

Recipes, Directions & Ideas for Your GINGERBREAD HOUSE



From GingerbreadNinja.com!

Your gingerbread structure can be anything and everything you want. For best results, grab pencil and paper, and spend a little time sketching the possibilities before you start your project.

- What “look” are you after? A perfect, neat and orderly end result or “anything goes” type of structure? Both can work well, but mixing the two looks may not work well.
- Want to **spend big \$\$** on your house, or do you prefer to use ingredients you have on-hand?
- Starting with a **pre-baked kit** that you’ll adapt and customize or are you baking your structure “**from scratch?**”
- Have a particular **color scheme** in mind ?
- Incorporating **stained glass windows** (melted hard candies) into your structure?
- Want to **light up your house** with battery-operated lights? Leave an opening so you can access the interior.
- **How much time** do you want to spend on your creation?
- Is your heart set on winning a **gingerbread house contest?**
- Have you decided how to make your house stand out with **unique, eye-catching construction** and decorating techniques?

JUMP START!

Save time by starting with a pre-baked kit. The two-story Swiss chalet above was made from two pre-baked Wilton gingerbread house kits.

The bottom of the house was constructed exactly as the kit directed. The second kit was adapted to fit on top of the first. The front and back of the second story had to be carved to fit on top of the roof structure of the first house, a delicate but easy task. Using kits allowed more time for decorating.



Recipes begin on next page.



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Meringue Powder

ROYAL ICING

As far as royal icing goes, this is our favorite. Grab a can of meringue powder (I use Wilton) at most any store carrying cake decorating supplies and you'll end up with a great batch of fluffy white stuff.

Ingredients:

3T Meringue Powder

1lb powdered sugar (4 cups)

6T warm water

Directions:

Beat all ingredients until icing forms peaks (7-10 minutes at low speed with heavy-duty mixer or 10-12 minutes at high speed with hand mixer). Makes 3 cups of icing.

Egg White

ROYAL ICING

Use this icing as the glue for your gingerbread house and its decorations. It dries hard as a rock in just a few hours. Since it includes raw egg whites, don't eat this stuff. Nobody wants Salmonella for Christmas!

Ingredients:

4 egg whites

4 cups powdered sugar

1t. lemon extract or lemon juice

Directions:

Beat all ingredients at low speed until icing forms peaks, 7-10 minutes. Cover bowl with a wet towel while you work or (better yet) move directly into an airtight container. Use decorator bags and tips or a cookie press to pipe icing onto your gingerbread masterpiece. A plastic baggie with a hole works, too!



Icing is the Cement of Your Structure

Whipping up big batches of royal icing can be tiresome. Make sure you use every speck of it. Keep your icing sealed and refrigerated and you can use it when needed.

- Depending on the design of your gingerbread house, you may want to tint your icing to match the gingerbread.
- Get your hands on some special icing coloring, available in a variety of colors, including brown. Use it to fill the gaps that occur when gingerbread shrinks during baking.
- Immediately put icing into a sealed container or transfer icing into four or five sandwich-size resealable freezer bags.

More on next page.

Recipe

BRING ON THE DOUGH!

More than anything, gingerbread dough needs to bake strong enough to support your structure. Don't let anyone tell you that you can use a gingerbread cookie mixture from the grocery store, because it probably won't have the strength that you need.

We have found that recipes using molasses or honey work best for creating strong gingerbread houses. The recipe below is the one we use year-after-year. It works, it's easy and it requires no extraordinary ingredients. Prep time is minimal.

2 c. molasses or honey

1 c. vegetable oil

1 1/4 c. sugar

3 large eggs

8 c. flour

2 T. ground allspice

1 1/2 t. ground ginger

1 T. baking powder

Combine above ingredients, mixing well. Put dough in a plastic bag and chill in your refrigerator. Chilling it

overnight is supposed to work better, but the ninja is often in a last-minute rush and has found that chilling for an hour or two works fine.

The next day, roll dough on the back of a cookie sheet and cut it according to your pattern. Remove any dough that remains between your cut pieces.

Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Cool completely before beginning assembly.

Kids — Be sure to have a grown-up do the baking for you.



Use a milk carton as your base structure, or part of a saltines cracker box, or a taped-together cardboard house.

- Coat your base structure with royal icing.
- Press graham crackers or cookies into the icing.
- You can also get creative with walls made of cereal.

Decorate any way you want and you've got an instant gingerbread house.



More on next page.



ASSEMBLY TIPS

Gingerbread Ninja reveals how to put it all together.

- **Roll and cut dough directly on the back of the baking sheet** to eliminate the need to move pieces of dough around. As a result, your finished pieces will not be torn or distorted.
- **Cut the pieces of your structure with a plastic serrated knife.** This utensil works well because the thickness of the knife creates a separation between the cut pieces, plus the serrated blade prevents the dough from stretching as you cut it. Perfect-O!
- No serrated knife around? Try a **pizza cutter** for a straight, smooth cut.
- Let pieces **cool completely** before taking them off the cookie sheet. They'll harden as they cool. If a piece seems too soft, just bake it a little more.
- It doesn't hurt to **bake some extra pieces**, just in case something happens to one of your gingerbread slabs.
- **Tint the icing** for the structure a complementary brown color and it will hide any imperfections.
- **Stack canned goods** around your walls to help hold them together while they dry. Tying string around the structure works fine, too.
- **Check your structure frequently** while icing dries. It's surprising how slabs that seem secure can shift during the first couple hours.

More on next page.



Win Win Win!

ENTERING A CONTEST?

To win a gingerbread contest, you need to think like a judge, keeping in mind the following:

- **Complete adherence to the rules.** Usually, everything visible on your gingerbread house must be edible. We had a wonderful house disqualified once due to visible toothpicks. So study the rules and be sure to follow them to the letter of the law!
- **Excellent execution.** Messiness is not a good thing, unless, perhaps, in the kids' division.
- **Creativity.** Develop some clever, unusual or unexpected features for your entry. How about some pink fondant pigs? Or a cat on the roof?
- **Fun use of everyday edible items.** Make a logpile out of cinnamon sticks or a roof out of spaghetti.
- **Make it strong.** Fragile structures can fall apart when moved. Bummer! As a precaution, take a batch of royal icing with you to the event for last-minute repairs upon arrival.
- **Keep weight in mind.** Remember, someone will have to carry this thing.
- **Hint:** Allow yourself plenty of time to create your masterpiece. You can start your house months in advance. As long as you know the scale (height and width) of your finished piece, you can make landscaping items early, figures that will decorate your landscape and other elements. Get a head start and take your time.

More on next page.

SPECIAL ACCENTS

Accent your gingerbread with special pieces fashioned from various kinds of dough recipes. (Doughs are made with all edible materials, but DO NOT eat this stuff.) We have used dough for reindeer, Santa, the sleigh, stars, and trim for the house. Just roll it out or use hand-building techniques to create the objects. (Make sure that adults handle all the cooking, baking and moving of hot items.)

Cornstarch Dough

- 1 c. salt
- 1/3 c. water
- 1/2 c. cornstarch
- 1/4 c. cold water
- (Optional) food coloring

Mix salt and water in saucepan. Stir while heating the mixture at medium-high for about 4 minutes. Remove from heat. Add cornstarch and cold water. Stir until the mixture comes together into a thick dough.

Let dough cool. Dust counter with cornstarch and knead until dough is smooth. You can leave dough its natural color or pull off clumps and add food coloring. Save dough in refrigerator in plastic bags or storage containers, sealed tightly.

After making your items, let them dry for about 5 days. Results in sleet, white, glittery sculptures perfect for gingerbread houses.

Basic Salt Dough

- 1 and 3/4 c. hot water
- 1 c. table salt
- 4 c. all-purpose flour

Use a bowl that will work with your electric mixer. Stir together the water and salt, letting the mixture sit for a minute so the salt can begin to dissolve. Add flour slowly to the salt water, and mix all together until smooth and pliable. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let everything sit for a few minutes.

For flat objects, roll dough on a floured surface to 3/4-inch thickness OR roll on the back of a baking sheet so the dough won't need to be moved. Cut with cookie cutters or handle in any other way you want. Bake in oven at 300 degrees for an hour.

MAKE IT UNIQUE

Gingerbread Ninja reveals secrets you can use for any season or holiday. Above all, you must start with a great idea. Is it an historical house? An animal? An object? Or a theme based on a book or movie? Try the ideas below:

- Pretzels for fences
- Cinnamon sticks for front porch pillars or logpiles
- Candy pebbles for chimneys
- Blue Jolly Ranchers, melted into an aluminum foil form, for a pond (melting takes just a few seconds in oven — have an adult do it).
- Melted Lifesavers for stained glass windows
- Chocolate bar sections for shutters
- Chocolate kisses for edging of walkways
- Ice cream “waffle” cones, upside down and decorated as Christmas trees
- Colorful gumdrops, rolled thin with a rolling pin, trimmed and used as windows (chill them beforehand so they won't get sticky)

For more recipes, photos and ideas, visit:

www.gingerbreadninja.com

Gingerbread Ninja



Crafty Kitchen Warrior