

Hints and Tips for Construction

Design quality

The Gingerbread City Council (GCC) are very interested in promoting the design quality and sustainability of new buildings, ensuring they live a long life. Luckily the gingerbread people are master bakers but remember the materials used need to last in the exhibition for 30 days and be baked to the highest quality. Melted sweets can make good windows – just crush them up and bake them with the gingerbread to seal them in, add them towards the end of the bake and check regularly to ensure they don't burn.

Looking Tasty

Remember: the GCC requires all new developments to have the appearance of being entirely edible. The buildings should be primarily constructed from gingerbread, with edible detailing made from sweets, candy and icing encouraged. Buildings may use non-edible internal supports, but entirely edible construction techniques are highly encouraged!

Built to last

Structural strength will be important so practicing with pre-made gingerbread kits could be a good way of experimenting and building your construction skills!

We encourage you to research and test your own recipes for creating your gingerbread pieces. As a guide the recipe opposite should create a mix that is structurally strong.

The recipe for the walls should create hard biscuits. It should not be soft or cake-like. Avoid using baking soda in the recipe as this can make the biscuits softer, lighter and more likely to absorb moisture.

Three-dimensional shapes could perhaps be created by shaping biscuit mix around a mould before baking.

Unique

To develop the unique character of the City, all designs should be specific to the Gingerbread City and not plagiarised from elsewhere. There will be awards for the most original, creative and interesting designs. We look forward to seeing some truly experimental designs!

Modern methods of construction

Ready mixed gingerbread dough is available to buy online in the lead up to December.

Long-Lasting Gingerbread Recipe

This recipe is designed to be tough enough to last up to a year even in high humidity.

Long-Lasting Gingerbread Recipe

Cooking time

15 - 25 min

Serves

Makes 1 gingerbread house

Tools

- ◆ 13 Quart steel mixing bowl,
- ◆ 9 quart mixing bowl,
- ◆ Small bowl,
- ◆ Spatula,
- ◆ Whisk,
- ◆ Measuring cup,
- ◆ Spoons

Ingredients

- ◆ 6 cups all purpose flour,
- ◆ 6 cups coarse rye flour,
- ◆ 2 teaspoons ground ginger,
- ◆ 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon,
- ◆ 2 teaspoons ground cloves,
- ◆ ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg,
- ◆ 1 teaspoon salt,
- ◆ 2/3 cup lemon juice,
- ◆ 2 beaten eggs,
- ◆ 2 beaten yolks,
- ◆ ½ cup margarine,
- ◆ 1 ⅓ cup honey,
- ◆ 3 ⅓ cups sugar.

Method

1. Measure out both the all-purpose flour and rye flour, sift together into the 9 quart bowl. Remove one cup and pour it into a small bowl for later. Using a small bowl, combine the cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, salt then pour this mixture into the large bowl of flour and blend. Combine the lemon juice, beaten eggs, beaten yolks into another small bowl and set it aside.
2. Using the largest bowl (13 quart), combine the margarine, honey and sugar. Place it over medium heat and stir it with a large spoon until it is soft enough to blend together. The sugar does not need to dissolve. Once the mixture is soft, remove it from the heat.
REMEMBER: Never leave anything unattended on the stove.
3. Pour the lemon juice and egg mixture into this bowl of sugar and honey while it is still warm. Using a wire whisk, whip the ingredients together until it is well blended.
4. Begin to add the flour into the mixture. Once it begins to thicken, use your hands to knead it all together. Continue to knead this dough into a smooth ball and cover with plastic wrap.
5. Use small amounts of flour to dust onto the rolling surface and the rolling pin. Take a portion of the completed dough (what you would need for a piece of the house) and knead this dough until it is soft. Roll it out on the surface until it is the desired thickness. When it is baked, this dough will rise a little. You will need to experiment with the thickness you will use.
6. Take the flatten (rolled) dough and spread it on a lightly greased sheet pan. Now cut out your desired shape.
7. Bake the shapes at **350 degrees**. If the dough is ¼" (~0.5cm) thick bake it for 15 minutes. For dough ⅜" (~1cm) thick, bake longer, about 20-25 minutes. Bake long enough to get very firm. Another recommendation is to lightly brush water over gingerbread prior to baking for a smooth effect on finished product.

Note: If this dough cools too much, it will be hard to roll. Take cold dough (just the amount you need) and wrap it in plastic wrap. Microwave it for 15-30 seconds. This gingerbread dough is NOT conventional.

Warning: Because this dough contains honey, do not refrigerate it. It is very thick and must be warm to knead and roll it out.

Recipe taken from:

<http://www.jaxhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/gingerbread-long-lasting-house-recipe-and-icing.pdf>

Strong Icing Recipe

This recipe is good to keep creations together for months, to glue walls and roofs together and to attach candies.

Strong Icing Recipe

Tools

- ◆ Mixing bowl,
- ◆ Glasses / bottles
- ◆ Whisk,
- ◆ Sieve
- ◆ Measuring cup,
- ◆ Spoons
- ◆ Decorating bag

Ingredients for the icing:

- ◆ 2 Tbsp meringue powder,
- ◆ 1/3 cup water,
- ◆ 1lb. Powdered sugar,
- ◆ 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

Method:

1. Combine the water with the meringue and beat until foamy.
2. Add the powdered sugar and cream of tartar
3. Beat mixture until stiff and white (about **5 minutes**)
4. Prop up the walls with glasses or bottles
5. Carefully apply the icing glue to the joints

Do not put on the roof until walls have dried overnight.

You may find decorating the walls easier before putting the walls together.

Use a decorating bag to apply the icing.

This icing, when dry, will be as hard as a rock.

If you don't want to purchase meringue powder, carefully separate 2 egg whites and beat them constantly for 3 to 4 minutes until they become foamy with peaks. Any grease in the bowl will ruin the process, so wash it carefully.

Recipe taken from:

<http://www.jaxhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/gingerbread-long-lasting-house-recipe-and-icing.pdf>

Pipeable Gingerbread

Thin down gingerbread dough with a bit of water to create a pipeable gingerbread paste that can be used in a couple of ways.

Return scraps to mixing bowl and resume mixing on low speed. Begin adding water, 1 teaspoon at a time, until scraps form a stiff but pipeable paste. Thoroughly scrape bowl and beater with a flexible spatula to eliminate lumps, then continue mixing until perfectly smooth. Transfer to a piping bag fitted with a small round tip. Pipe designs, such as fences and railing, onto a parchment-lined half sheet pan and bake until pale gold, about **12 minutes**. Cool completely before handling.

Thinned down dough can be piped over raw dough with a small basketweave tip to make siding on a house or the floorboards of a porch.

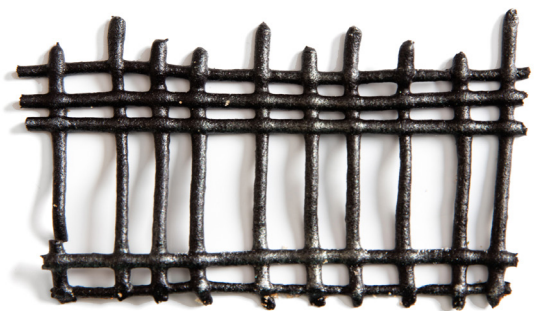


It can also be piped into freeform shapes, like the “wooden” railing of a porch. If you make a mistake or don’t like your design, just scrape up the paste and try again.



Because construction gingerbread doesn’t puff in the oven, the paste maintains its shape, baking into pieces that are lightweight but surprisingly strong.

You can even dye the gingerbread paste if you want to pipe out an old-timey wrought iron fence. Again, no real template is required; just channel your inner Edward Gorey and have fun baking off your designs.



Whatever you do, don’t try to bake and assemble a gingerbread house on the same day. It requires a fair amount of time and effort to roll, cut, bake, trim, and cool the dough.

Images and tips taken from:

- ◆ <http://www.seriousseats.com/2016/10/how-to-make-construction-gingerbread.html>
- ◆ <http://www.seriousseats.com/recipes/2016/10/construction-gingerbread-recipe.html>