

GINGERBREAD HOUSE

This gingerbread house looks beautiful and tastes delicious if you can bear to break it apart after using it for decoration. It is a fun activity for families to make together when it's cold outside.

INGREDIENTS

375g (13oz) butter
275g (10oz) brown sugar
3 egg yolks
750g (1lb 11oz) plain flour
3 tsp bicarbonate soda
9 tsp ground ginger
7½ tbsp golden syrup
Gingerbread house template
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For the royal icing:
700g (1lb 8oz) icing sugar, sifted
3 egg whites
3 tsp lemon juice
For the decoration:
Candy canes
Orange and red boiled sweets
Icing sugar for dusting

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the egg yolks and beat well. Gradually add the sifted dry ingredients and syrup and mix well. Knead the dough lightly and divide it into portions for rolling out.
2. Roll out the dough onto baking parchment to 5mm (¼ inch) thick. Use my template to help you cut out the structure of the house with a knife. If there is any dough left, make a gingerbread family using gingerbread people cutters. Line several baking trays with baking parchment and carefully place all parts onto the baking trays. Cut out two small square-shaped windows into the sides of the house and the front, leaving room in the middle of the front for the front door. Cut out a heart from the front like I have and place a red boiled sweet in it onto the baking tray. Place orange boiled sweets in the windows onto the baking trays. Bake for 10 minutes until browned and hardened. Cool on a wire rack. Gently cut out a door on the front in between the two windows while still warm, and leave covered overnight to harden and dry out ready for assembling your gingerbread house.
3. The next day, make your royal icing which will act as a cement to stick your house together and to decorate your house and gingerbread family. In a bowl, using the whisk attachment of an electric mixer, beat the egg whites until frothy. Add the sifted icing sugar gradually, beating well between each addition. Then beat in lemon juice until thickened and at a piping consistency.
4. Fill a small piping bag with the royal icing and snip a small hole at the end. Before sticking the house together,

Amy's Tip

Add a magical touch by putting a battery-operated tea light inside your gingerbread house, like I have, creating a glowing effect through 'stained-glass' windows

you need to decorate the roof and pipe on the window panes. Once this has dried, get a plate or cake stand for your gingerbread house to sit on. Cut a large snip into your piping bag that is filled with royal icing. Start by piping the icing onto the edges of each side, front and back and the bottom of each piece to stick them to the board, then leave for 1 hour to set.

5. When you have stuck all of the walls together, carefully stick the first half of the roof on. Hold in place until it has set, then repeat on the other side. Leave to set for a few hours. Now stick the chimney on using icing.

6. Finish by piping more icing around the house and on the roof and chimney to look like snow. Decorate with candy canes and boiled sweets for the roof. Place the door in position and finally, dust with icing sugar to look like freshly fallen snow.