

RECIPES

The following recipes make gingerbread that has a smooth, consistent surface and an even baked edge. The dough is easy to roll and can be coloured with paste food colours or made in a number of shades, substituting brown sugar for white to make a pale gingerbread or adding treacle or cocoa powder to produce darker shades.

Conversion tables for weights and volumes can be found on page 127.



Classic gingerbread

This classic all-purpose gingerbread recipe is ideal for cookies, treats and small structures. It produces an even baked surface and edge, can be re-rolled, refrigerated and frozen, although this recipe and the ones that follow are best used on the day they have been made.

Vegan gingerbread

Follow the classic gingerbread recipe and method but replace the same quantity of butter with dairy free vegan margarine and replace the egg with 1tsp of finely milled flax meal mixed with 25ml water. Allow the flax meal mixed with water to stand for 15 minutes before use – this allows the flax meal to swell in the water.

Ingredients

- 112g golden syrup
- 68g dark brown sugar
 - 68g butter
 - 300g plain flour
 - 2tsp ground ginger
 - ½tsp ground cinnamon
 - 1 pinch of nutmeg
 - 1 pinch of cloves
- ½tsp of bicarbonate of soda
 - 3.75ml water
- Half a beaten egg – approximately 25g

Method

1. Weigh and measure the flour, bicarbonate of soda and spice. Mix together until the spice is evenly distributed, then sieve into a mixing bowl.
2. Beat the egg lightly.
3. Melt the golden syrup, dark brown sugar and butter together in a saucepan until all the sugar granules have dissolved. Do not allow to boil. Allow to cool a little.
4. Make a well in the middle of the flour and spice mix and pour in the melted syrup, dark brown sugar and butter. Add the egg and water.
5. Stir with a spatula to combine and knead to form a stiff dough.
6. Transfer the dough into an airtight plastic bag (or wrap in greaseproof paper) and allow to cool completely and rest at room temperature before use.
7. Preheat oven to 180°C / Fan 160°C / Gas mark 4.
8. Roll out and cut the gingerbread to the required shapes and thickness on baking parchment or a silicone mat using a cutter or template. Then gently slide onto a flat baking sheet covered with baking parchment. Bake for 8–15 minutes until evenly golden brown. (Note that baking times will depend on the size and thickness of the items you are baking.)
9. Once cooked, remove the baking sheets from the oven and allow to cool a little before transferring the items to a cooling rack with the help of a palette knife.

Tip

Use balls of unused gingerbread to weigh down the corners of the parchment if baking in a fan-assisted oven. This will help prevent the parchment from lifting which might distort the gingerbread as it is baking.



Pale gingerbread

This recipe makes a lighter gingerbread that uses white caster sugar. It can be used to provide variations in shade and is used when making coloured gingerbread. Like the previous recipe, it produces an even baked surface and edge, and can be re-rolled, stored and frozen.

Follow the classic gingerbread recipe and method (see opposite), but replace the same quantity of dark brown sugar with white caster sugar and omit the cloves and nutmeg.



Dark treacle gingerbread

Like the recipe for pale gingerbread, this darker gingerbread can be used to provide shade variation and has a deep and rich flavour.

Follow the classic gingerbread recipe and method but replace the same quantity of golden syrup with black treacle.



Rich chocolate gingerbread

Follow the classic gingerbread recipe and method but replace the same quantity of golden syrup with black treacle and replace 25g flour with 25g good quality cocoa powder.

Storing gingerbread and shortbread dough

The gingerbread doughs in this book can be stored in a refrigerator for three or four days if kept in an airtight food storage bag. They can also be frozen for several weeks if kept in an airtight bag. Shortbread dough can be stored for two days in the refrigerator.

Shortbread

Shortbread can be used to make light coloured inlays in gingerbread cookies. It also makes delicious cookies in its own right!



Ingredients

- 150g caster sugar
- 300g salted butter
- 400g plain flour
- 50g cornflour (corn starch)

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C / Fan 160°C / Gas mark 4.
2. Cream the sugar and butter together until it is light and fluffy.
3. Gently mix the cornflour (corn starch) into the flour until it is evenly distributed. Then sift into the creamed butter and sugar.
4. Mix to form a stiff dough, then sprinkle some flour onto a clean surface and knead the dough until it is smooth.
5. Roll out the dough and cut your desired shapes and place on a baking sheet covered with baking parchment.
6. Bake for around 12–15 minutes or until the edges are golden.
7. Remove from the oven and allow cooling a little before transferring to a wire cooling rack.





COOKIE FAVOURS

These pretty cookies use cutters of assorted shapes and sizes to create fuse-baked inlays and lacy patterns that are combined with a fine piped white outline to add a delicate edge. These cookies make lovely favours for weddings, parties or as gifts. Alternatively, you can add name tags to your cookies to make wonderful place settings for your Christmas table.



You will need:

- Kitchen scales, measuring spoons and jug for weighing and measuring ingredients
 - Sieve
 - Saucepan
 - Tablespoon
 - Mixing bowl
- Ramekin used to contain and mix small amounts of wet or dry ingredients before they are added to a mixture
 - Rolling pin
 - Rolling spacers
 - Baking parchment
 - Silicone mat.
- 1 batch of classic gingerbread dough
- Half a batch of shortbread dough
- 65mm round fluted cookie cutter
 - 20mm petal cutter
 - 20mm five-petal flower cutter
 - 20mm heart cutter
 - 7mm heart plunger cutter
 - 15mm and 5mm circle cutters
 - Piping bags
- Numbers 1.5 and 3 piping nozzles
- White royal icing, piping consistency
- Cookie bags and decorative ribbon
 - Wire cooling racks





1. Roll out a sheet of classic gingerbread dough using 3mm-deep spacers to give an even thickness on baking parchment or a silicone mat. Repeat to make a smaller sheet of shortbread dough. Gather the tools and cutters ready for use.

2. Using the round fluted cookie cutter, cut several cookie shapes, leaving at least 2–3cm (¾–1¼in) space between each shape. Use your choice of smaller cutters to remove sections of dough from each gingerbread cookie, which can be inlaid with shortbread or left empty to form various patterns.

3. To inlay some of the sections, use the appropriate cutter to cut the matching shape in shortbread dough.

4. Carefully position the matching shortbread shape into the space.



5. To build the pattern further, remove a shape from the shortbread dough.

6. Fill this space with a matching shape in gingerbread dough.

7. Finally, dot in small circles around the outside of the cookie using a number 3 piping nozzle to give a lacy effect.

8. Repeat this process using your choice of cutters to give different patterns. Bake the cookies for 8–12 minutes until lightly golden brown on the edges.

9. Once the cookies have cooled completely, pipe a scalloped line (see page 34) to follow the outline of the cookies, using a number 1.5 piping nozzle.

10. Once all of the cookies have been outlined and the royal icing has dried hard, place each cookie into a cookie bag and tie with a pretty ribbon of your choice.