

GINGERBREAD HOUSE

5 ½ cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ginger
6 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cloves
1 1/3 cup molasses
2/3 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1 cup oil

Cream eggs. Add, molasses, oil, and brown sugar. Cream. Add dry ingredients. Mix well.

Use a 13" X 17" cookie sheet. Turn it over so the bottom side is facing up. Cover the bottom side with tin foil. Cover the foil with oil. (If you don't oil it good enough the baked gingerbread will not come off the foil.)

Gently press the dough onto the well-oiled foil so it is an even thickness.

Cut out the paper patterns of the gingerbread house. Lightly lay it over the gingerbread house and gently score the pattern into the dough – 2 side pieces, 2 roof pieces, one front piece, and one back piece. (We like to cut out a door so we can tell the front piece from the back piece.)

Bake at 300 degrees for 20-30 minutes. Take out of the oven and IMMEDIATELY cut along the scored lines. (You might have to place the pattern back on top of the gingerbread if the lines are not discernable due to the rising during baking.)

Let cool. Gently remove the house pieces from the foil. Brush off all crumbs. If there are crumbs on the gingerbread, the frosting won't stick very well.

Cover a piece of cardboard with aluminum foil. This will be the base that you put the gingerbread house on. Mix the frosting.

FROSTING

3 egg whites at room temperature
4 cups powder sugar

Beat eggs till very frothy. Gradually add sugar. Beat until you can make stiff peaks in the frosting. Keep the bowl covered with a damp cloth so the frosting won't dry out while you are working on your house.

Get a cake decorator bag and a round hole tip. (I use a Wilton #12.) Fill the bag with frosting and twist the top of the bag shut to keep frosting in the bag while you are squeezing.

Get the back piece. Squeeze frosting on the edge of side A (the edge of the 5 inch side) and up along both of the sides B (the 3.75 inch sides). Make sure the frosting along side B is to what will become the inside of the house. Press the frosted 5 inch edge on to the foil covered cardboard base and have someone hold it in place.

Squeeze frosting along side A (the 5 inch edge) of one of the side pieces. Press that frosted edge down on the foil covered cardboard base while also pressing the 3.75 inch side (side B) into the frosting on the 3.75 inch edge back piece (which is also side B). The frosting should hold the two pieces together at right angles and to the foil covered cardboard base. Repeat with the other side so that you have a three sided house now.

Squeeze frosting on the side B (3.75 inch) edge of the house sides. Squeeze frosting along the bottom edge of the front. Press the house front on to the foil covered base and in to the frosting on the edges of the sides of the house matching the B sides. You should now have all four 'walls' of your gingerbread house standing.

Squeeze frosting along the top edges of the walls and the front and back. Place the roof on top of the frosted edges while gently pressing it down into the frosting. Match side A of the roof with the side A (5 inch side) of the house side. Make sure that there is frosting holding the two roof 'peaks' together. Now, the gingerbread house should be all put together and able to stand without anybody supporting it.

Squeeze frosting on the bottom edge of the door (if you cut one out) and along the side of the door that would be connected to the house. Press the frosted side of the door to the hole where the door was cut out so that the door is standing ajar.

Use the rest of the frosting to decorate the house. Press candies in the frosting to hold the candies in place.

HINTS: Use a star cake decorator's tip and put star designs on the house. Insert small candies like M & Ms, mini gumdrops, or Red Hots in the middle of the stars. Put candy canes along the corners of the house. Make a chimney out of the gingerbread scraps. Make frosting 'icicles' hanging from the edges of the roof. See pictures for ideas of how to decorate the gingerbread house.

WINDOWS

You can also cut a 'window' in the sides of the gingerbread house when you score the gingerbread dough before baking and when the gingerbread is through cooking. Once the sides are cooled, carefully lift out the gingerbread 'window' so there is a hole in the house side.

Brush off all of the crumbs and place the side on a clean piece of foil. Make the Old Fashioned Hard-Tack Candy (recipe below), and pour into the window hole. When it cools, the candy will harden and stick to the gingerbread. The sides will now look like they have a stained glass window. (The pictures that I have included here do not have the stained glass windows. Just the outline of a window made with the frosting.)

OLD FASHIONED HARD-TACK CANDY

1 cup water
2 cups sugar
2/3 cup white Karo syrup
red food coloring
1 teaspoon cinnamon oil flavoring

Place a sheet aluminum foil on the cupboard. Have it long enough to fit both of the gingerbread house sides with room to spare. Mix water, sugar, and syrup in a heavy kettle. Bring to a boil. Boil until the candy reaches 275 degrees (hard crack stage) on a candy thermometer. Take kettle off the heat. Stir in a few drops of red food coloring and one teaspoon cinnamon oil flavoring. Be careful not to inhale steam rising from the hot candy because the cinnamon oil flavoring in the steam can burn your nostrils!

Carefully pour some of the mixture into the 'window' that was cut out of the sides of the baked gingerbread house. Pour remaining candy on the extra aluminum foil. Let candy cool until it hardens.

Use the sides to build the gingerbread house. When the extra candy has cooled, tap it gently with the heavy end of a butter knife to break the candy into pieces. Eat and enjoy!

EXTRA IDEAS

You can put candy cane along the edges of the house. Or, build a fence around the house with the candy canes. Create pine trees out of green mini gumdrops. Make snowmen out of marshmallows. Purchase miniature cats, dogs, people, etc. from a craft store to put in the 'yard' of your home. Be creative!!