

Gingerbread

1 cup shortening
 1 cup sugar
 1 egg
 1 cup dark molasses

 2 tablespoons vinegar
 1 and ½ teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon ginger
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 1 teaspoon cloves

 5 cups flour

Cream shortening and sugar. Stir in egg and molasses. Add vinegar, baking soda, salt and spices and mix thoroughly. Add flour and mix until smooth. Chill at least three hours. Overnight is better.

Roll dough to one quarter inch thick on large cookie sheet – recipe will fill two cookie sheets. Place cardboard patterns on dough and cut out shape with sharp knife. Do not remove excess dough.

Bake at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes*. Cake should be brown, flat and smooth. Baking time varies with thickness of the dough. Touch lightly on top; if it springs back, it is done, it should also be baked slightly away from edge of the pan. Remove from oven. Cut quickly along pattern pieces again with sharp knife. Remove pieces from the pan with a pancake turner or spatula – very carefully to avoid breaking.

Cool flat on waxed paper and allow to dry thoroughly, at least twenty-four hours, preferably two or three days, before assembling.

PLAN AHEAD

day 1 mix dough & chill
 day 2 bake and allow to dry at least 24 hrs
 day 3 or 4 assemble and decorate

Frosting

* On accident, I severely over baked the pieces for the roof, and they turned a nice dark brown and dried very quickly. It was ok for the house – but not recommended for cookies you are planning to eat.

2 and ½ to 3 cups powdered sugar
 ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
 2 egg whites (crack egg, keep yolk and white in egg shell, pass yolk between two halves, white will fall in bowl.)
 ½ teaspoon vanilla

Break egg whites into bowl. Add cream of tartar and vanilla. Begin beating, adding sugar gradually. Beat until frosting holds its shape. Keep bowl covered with damp towel.

Prior to assembling all the pieces you may choose to do some wall decorating while they are flat with small candies, nuts, etc– using the frosting as the “glue”. Allow to dry 20 minutes before trying to assemble the house.

Assemble walls on corrugated cardboard covered either with aluminum foil or with waxed white freezer paper, either will be effective. Using a cake decorator, put a line of frosting along where you wish to set the first side of the house. Set the side in the frosting line. Holding this in place, run a line of frosting down the end, attach one end to the side, also attaching it to the base with a line of frosting. Attach remaining side and end in the same way. Allow this much of the house to dry - at least twenty minutes before putting on roof. Place frosting line on top edges of house, attach roof pieces and then run a line of frosting down the center top of roof. Finish decorating!

(Ideas: licorice, slivered almonds, gum drops, pretzel sticks, candy canes, sugar wafer cookies)