

Every stage production has a story to tell, and for the props artisan, a new world of opportunity. The chance to design, create, and breathe life into otherwise "normal" and commonly overlooked items that lend themselves to the world you are helping to create.

While a prop request can be challenging, it can also be fun, rewarding and educational. You'll get to learn new techniques and develop processes that can be added to your tool box. Experiences you will definitely use again. Among those tools often called upon are those needed to create non-edible food that makes the mouth water, including delectable desserts. Here are my recipes for two desserts so realistic you will need to put a disclaimer on the prop table.

Brownies

A sweet treat for Sondheim's *Company* was a plate of delicious fudge brownies. They had to look real, stay in place on the plate, and read to a 1,500-seat house. It was always fun watching people trying to guess the real brownies from the props.



- Use green/yellow medium duty scrub sponges, trimmed to the desired size.
- Using a dark brown or black spray paint, paint the sponges. This takes some time; they are sponges. Be patient. Allow to dry. (NOTE: Do NOT rinse sponges before painting, as they will become thin and brittle as they dry out. The way they come out of the package is ideal for this purpose.)

- Joint compound is used for icing. Mix in some acrylic paint to get the color you want and started icing. How you dress the icing at this stage is how it will set-up, so now's the time for art.
- After everything is cured, apply a coat of Zinsser Bulls Eye Amber Shellac over the icing. This puts it over the edge. Trust me.

A Breakaway Ice Cream Cone

For *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, we needed two ice cream cones—one normal, single dip on a waffle cone. The second, an 'FX cone' that the performer spilled on the floor during the scene. They can't melt, of course, and would be used for each performance, so they needed to be somewhat sturdy and very believable that they were real ice cream; landing on the floor with a realistic splat! This was a fun design. I researched various products—silicones, rubbers, etc. that were readily available to me to make this happen. Here's what worked best.

- Using two cardboard craft cones, I stretched netting over them and painted the 'waffle' pattern.
- The normal cone used a foam ball wrapped in pink flannel and trimmed in braided yarn for the hand-dipped look. This was permanently glued into its cone.
- For the FX cone, I used a hacky sack, I made by wrapping a baggie of brown rice in flannel and repeated the steps above except the glue. By not gluing the 'scoop' in it could fall out of the cone, land with a splat and stay put for a convincing effect.

Passion, practice, research, and the knowledge of available products are crucial in the creation of some pretty sweet props. **S**



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