

Gingerbread House Recipe

Makes 7 small houses (I have made 1/3 recipe for 2 houses + cookies)

GINGERBREAD

1 cup vegetable shortening

1 teaspoon baking soda

2 cups molasses

3 teaspoons baking powder

8 cups flour

3 teaspoons ginger

¼ cup sugar

1 ¼ teaspoons salt

Combine dry ingredients.

Melt shortening and combine with molasses and ½ cup warm water in mixer bowl.

Mix dry ingredients into combined liquids (I use my electric stand mixer for most of dry ingredients and then add the last bit by hand.)

Chill several hours or overnight.

Roll fist-sized amount of dough to 1/8 inch thick.

Place patterns for house pieces on rolled out dough and cut around with sharp knife.

Carefully move house pieces to cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 12 minutes.

Cool a minute or 2 on sheets, then move to baking racks to cool completely.

Each house needs 2 roofs, 2 sides, and 2 ends. I keep a tally sheet after cutting, but before moving to cookie sheet to bake.

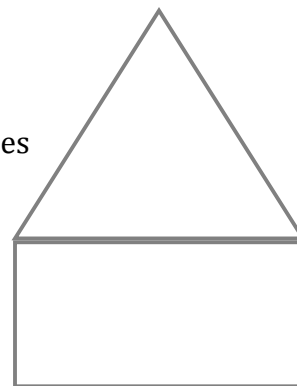
Extra scraps are rolled out and cut into gingerbread cookies with or without a cookie-cutter.

PATTERNS FOR CUTOUTS:

Roof: 4 ¼ inch x 4 inch rectangle

Side: 3 ¼ inch x 1 ¾ inch rectangle

End: 3 ½ inch x 1 ¾ inch rectangle on lower half with isosceles triangle on top, overall height of stacked rectangle and triangle is 4 ¾ inch



TIMINGS:

Mixing dough 1 hour, baking 1 ½ hour, building 7-10 minutes each, decorating 30-45 minutes each.

ICING

(I double it and make 2-3 houses, then make another batch of icing...)

2 cups confectioners sugar

1 ½ egg white slightly beaten

1 ½ teaspoon white vinegar

Measure confectioners sugar into mixing bowl.

Add egg white at lowest speed beating for about 1 minute.

Add vinegar while mixing at low speed.

Beat at high speed for 2 minutes or until stiff and glossy. Keep tightly covered.

HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

Cut cardboard bases for each house maybe 6-7 in x 9-10 in, and cover with aluminum foil.

Fill cake decorator's piping bag, fitted with medium round or smallish star head, about half full of icing. (I use the disposable ones and reuse the heads each year.)

You'll be able to figure out how to build, but I construct houses ahead of time so the icing's set some for the wee ones. I start with a side, add an end, add the second side, and add the second end. Let this harden a bit, then add one side of the roof and let that set, then add the second roof piece. A second set of hands is welcome here!

Thus, working around the house, I pipe a line for the first SIDE on the foil, set the SIDE on that, then run a line of icing up one vertical, pipe a line on the foil and set in the END, pipe the END's upright, pipe the line for the second SIDE, pipe its upright, pipe a line for the second END on the foil, set it on the line and pipe the last uprights. Along the way, sometimes you need to add a bit of icing here and there to hold things together. For the roof, pipe the two sloping edges and the top of the SIDE before setting the roof on. The last thing to pipe is the ridge line.

DECORATING (youngest decorator record set in 2012 – 19 months!)

Anything goes here. We buy 8-10 varieties of candies, dole some out in small bowls, and set them in the middle of the table. Working in pairs, pipe on a bit of icing, stick in a candy, repeat ad nauseum. We tend to do 2 or 3 houses at a time. Parents of younger ones pipe icing while the kids tell them where icing is needed and select the candies. Some houses are completely encrusted, others not so much.

EATING

After the holidays, we break off (and discard) the candy, but eat the gingerbread into the new year. It literally melts in the mouth.