, which were just as lovely (though if you have hot hands, the canvas bags transfer the heat—faster than it would with the metal set—to the frosting and it will puddle, so hold the bag by the top where you have twisted or folded it).

Last year for Christmas, I wanted to give a friend who has recently gotten into gourmet baking a set of those cake decorating supplies of yore. Not having time to go online, I found, stupidly, a discounted cake decorator at a local department store. The thing doesn't stay closed (at the plunger and cap), and it is plastic and stays greasy after washing. Ugh.

Twenty years ago I would have had an excuse, but today, I should know better—and use a source like eBay, where we not only find cake decorating supplies but those of the quality of the originals: Look for the brand name Wilton or use keywords like "vintage" or "original" or "aluminum"…for the kind of cake-decorating supplies Gram had.