

## Christmas Customs - Gingerbread House Recipe

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### [Fun Cooking Craft - The Gingerbread House](#)

A fun craft idea for the holidays that demands minimal skills for both adults and children is making a Gingerbread House particularly as a family activity. There are many formats of the Gingerbread house, with sloping or straight gable ends, chocolate button or marshmallow rooftops to gazebo style hexagonal houses with delicate sugarcraft lace work. There are also many Gingerbread House Kits available from about \$25 to \$49, including a lovely one by Martha Stewart. The latter uses an assembly idea with sugared jellied fruits and striped candy canes you could easily copy using my recipe below. Cost wise, a kit is outrageous compared to making your own. To make the Fashion-era Gingerbread House 2004 will cost you less than £5 or \$10 maximum including decoration.

### [The Aroma of a Spiced Gingerbread House](#)

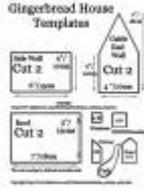
Gingerbread biscuits are a very old commodity that has been sold at fairs and village markets for centuries in Britain and also throughout Europe and Scandinavian countries. One popular British gingerbread is the famous Grantham Ginger Biscuit. The origin of the Gingerbread House most seen at Christmas is thought to be German and these edible Gingerbread house decorations were probably first developed about 200 years ago. Many German customs crossed the Atlantic to the Americas and are now firm favourites worldwide. Recently in the UK, food fashions have included Gingerbread items and products like Stollen and Panettone. All have become very fashionable food items to offer to spur of the moment guests at Christmas and many make great little gifts for casual calling.

A German friend of mine always used to give me spiced biscuits from a delicatessen before they became more easily available everywhere. Now that I bake Gingerbread Houses or Gingerbread Holly wreaths most Christmases for both decorative and edible effect, I have come to the conclusion that the spice taste that most matches the biscuits my friend gave me is that of cinnamon. So my recipe uses cinnamon as the base spice powder, but you can replace it with mixed spice, ginger or your own spice mix.

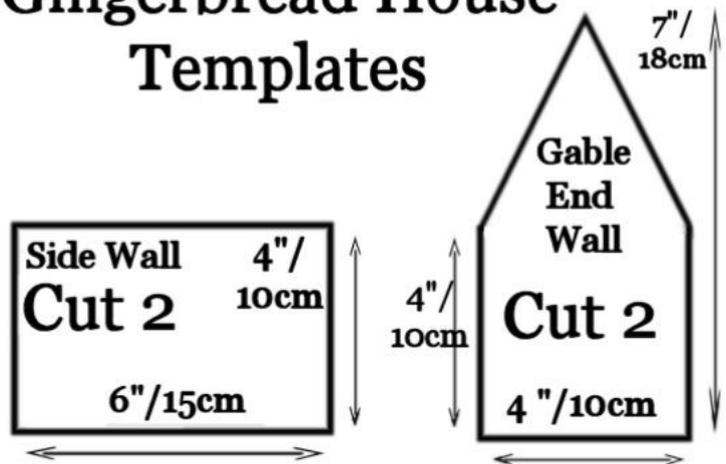
Every time you pass the Gingerbread house wherever you display it, wonderful wafts of Christmas smells attack your olfactory senses and create an aura of festive wintertime that no synthetic perfumed festive spice candle can really give you.

## The Gingerbread House Cooked Pieces

Baking your own gingerbread pieces can be fun, but you need to mark out the shapes carefully with a ruler or card template and try to keep the shapes as even as possible. Then when you assemble the house, the pieces fit reasonably well like a food jigsaw with either icing or marzipan, which acts as food cement!

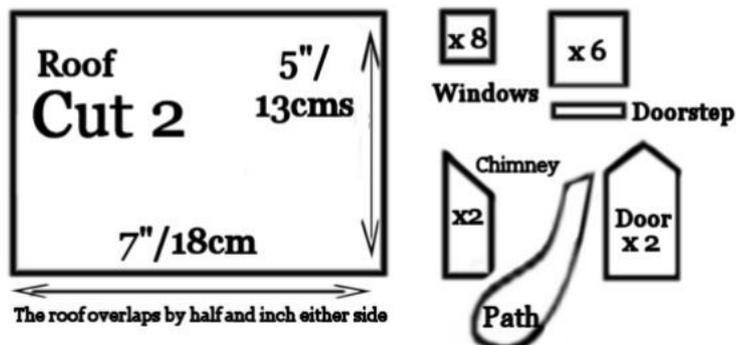
<u>The Gingerbread House Shapes</u>	<u>The Gingerbread House Cooked Pieces</u>
	
<p>Click above picture diagram to see the pattern pieces enlarged. Print off the enlarged pattern guide.</p>	<p>This is what the cooked pieces look like before assembly. Do cook a few more doors and windows than you need and then select those that are best. Click to enlarge the picture.</p>

## Gingerbread House Templates



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## The Decorative Icing and Toppings

As for the icing, there is no need to fuss too much with it. This is a fun piece. The better you can do it fine, but limited skills and a packet of dolly mixture sweets, Smarties or jelly beans and tubes or ready icing will produce a piece which children find magical. Mine was made very quickly, more quickly and with less time than I should have liked, but you know December is a time of year when this may be your situation too. So, take a very chilled out attitude to making your Gingerbread House and if you, or your children, pipe wonky lines - so what - it's meant to be fun. All that will happen is that it will become a fairytale crooked house too with crooked windows and doors. Disaster solved - just say it was intentional.

A clickable thumbnail of the [Gingerbread House](#) when completed.



You can use fondant circles for overlapping tiles as I did. Alternatively, use American frosting or a Royal soft peak icing, or white or milk chocolate buttons, chocolate flakes, liquorice pieces, marshmallows, nonpareils (hundreds and thousands chocolate buttons). For the rooftop, get coconut shreds or pretzels or use peppermint creams, slices of Turkish delight coated with more icing sugar and even Mars bars sliced into tiles. All the above work well, so just use your imagination and don't worry if the icing is a bit crooked - getting the house to stand up is far more important!!! For some reason it delights adults and children alike however naff you make it!

### The Gingerbread House Recipe

#### **Preparation**

First, preheat the oven to 190 degrees C or Gas 5 -  
Cooking time 5 to 8 minutes per baking sheet.

Now make your card templates using the picture of templates. Make card or paper shapes for the roof, the gable ends and the side walls by clicking the thumbnail [above](#) and printing off the A4 enlargement shapes that you will measure out yourself.

Get out your baking tins and cut several pieces of silicone

or greaseproof paper. The extra money it costs to use silicone paper is always worth it in my opinion. Draw the shapes onto the paper, then turn the papers over. Leave about an inch space between the shapes when drawing them. After you draw out the shapes on the papers, you can if using greaseproof paper smear it with margarine. Silicone Parchment or long life paper will not need to be greased.

You will be rolling the gingerbread dough paste directly onto this paper on the reverse side of the drawing and then using your card template as a guide to cut the excess paste away with a sharp knife. It is best to do the rolling on the paper though on your work surface rather than with the paper in the tin!

Have a spare tin lined for extra bits like the path, windows, doors and doorstep.

Ingredients	Method
<p>8 tablespoons golden syrup (120ml)            3oz margarine (75gm)            3oz soft brown sugar – dark or light as you prefer (75gm)            1lb sifted plain flour (400 gm)            2 level tablespoons cinnamon or mixed spice (this is 30ml)</p> <p>1 level tablespoon of bicarbonate of soda – 15ml            2 tablespoons water            1 egg plus            1 egg yolk (reserve the white for later for the royal icing)</p> <p>For later            1 lb commercial fondant paste (Renshaws)            8oz of confectioner's icing sugar plus the reserved 1 egg white</p> <p>1 large Pyrex bowl            3 baking Trays            2 tablespoons            A knife.            2 medium basins</p>	<p>Now make the dough, which needs no chilling. I use either a food processor for this job or a large bowl and tablespoon spoon will do the job just as well.</p> <p>First have ready a large Pyrex bowl.</p> <p>The messiest part is measuring out the golden syrup. Dip a tablespoon in boiling hot water and then take level spoons of syrup out of the tin. <b>These 8 flat tablespoons amount to just less than about one third of a tin of golden syrup.</b> If you measure too generously, you may need to add a tablespoon or two of extra flour until the paste is like a cookie dough texture.</p> <p>Add the margarine and sugar to the bowl and microwave for 1 minute or less until melted together, but not hot.</p> <p>Mix the bicarbonate of</p>

Piping bag  
Rolling pin  
1 10inch round or square  
cake board.

To decorate - assorted  
sweets such as dolly  
mixtures or Cadbury's  
buttons, jelly beans, silver  
or gold almonds or dragee  
balls - as you please.

soda in warm water in a  
cup to dissolve it and then  
add to the syrup mix. Now  
add in the whole egg and  
the egg yolk. Mix well.

**Reserve the white of the  
egg to mix up half a  
pound of royal icing  
later.**

Now add the sifted flour  
and the cinnamon to the  
wet ingredients and mix  
well until you form a cookie  
dough. Add a little more  
flour if too wet. Knead  
very lightly.

### Using the Gingerbread Dough

Divide the dough into 6 portions and keep the rest and  
trimmings in a polythene bag whilst working. When  
rolling the paste keep to the same thickness throughout of  
about a quarter of an inch depth. Roll each piece directly  
onto your greased paper over the marked shape as a size  
guide. Take your card template and cut around the  
shape. Lift the paper onto the baking sheet.

Continue until you have the following pieces - 2 rooftops,  
2 gable ends, and 2 sidewalls. **With the trimmings roll  
the paste a bit thinner** and make 2 doors, 1 or 2  
chimneys, 7 windows in varying sizes, 1 path and 2  
doorsteps. These small pieces are best made a bit smaller  
than you first think, as the dough does increase when  
baked. Make a path by making a dough sausage and  
bending it into a loose S shape and by flattening it with a  
rolling pin or use the pattern provided.

**Bake each sheet for 5 to 8 minutes and cool on a  
rack.**

### Gingerbread House Assembly Instructions

#### Stage 1- Making the Basic House

**Make the royal icing by adding approx 8ozs sifted  
icing sugar to the egg white. Beat well until a mix is  
obtained that will be suitable for piping and sticking.**

Pipe or smear some tacky royal icing on the sides of the  
pieces and first join the side wall to the gable end wall and  
then the side wall to that, finishing with a gable end. Hold  
it altogether until it feels safe. If you have trouble doing  
this, try inserting something like a Twining's Tea box  
inside which can give the walls some support whilst  
assembling.

Once the house is firm enough, put little packets of sweets inside the house or if to be eaten soon pile the sweets loose inside the house.

Next put icing on the edges of the standing house and on the centre ends of the 2 roof pieces and join them into a V shape. Now stick them on the standing house. Hold them until they feel secure.

You can leave the house at this stage to firm up and apply the actual decoration on another occasion if preferred. Reserve the remainder of your royal icing and keep it covered with cling film to keep it moist and lump free.

### **Stage 2 - Gingerbread House Decoration Instructions**

Dust your surface with a little icing sugar and rollout about half the fondant paste to about one eighth of an inch. Using a circle or scone cutter cut out as many circles as you can to begin with. Cover the circles with Clingfilm (glad wrap) until needed. Do the same when you roll a second lot of circles.

Roll out the fondant scraps and use a decorative edged cutting ruler to cut 4 bargeboards and apply these at the centre front of the house using icing to secure them into position.

Next, spread royal icing finely over the rooftop. Now starting at the bottom of the roof, add circles of fondant in neat rows overlapping the barge boards to neaten. Go over the roof spine and continue until the remainder of the fondant paste is used up rolling out more and cutting more circles as you need to. Pinch a decorative spine down the centre of the rooftop using a sugarcraft scallop impression tool. Stick silver dragees in the decoration.

Using royal icing, stick on the chimney(s) and the windows and doors, as you prefer.

Now the fun bit is to pipe some extra icing and add dolly mixture sweets etc. Admire your handiwork and take a digital picture of it so you can copy it exactly or reinvent it slightly differently next year.

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