

Gingerbread Contest

Now is the time to think about your gingerbread creation for this year's contest. Do you remember some of the entries of the past years, like various gingerbread houses, a castle, train, igloo, birdhouse, outhouse, ship, lighthouse, carousel, airplane, farm, general store, etc. etc.? There are almost no limits to your imagination...



Following are a few simple instructions on how to go about making an entry:

- Draw a simple first draft of your project on paper.
- When you are satisfied with your first draft, draw all pieces in their final size on cardboard. Don't forget to put in doors and windows.
- Cut out the different pieces and assemble them with tape.
- If necessary, make adjustments.
- Entry must be entirely edible (no toothpicks, plastic figures, etc.)

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Did you think of an exciting gingerbread creation? Did you already draw the pattern on paper and build a cardboard model? Well, then you are ready to make the dough. Here are two different recipes, you can choose which one to use. Both recipes have to be doubled or tripled, depending on the size of your project.

Version 1

- 1 cup margarine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup dark molasses
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon ground ginger
- 4½ to 5 cups all purpose flour

Continue at *

Version 2

- 1½ cup honey
- ⅓ cup water
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon all spice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 cups white flour
- 2 cups whole wheat flour

Melt in a large pot on low heat, remove from heat, let cool, and set aside.

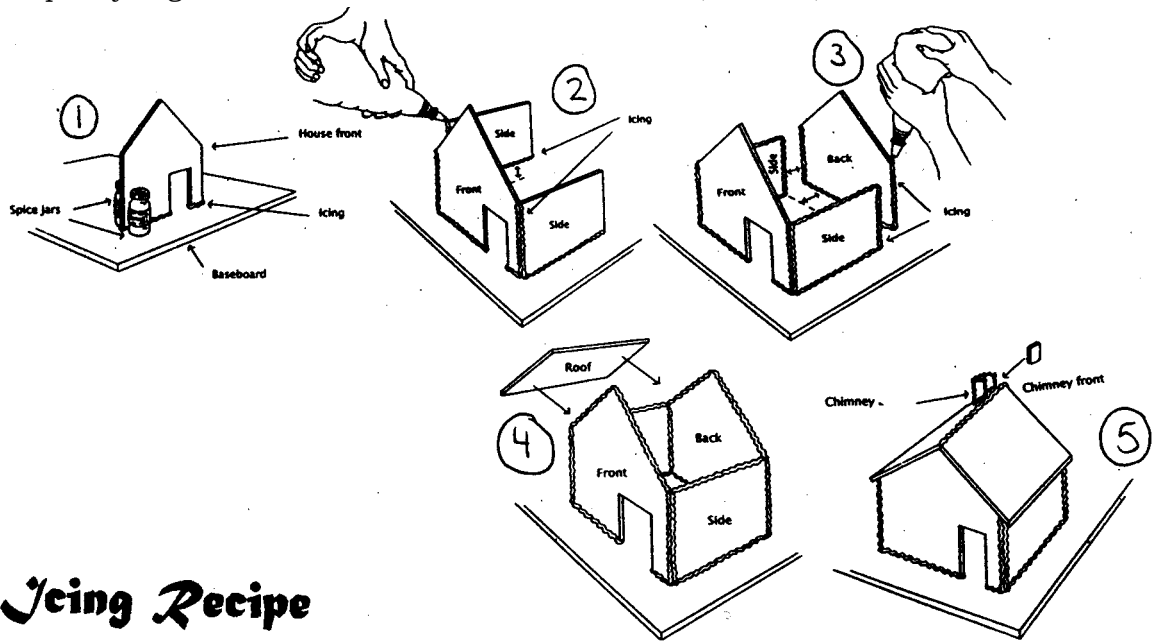


* **For both versions:** Mix and knead all ingredients until dough is even and smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and chill until it is easy to handle. It will stay good in the refrigerator for up to a week. Return dough to room temperature for at least 2 hours before starting to work with it. Roll the dough out on cookie sheet with a little flour to about 1/8 to 3/8 inch thick. Using your cardboard pattern cut out all required shapes. Don't forget windows and doors (use cookie cutters to make these). Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden at 375°. Check for air bubbles during baking, and if there are any, poke them with a knife. After baking let cool on large cooling rack, making sure all pieces lie flat. Compare shape of the gingerbread with the cardboard pattern and trim any excess dough before pieces cool. Keep pieces in a dry, flat place, covered with a towel, until you are ready for assembling.

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Now that the planning and baking is finished, it is time to make a wooden base for your gingerbread house. Cut a piece of plywood big enough for your house. Cover it with brown paper, wax paper, or aluminum foil, using masking tape to secure it in place.

- Some people decorate their house before assembling. This makes decorating easier, but requires great care when the house is put together.
- Check one more time if all the pieces fit tightly. Carefully shave the edges where needed with a serrated knife. Be careful, work slowly, don't break the pieces
- Have a couple of jars or small cans ready to support the first pieces of your house.
- Fill a pastry bag with royal icing, and fit it with a # 8 writing tip.
- Following the pictures below, squeeze the icing generously along the edges. With gentle pressure, attach pieces to each other, using jars for support when necessary. Allow a couple of hours for icing to harden before you start decorating your house. With thin tip on pastry bag decorate the house with all the candies, cookies, etc. etc.



Royal Icing Recipe

1 pound box powdered sugar

3 egg whites at room temperature 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar

Sift the entire pound of sugar to remove all lumps. Place egg whites in mixer bowl. Add sugar and cream of tartar to whites while stirring. When all the sugar is incorporated, turn mixer on high and beat mixture until thick and very white. Mixture will hold a peak. This process should take 5 to 7 minutes. When finished, cover icing tightly with a damp cloth or plastic wrap as it dries very quickly and will form a crust.

To tint icing, use a small amount of color at a time. Paste food colors will not change the consistency of the icing as liquid colorings will. You only need to add a small amount to make a pastel color. For a quarter cup of icing, dip the tip of a toothpick into the color and then into the icing. Stir well. If you desire more color, dip again, gradually. For strong colors such as red, royal blue, and dark purple, you will need 1/8 teaspoon to 1/4 cup icing. Add more or less as you desire.

NOTE: If you plan to make several colors as you will for ornaments, a muffin tin makes a handy palette.