



# Flower Meets Flour

by Stacey Rowe



You've managed to survive another brutal upstate New York winter bingeing on Netflix favorites like the *Great British Baking Show* and *Nailed It!* and now you're probably wondering how you can manifest fancy bakes in your own kitchen. While mastering Mary Berry's Genoise sponge or one of Paul Hollywood's perfect loaves might be daunting, rest assured, you could infuse some decorative style and flavor into some of your favorite recipes with something from your own backyard—edible flowers!

For this particular issue theme, the focus will be on candied lilacs,

but any edible organic bloom can be treated in the same manner—for example, pansies, violets, and rose petals. To candy the lilacs, you have two options: using egg whites or using a simple sugar syrup if you are wary of raw egg or prefer a vegan option. The process will be the same once you choose your method, and when the flowers are dry you can festoon anything from cakes to hipster donuts. We've provided a simple butter cookie recipe that will pair nicely with lilacs.

Start with fresh blooms that have not been treated with any pesticides (organic). Rinse and dry well. When dry, remove the blossoms, ensuring any greenery or stem bits are eliminated. For both methods, you will want to have tweezers, a small paintbrush (one that is new or hasn't been used with paint), a paper towel, and wax paper to dry the blooms. You will need about one cup of superfine sugar (also called caster sugar) in a bowl. In another bowl, mix one egg white and one teaspoon water. If you are using powdered egg white (albumen), use two level teaspoons and combine with two tablespoons of warm water until smooth. While both mixtures work just fine, the powdered version has more favorable reviews due to being less viscous.

Hold a blossom with the tweezers and dip the brush in the egg white mixture. Cover the flower completely with a thin layer, then dust with superfine sugar and place on the wax paper to dry. You can also dip the blooms, but you will want to remove any excess egg white with a paper towel before dusting with sugar so the blooms don't become clumpy. You will be drying these at room temperature overnight or longer, depending on your humidity levels.

The vegan version of mixture can be created on the stove. Heat one-fourth cup water and a half-cup sugar in a small pot over medium heat, stir and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until all the sugar is dissolved—do not caramelize! Allow the simple syrup to cool and apply to the blooms in the same manner as above. Candied flowers should last in an airtight container for several months and up to one year.

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## Lilac Butter Squares

### COOKIES

3 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt  
Zest of one lemon (approximately 1 tablespoon)  
2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened  
1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups granulated sugar  
2 large eggs

### ICING DRIZZLE

1 cup white chocolate chips  
1 cup of lavender (colored, not flavored) candy melts  
2 plastic bags (or 2 pastry bags with small tips)

Whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, and zest in a bowl. In a separate bowl, beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer until pale and fluffy (two to four minutes). Beat in eggs, one at a time, and then mix in the vanilla. Add the flour mixture a little at a time until just combined. Divide the dough in half and form two logs and wrap each in plastic wrap. Use your hands to square off the sides of the logs. Chill logs for about one hour and fine tune the edges of the logs with a ruler or by rubbing against the edge of the countertop. Return the logs to the refrigerator for at least an hour until firm (or overnight).

When ready to bake, prepare two cookie sheets with parchment paper, put the oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven, and preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Remove log from plastic and cut into quarter-inch slices. Arrange slices on baking sheets one inch apart. Keep dough chilled in the plastic wrap between batches. Bake ten to twelve minutes, switching racks halfway through baking. Remove from oven when edges are golden; allow to cool on the baking sheets for a few minutes before transferring to racks. Repeat with more slices of dough.

To decorate the cooled cookies, place the white chocolate and purple candy melts in separate microwave-safe bowls. Heat each in twenty to thirty second intervals and stir until fully melted. Pour into separate Ziploc bags and cut off the corner (about one eighth of an inch) or fill two pastry bags fitted with small tips. Drizzle the icing over the cookies in stripes—the effect should be streaks of white and lavender going across the cookie. Top each with candied lilac petals. Allow cookies to set for about two hours.

Cookie dough will keep in the refrigerator for four to five days or frozen up to one month. If freezing, wrap with another layer of plastic wrap and thaw in the refrigerator before slicing. Cookies will keep for about a week in an airtight container.