



Sweet Fusion

Chefs from around the world are drawn to the translucent, crystalline qualities of Isomalt sugar. Thanks to the dedication of competition chefs' we get to see their new techniques each year.

BY STÉPHANE TRÉAND & MICHAEL JOY

When encapsulation first made center stage, it was a breakthrough. Its continued popularity is apparent with so many chefs eager to duplicate the effect.

Competition after competition we see encapsulation get cleaner, yet not necessarily more innovative. Repeating a technique is valuable for day to day needs, but those expecting to score points with the judges must do more.

To the competition chef's credit, they have discovered pouring Isomalt on vinyl will eliminate air bubbles. They have also learned to double encapsulate shapes to prevent re-melting under the heat of a fresh pour. Chefs have also found that having control of their medium while allowing the material to behave naturally can make their showpiece more harmonious.

Balancing both control and a fluid understanding of his material, Chef Tréand demonstrates a new method of encapsulation. By using a specially designed two-part sphere mold, Stéphane is able to arrange a pattern in the very center of the sphere. Ideally, his technique will spark your creativity, leading to new ways to create forms inside of other shapes.

Take your pick; drawing out a pattern, building layer by layer or perhaps encapsulating multiple components such as a sphere, in a sphere, in a sphere. With a few molds and a creative mind, your possibilities are endless!

Stéphane Tréand MOF Pâtissier is the Executive Pastry Chef at St. Regis Resort Monarch Beach, California. Michael Joy is the founder of the Chicago School of Mold Making.



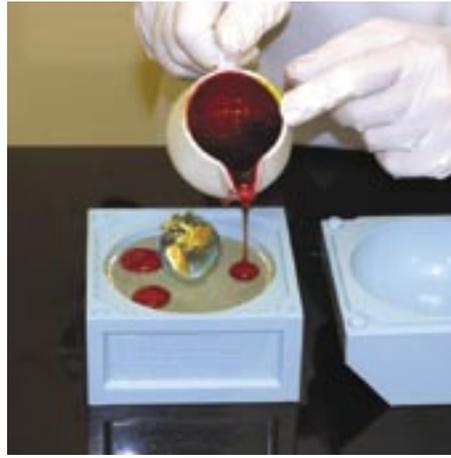
For an edgy look, Chef Tréand positions the sphere in the center of crystal 'shards' made by shattering a cast Isomalt spire.



1. The set up

Fill the bottom half of the four inch sphere mold with clear or lightly colored Isomalt and allow it to cool. Next, make a smaller Isomalt sphere (using a separate mold). It is important to mention that any cast shape could replace the small sphere.

Note: For geometric shapes, two-part molds made of firm silicone work best. The firmness prevents the rubber bands from compressing the mold out of round and losing registration.



2. Define and pour

The small sphere has been torched onto the surface of the Isomalt. (A dash of gold leaf can define the shape of similarly colored objects.) Next, use contrasting colors to draw out your pattern.

Helpful Hint: Use a torch to flame off any small surface bubbles on your encapsulating shape (small sphere). If you don't torch, expect the surface bubbles to stay in the casting.



3. Inside design

Allow your design to cool. (For a different effect, mix the colors on the surface while the Isomalt is still liquid.)

Helpful Hint: Do you want the center sphere to stand out more? Cast it in a contrasting color or gold leaf the entire surface. How about placing an air brushed piece of pastillage inside?



4. Top off the pour

The two halves of the mold are secured together with strong rubber bands. Fill the rest of the mold with Isomalt cooled to 140° C/ 284° F. Set the mold aside for a few hours to cool.

Helpful Hint: When casting in a silicone mold, pour your isomalt as cool as possible. Silicone will insulate heat and hot isomalt will continue to boil in the mold. The more the boil, the more the air bubbles. To further avoid bubbles don't stir the Isomalt prior to pouring.



5. De-mold

When the mold has cooled to the touch, separate the two halves to reveal your handy work. Push the sphere out from the bottom side of the mold. Make sure you are ready to catch it when it pops out!

Notice how the gold leaf did not migrate to the outer surface of the sphere, nor did the red color drops fuse together in a swirl-like manner. With some practice, you could write words or even draw a decorative symbol. Any calligraphers out there?



6. Finishing touch

The interior of the mold is gloss smooth. However, air within the boiling isomalt can deposit micro bubbles on the surface of the sphere. A quick pass of the torch will melt surface bubbles and dissolve the fine seam line.

Your spheres will look like glass!

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Cook the Isomalt without water at 170° C/ 338° F (a good temperature for transparency). Then allow it to cool to at least 140° C/ 284° F before pouring it into the mold. The temperature can vary with the mold size. Pour large molds cooler, small ones hotter.