

# Christmas Is Fun with a Gingerbread House!

Christmas is for kids, all ages and sizes. One thing that will make any child's eyes light up at Christmas is a gingerbread house covered with candies. It doesn't take much skill to put it together — just a little time and patience.

## GINGERBREAD HOUSE

The success of putting your house together depends mainly on cutting your pattern correctly and making sure the edges that touch are the same size. You will need one pattern for the front and back, one for the two sides and one for the roof.

This gingerbread house lasts for weeks, so it can be made now while you still have time and it will still look nice all through the season. Make the pieces of your house several days before you plan to assemble it. When fresh they are quite flexible so you must let them dry out and become hard enough to stand by themselves. You will need two batches of this dough for a house 8 or 10 inches long and 8 inches high. Make them separately because the dough is hard to handle in bulk.

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup molasses
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tbs. ginger

Melt the shortening in a large saucepan and stir in the sugar and molasses. Remove from heat. Sift 4

cups of the flour with the remaining ingredients and stir into the molasses mixture. Knead dough with your hands and work in the last cup of flour. Dough will be very stiff and even crumbly, but do not add any liquid. Grease a cookie sheet with no sides or very shallow sides. Roll out the dough on the cookie sheet.

Lay your cardboard pattern on the dough and cut around it with a sharp knife. Do not cut off the excess dough or the sides of your house will spread and become rounded in baking. Bake at 375 for 15 to 20 minutes or longer until the gingerbread is dark brown. Better to overbake it than underbake.

Remove from oven and retrace all outlines with a sharp knife. Let cool and snap off edges. These edges make good snacks for the kiddies while they are waiting. Wrap pieces of house loosely in foil and leave to dry for two or three days before assembling. If the house is large, you may have to roll the dough out several times on the cookie sheet before you get all the pieces. You may also cut out gingerbread men and doors and shutters for the house.

## Frosting

The frosting dries to a hard white gloss and is the 'glue' you use to stick the house together and stick the trimmings to the house. Don't make it until you are ready to use it because it dries very fast. If you have to stop and don't finish decorating in one sitting, cover the frosting with a damp towel or add a teaspoon of water and seal tightly in a plastic bowl.

- 4 egg whites
- ¼ tsp. cream of tartar
- 4 tsp. water
- 6 cups sifted icing sugar
- food coloring (optional)

With an electric mixer, mix the egg whites, cream of tartar and water until fluffy, then add sugar and beat until smooth. Using a pastry bag or a thin knife apply this mortar to the edges of the house to hold them together. You may have to hold each piece for a few seconds until the 'glue' sets, but children's hands are fine for this job.

Make sure the four sides of the house are set firmly before you put on the roof, or the whole thing will collapse like a house of cards. When the roof is on the fun begins. Let your imagination run loose and you'll probably come up with all sorts of



Gingerbread House created by Bittner's Specialty Shop in Square One, is admired by six year old Marc MacDonald and his sister Lisa, age 10, of 1367 Glen Rutley Cir., Mississauga. Instructions for making a Gingerbread House are printed on this page.

ideas for decorating. I used shreds for the roof to give a thatched appearance, but you could use corn chips or cookies or any of the packaged cereals or snack foods. You could even cover the roof in candies. If you want to eat the candies later

use mainly wrapped ones. If it is to be a decoration use jelly candies, gumdrops or other colourful bagged candies. An inexpensive and very eye catching house could be made of smarties. To dress it up use foil covered Santas or foil-

covered chocolate money. You could drip frosting on the edges and make it look like icicles. Icing sugar sifted over the finished house gives a look of new-fallen snow. Don't forget a couple of gingerbread men for the front yard. And Have Fun!!

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