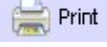


PickYourOwnChristmasTree.org

Where you can find a Christmas tree and winter events like sleigh rides, hayrides and wagon rides near you!

!Click on the printer icon that looks like this:  (at the top left, to the right of "save a copy") to print!
See www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm for many other canning directions and recipes

How to Make Homemade Gingerbread House - Easily!



A home-made gingerbread house seems like a daunting task, but in reality, it's quite easy! Especially with these step-by-step instructions, with photographs to illustrate each step. I've also made all the templates for you; you just print them out and cut them along the lines! Finally, with the openings for the doors and windows, you can even put a small light inside, so your gingerbread house lights up!

It's really quite easy - my 2 1/2 year old helped and had a great time! The photo at left shows the results of our first attempt!



The keys to success are simple:

1. Gather all the ingredients before you start
2. Allow the recommended time for the icing "glue" to harden
3. Remember that the goal is to make a storybook fantasy house and have fun... don't get too perfectionist about the architecture!

Step 1 - Gather the Ingredients and Supplies

1. A pattern (see step 1) for the front, back and side walls, roof and chimney. ([click here for a pdf file that you can print to use for the templates](#) - NO drawing or required - just cut on the lines!)
2. Gingerbread dough
 - o 1 and 1/2 cups (12 fl oz)(usually, that's 1 bottle) of unsulphured molasses
 - o 1 and 1/2 cup (3 sticks) butter or margarine
 - o 8 cups all-purpose flour
 - o 2 tablespoons double-acting baking powder
 - o 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - o 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - o 4 teaspoons ground ginger
 - o 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
 - o 1tablespoon allspice
 - o 1 and 1/2 cups brown sugar (dark or light)
 - o 2 large eggs
3. Icing glue -
 - o 4 egg whites
 - o 1 teaspoons cream of tartar
 - o 4 cups of confectioner's sugar (also called icing sugar or powdered sugar)
4. cookie sheets
5. aluminum foil or better yet, silicon baking mats
6. butter or margarine
7. flour, all-purpose, white or whole wheat
8. Again, more silicon banking mats OR waxed paper
9. Heavy duty mixer (optional - you can mix by hand)
- 10.Rolling pin, I like the non-stick silicon type
11. Cake knives
- 12.Spatula
- 13.Cooling racks
14. One 11" by 17" cookie tray, heavy cardboard and/or plywood to use as a base



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15. Six quart-sized bottles (like full spaghetti sauce jars) or unopened soda cans to hold the walls and roof in place while the icing dries.
 16. Pastry bags and tips (OR a gallon sized Ziploc plastic bag (quart will do, also)
 17. Candies: M&M's, gumdrops, lifesavers, colored sprinkles, etc.
-

Step 2 - Print and Cut Out the Stencils

I've seen some miserable directions for making the patterns/stencils, so complicated, they looked like a college geometry exam! So, instead of giving you measurements, a ruler, a protractor and instructing you on making right triangles superimpose on trapezoids... I've already made the templates for you, put them in a printable pdf file! All you need to do is [click here \(which will open a new window\)](#) <http://pickyourownchristmastree.org/gingerbread/Gingerbread%20house%20templates.pdf> and then print the file that comes up. Then close that page and you will return here!

If your printer can handle stiff or heavyweight paper, so much the better; use that, but plain paper will do, too. Just print the templates, then cut them out along the heavy solid lines, including the doors and windows. Notice that you really need only one of each roof pieces and the side (since the two long sides and two roof pieces are each identical), and you will reuse them!

The [pdf file includes templates](#) for

Roof: 2 rectangles, 7 inches by 9.5 inches

Side walls: 2 rectangles, 4"x7.5"

Front and Back: [see the templates](#).

Chimney: (optional) 1" wide.

Note: If you don't have a printer - or it is not working, don't despair. Just look at the templates on your computer, and with a manila folder, a magic marker and a ruler, you should be able to make them - I included all of the dimensions on the templates!



Making the dough

Step 3 - Get the dough ingredients ready

No, don't run off to you job and try to earn more; we're actually making dough, just like the funny man making the doughnuts. Ok, so you're not old enough to remember that commercial...!

Here's what you'll need:

- 1 and 1/2 cups (12 fl oz)(usually, that's 1 bottle) of unsulphured molasses
- 1 and 1/2 cup (3 sticks) butter or margarine
- 8 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoon double-acting baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 12tablespoon allspice
- 1 and 1/2 cups brown sugar (dark or light)
- 2 large eggs



Step 4 - Turn the oven on

Now's a good time to get your oven pre-heating to 350 F (175 C)



Step 4 - Melt the butter

Melt the butter in the microwave or stovetop until just barely melted.

You might also warm the molasses so it pours and mixes more easily (remember the expression "slow as



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molasses?). You can heat it in the microwave (with the lid removed) for 45 seconds, or let it sit in a pot of very warm, almost hot, water for 30 minutes.

Step 5 - Mix the butter and molasses



Pour the melted butter and molasses into your mixing bowl (a large one!)

Step 6 - add the eggs and brown sugar



Now add the eggs, and next the brown sugar! Note how I switched from a whisk to a heavy beater on the mixer.

Step 7 - Mix the dry ingredients

In another large bowl mix the

- 8 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoon double-acting baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 12tablespoon allspice



Step 8 - Add the flour to the wet ingredients



If you have a mixer with a dough hook, it is time to put that on. Otherwise, you'll need to (knead, too) do this by hand!



Done mixing



Back into the bowl and knead it into a smooth ball.

Step 9 - Chill!

The dough, that is. No time for you to relax, yet. Put the dough in a ziploc bag or other container and refrigerate at least 30 minutes. Most directions say that you can even leave it till the next day, and I'm sure you can, but that's not necessary.



Step 10 - Prepare the platform or base



Now is a good time to prepare a base to build the house on. I just cut the side of a cardboard box to fit inside a baking pan or cookie sheet with a lip around it. I've heard some people use a piece of plywood, and that's great if you have one lying around...



Then, I covered the cardboard in a sheet of heavy aluminum foil. I put the shiny side down, so it wouldn't be TOO reflective (for photos).

Step 11 - Roll out some dough

On a silicon baking mat, waxed paper or a floured surface, roll out a small amount of the dough (about the size of a tennis ball) until it is about 1/4 inch thick. Don't get carried away trying to measure it, gingerbread is pretty tough stuff, so it can be as thin as 1/8 in some places or as thick as 1/2 inch, but 1/4 inch (1/2 cm for those of you in other countries) is ideal.



Step 12 - Match a template cutout to the rolled dough



Try to match one or more of the cut out patterns to the size of the rolled dough. It doesn't need to be an exact fit, you will reuse the trimmings. And don't worry about making the rolled out dough any precise shape

(rectangle, circle - just as long as it is bigger than one or more templates, that will do.

Just place one of the paper pattern pieces on the dough and using a dull knife (like a table knife) cut around the edges.



Step 13 - Cutting out doors and windows



Cut out the windows and doors and just lift out the extra dough. Save the trimming to roll again for the next template.

Now, here is why I like using the silicon baking mats. I can just lift the mats with the dough



<http://pickyourownchristmastree.org/gingerbreadhouse.php>

pieces on it, and lay it on the cookie sheet.



Or lay the cookie sheet over it then turn it over - if you need to reuse the cookie sheet for the next batch.

Here's a tip on windows: you can fill the empty window holes with crushed life-savers to form stained glass windows! It will melt in the oven and fuse to make "glass" panes!

Step 14 - Making the chimney



Making the Chimney - The chimney pieces are no different from the others, just smaller! You don't need to make a chimney, but it adds a nice touch. I will admit that they are a pain in the neck to get to stay glued in place until the glue sets. More about that later.



Step 15 - Pop them into the oven



Now pop the tray into the oven and let it cook for 12 to 15 minutes, until it puffs up a little bit and just starts to become golden and slightly firm. While one tray is baking, you can cut out the next patterns.

Then remove the cooked batch and let cool!

Another tip about the cooked dough: It's easy to trim it when it is fresh from the oven, still warm and soft, so you can trim some defects then. But even after it cools

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completely, it's still pretty easy to trim it with a sharp pair of kitchen shears or a firm, sharp knife that won't bend under pressure. You use a pizza roller or sharp knife to mark lines on the sections just after they are baked, to make shingles and other designs. And you can do it before baking, but they won't be as well defined.

Making the Icing

The icing is your mortar and glue, as well as decoration and trim!

Ingredients:

- 4 egg whites - If you use pasteurized eggs whites, like those in the carton at right, then the icing will be safe to eat (otherwise, the uncooked eggs may contain salmonella!)
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 4 cups of confectioner's sugar (also called icing sugar or powdered sugar)



Step 16 - Beat the egg whites



In a large bowl (I like standing electric mixer, like a



KitchenAid)

beat the egg whites until they begin to foam. Add the cream of tartar and beat until the whites are stiff but not dry.



Gradually beat in the icing sugar, beating for about 5 minutes until it reaches spreading consistency. Keep it covered and refrigerated until needed.

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If you have a pastry bag, use that, but it's easy to take a large (1 gallon) ziploc bag. Fill the bag, and pop it into the fridge. When you are ready to use it, just cut off 1/4 inch of a corner and you have an instant pastry bag!



Construction - Call "Bob the Builder"

It's not hard - it only requires ONE thing: time to let the "mortar" dry after you assemble the 4 walls and roof. You can't hurry it. Well, there is one trick I'll show you, but you must let the icing harden before you start to decorate!

Step 17 - Put icing on the seams



Start by laying a bead of icing down along all the seams of the sides, walls and roof. Just like with real glue, it will stick faster and hold better, if we coat the seams where they will connect and let them dry until they are tacky.

Step 18 - Connect 2 walls, and then the next, the fourth and the the roof!



Start with a side wall and the end. Stick them together and while one person holds them in place, use your pint or quart jars (filled with contents) to hold them in place. Use whatever you have handy:



<http://pickyourownchristmastree.org/gingerbreadhouse.php>

spaghetti sauce jars, jam, soda cans, as long as it is heavy enough to hold the pieces in place. Add the other end and side, and then the roof pieces.

There's really no trick to it other than:

- Use lots of icing and add more as it dries if gaps appear.
- Keep the whole thing steady and untouched while it hardens

If the jars and cans are exactly the correct size, use wads of paper towels to build them up. You'll notice I did that to hold the roof pieces in place. The overhangs rest on the cans. I used paper towels to build the cans up so the roof pieces are pushed tight together

Step 19 - Construct the chimney



The chimney will be a lot easier to attach to the roof if it is already assembled and hardened. Trust me. I tried assembling and gluing it at the same time. It will make a saint curse....

So, having done it the wrong way, I constructed a model of cardboard (see photo at left) to show you the RIGHT way. Using some ordinary adhesive tape, wrap the pieces into the shape shown (the chimney is upside down). Then pour icing down the inside along all four joints.

Let it harden along with the rest (next step)

Step 20 - Let it dry and harden!

Now, in a warm, not too humid room, it should be hard enough to work on in about 4 to 6 hours. Overnight is really best.



BUT, if you ARE in a big hurry, here's a trick: aim a hair dryer set on cool and high right at it. Hot won't work, because the icing will melt. But cool will cause it to dry more quickly!

Step 21 - Ice the roof (if you want a snow-covered roof) and then attach the chimney



I wait to do the chimney until the walls and roof have hardened in place, preferably overnight.

You will notice I used a large safety pin, pushed gently into the roof, to hold the chimney in place while the icing hardens. Otherwise, the chimney will slowly slide down the roof!



To decorate the gingerbread house

Ingredients and supplies:

- Gum drops,
- M&M's
- Life savers
- Other hard candies
- Colored "sprinkles" or "jimmies"
- Colored icings (comes in cans now!)



Go wild! Icing around the door and windows makes nice trim. To apply candy decorations, dab a small amount of icing to the underside of the candy and hold in place until set.

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You can use dough scraps to roll out added decorative cut-outs to be applied with icing glue. These cutouts can be impressed with designs before baking. For example,

you could make window shutters, doors, or figurines! They can be "painted" with colored icing.



I found these little Marshmallow edible figurines at the Wal-Mart. They are exactly the right size to be scaled for the house!

[Write me to let me know how your house turned out and any](#)

[tips you want to share:](#)

<http://www.pickyourown.org/feedback.htm>

I hope you and the kids have fun! It should be a memorable experience!

<http://pickyourownchristmastree.org/gingerbreadhouse.php>

Preserving your Gingerbread House

Yep, you can actually spray it with Shellac or lacquer (available from paint stores, Home Depot, Lowes and Wal-Mart) and it should last for years. Just be sure to let it dry completely first. I plan to do my after the holidays, when I am packing things up!