



Gingerbread House

Step-by-Step Guide

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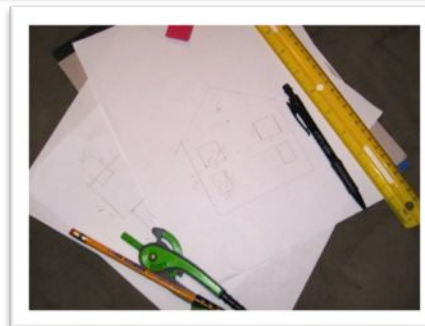


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Design and Template

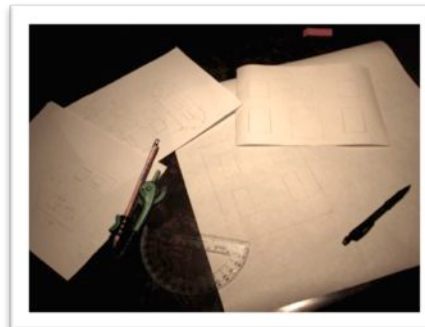
Step 1

Determine the style and size of your gingerbread house. The most common gingerbread houses are about 6 inches by 6 inches. Most construction-grade gingerbread house recipes will cover this. If you want to create a lot of intricate details, make a larger house. You can make measurements easy by downloading free gingerbread house ideas and templates online, too.



Step 2

Create a template. Once you've decided on the style of gingerbread house, create a template according to the dimensions of your plan. You can print downloaded templates or you can draw the template. I prefer to use the paper side of freezer paper. Cut out your template and set it aside. It is important to keep your template as straight and accurate as possible.



Baking

Step 3

Depending on the size of house you want to create, you should need one to two recipes of construction grade gingerbread. Here is recipe for high humidity (extra hard and dry).

2 3/4 cups all purpose flour
1 1/8 cups sugar
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1/3 cup honey
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ginger

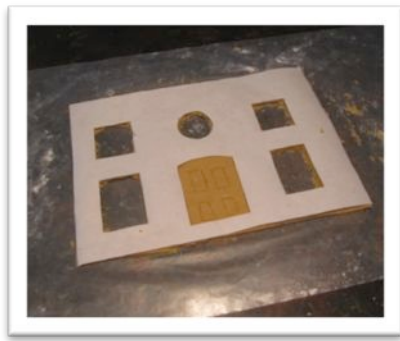
Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In your food processor or mixer (with dough hook) blend flour, sugar and all spices. Add eggs one at a time. Heat honey for about 10 seconds in the microwave, then pour into processor/mixer and blend until mixture is away from the sides and is completely mixed (add water 1 tablespoon at a time if it is too dry). Knead dough on a lightly floured surface, then pat into ball. Your dough should be stiff and not too



Step 4

Roll your dough onto a floured surface or wax paper. If you would like to include windows, wax paper is a must (*see the instructions for windows at the end of the guide*). Your dough should be no thinner than a nickel but no thicker than a half dollar. Roof pieces should not be thicker than your walls. Set your cutout template on the wax paper and begin to cut out your shapes. Be careful not to let your cookie pieces become misshapen. Carefully transfer your cookie to a cookie sheet.





Step 5

Bake your cookies in a preheated oven until they are golden brown and would otherwise be over-baked if they were cookies you would eat. Your goal is to cook out moisture without burning. Place cooked pieces on a wire rack to cool.

Step 6

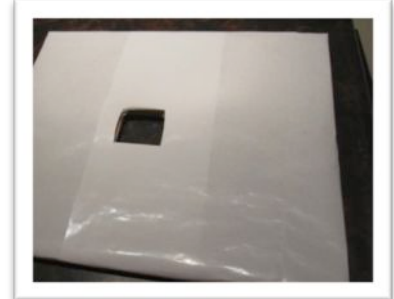
Let the cookie pieces rest for at least four hours, preferably overnight. This will allow them enough time to become completely dry and hard.

Base Prep

Step 7

Choose a piece of cardboard or a tray that can serve as a base for your gingerbread house. Double up pieces of cardboard if necessary to insure stability. If you wish to decorate a yard around your house, be sure to choose a base that will give you plenty of room. Cover the base in freezer paper with the waxy side up. Some bakers prefer to use aluminum foil.

If you are including windows and wish to illuminate your house, you will need to decide where the house will sit. Cut a hole big enough to run a small strand of mini lights into. You can also use a nightlight on an extension cord (*see the instructions for windows at the end of the guide*).



Icing



Step 8

3 large egg whites
4 3/4 cups powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

Double this recipe for large houses or if you plan to add a lot of icing to the house.

In a large clean bowl, beat egg whites and cream of tartar with electric mixer at medium speed until eggs become foamy. Add powdered sugar in small amounts, mixing well on high speed after each addition. Beat on high speed 4-5 minutes or until mixture thickens. Refrigerate, covered, until ready to use. You may need to stir icing to soften before use.

Assemble

Step 9

Fill piping bag with icing (or a large and strong Ziploc bag with a ¼ inch cut out of a corner). Choose a tip with a pretty large and smooth opening about ½ inch wide. Set one of the cookie walls in the desired location on your serving base. Hold the wall up with can to ensure the wall stands straight up.

Run a line of icing along the base of your wall. Then add an adjacent cookie wall in the same manner. Add a bead of icing along the corner where the two walls make a corner. Be sure to add icing inside and outside of the corner. Continue to add walls of the house in same fashion.

Once all the walls have been iced together and iced at their base, let the structure sit for about an hour or until the walls can stand without the support of the can goods.

When the structure is fairly secure, run beads of icing along the tops of the walls and carefully place the roof pieces on, one at a time. Once they are both on, run icing along the top or peak of the roof. Also run icing along the eaves where the roof touches the walls.

Step 10

Let the assembled house sit for at least four hours if not overnight. This ensures that the house can handle any additional weight of icing or candy. Plus, it gives you a much-needed break.



Decorate

Step 11

Begin the decorating. This is where the fun begins. Use your creativity and leftover stashes of Halloween candy to create an entire gingerbread scene.

- ❖ Pretzels, cereal and graham crackers blend in naturally with the gingerbread and can add a lot of dimension to your house. Use these to create doors, shutters, chimney and porch.
- ❖ Candy canes and bright colored candies add a fairytale-like touch.
- ❖ Candies like gum drops and taffy are great for forming into shapes.
- ❖ Upside down ice cream cones are a great base to create trees with green icing. NOTE: Adding food coloring may thin your icing. Add additional powdered sugar to thicken.

How To Create Candy Windows For Your Gingerbread House

1. Choose or create a template with windows. You can also add them to a template without windows.
2. Be sure to roll your dough out on waxed paper and leave underneath after cutting out shape from the template.
3. Cut out the window shapes, trying to keep the edges as clean as possible.
4. Crush hard candies like suckers. The color is completely your preference. I love multi-colors, but many like to use yellow or clear-colored candies. Keep candies in their wrappers to minimize mess, and hit with a hammer or meat tenderizer on a cutting board.
5. Fill the window holes in your gingerbread wall with the crushed candy; make sure there is wax paper underneath the cookie and that it's already on the cookie sheet. How much candy you add depends on how large your windows are.
6. Once your window holes are filled with candy, place the cookie sheet in the center of your preheated oven. You can always add more candy as the cookie is baking if it looks like you do not have enough. Note: Melted hard candy is very hot and will easily burn you.
7. Let your baked cookie pieces with windows cool on the cookie sheet until the windows harden. This doesn't take too long. Then transfer the pieces onto cooling racks to let the cookie cool completely. Once it has cooled, peel wax paper off the back.
8. Assemble these pieces just as you would any other piece; just make sure to cut a hole in a cardboard base for the house to sit on if you plan to illuminate the house.
9. Once the house has been fully assembled, decorated and hardened, insert a light in the precut hole. I recommend a night-light on an extension cord or a small set of mini lights (probably no more than a 20 light strands, as the heat from too many lights may melt your windows).

