

GINGERBREAD DOUGH

Whisk together thoroughly:

6 cups all purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
4 teaspoons ground ginger
4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground cloves or allspice
½ teaspoon salt

Beat on medium speed until very fluffy and well blended:

12 Tablespoons (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened
1½ cups packed light brown sugar

Beat in until well combined:

2 large eggs
1 cup dark molasses
1 Tablespoon water

Beat half the flour mixture into the molasses mixture until well blended and smooth. Stir in the remaining flour, then knead the mixture until well blended. If the dough is soft, stir in more flour until it is firmer and more manageable but not at all dry.

Place the dough in a sealable plastic bag or airtight container. Set aside in a cool place, but not the refrigerator, for at least 2 hours or up to 6 hours. Or, refrigerate the dough for up to 3 days: bring to room temperature before using.

MAKING AND BAKING THE HOUSE PIECES

Preheat oven to 350.

Roll out dough to ¼" thick on a large sheet of parchment paper. Rub a small amount of flour on surface of dough and cut out pattern pieces as desired, saving scraps in a sealed plastic bag to prevent drying. Cut paper around pieces and transfer to cookie sheet. Bake until pieces are tinged with brown and just beginning to darken at the edges, 11 to 15 minutes for large pieces, 6-8 minutes for smaller pieces. Be sure gingerbread is thoroughly cooled before beginning construction – pieces should be very stiff and solid!

ROYAL ICING WITH POWDERED EGG WHITES

(You will probably need to double the following recipe)

Beat together until stiff peaks form:

1½ cups powdered sugar

1 Tablespoon powdered egg whites

2 Tablespoons water

Color if desired with liquid or powdered food coloring.

Tips: Avoid making icing on humid days. Be sure that any container or utensil that comes in contact with the icing is grease free, and do not store the icing in a plastic container. While working, keep the bowl of icing covered with a damp dishtowel and, when not piping, cover the tip of the icing bag as well to prevent drying. Tightly covered, this keeps up to 2 weeks.

SIMPLE SUGAR GLUE ICING

(You may want to double or triple the following recipe)

If you don't have or want to use egg whites or powdered eggs, try this simple recipe below. This recipe is too thick for a pastry bag. It may not be as fluid or decorative as royal icing recipes that use egg whites, but it will create a mixture that holds the gingerbread house together. You may need up to 10 batches for one house, but do not mix all 10 batches at once or the mixture will dry out.

Mix until you have a cement-like mixture:

1 cup powdered sugar
2-3 tablespoons of water

If it is too thick you can add more water. If it is too thin, add more sugar.