How to make a Homemade Gingerbread House

Some of my favorite memories around Christmas time are making homemade gingerbread houses with my mom. We loved shopping for all of the fun candy we wanted to decorate with and we'd always get to pick a friend or neighbor to make one for.

The best thing about making these homemade gingerbread houses is that you can take your time. The gingerbread dough can be made up to a week in advance and stored in the fridge. And after you bake and cut the gingerbread into the pattern pieces you can store them for as long as you want. *So don't feel like this is a project you have to conquer in one day!* And if you have young kids who will want to help, the decorating of the house is always the best part, and that comes very last!

Think of your gingerbread house more as a fun Christmas decoration, than a house you would eat. The final product is so impressive and fun that hopefully you will want to store it for years to come!

To store it, cover it in a large plastic bag to protect it from dust and store it in a dry, protected place.

Let's Get Started

Materials Needed

- Gingerbread House Pattern, printed and cut out—(included, pages 15 & 16)
- Gingerbread recipe, included below
- Frosting recipe, included below
- Cardboard Base: A large cardboard cake board works best (found easily at Michaels or a baking supply store). Or you can cut your own large piece of cardboard and cover it with tinfoil.
- Candy for decorating, find suggestions on page 10.
- Cake decorating bag, decorating tips (small round tip (Wilton 3) and small star tip (Ateco 27))

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RECIPES

Ingredients

For the Gingerbread:

- 1 cup molasses
- 1 cup shortening (Crisco) 2 tsp baking soda
- 1⁄2 cup water
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 7 cups all-purpose flour 1⁄2 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground ginger

For the Royal Icing:

- 4 egg whites
- 2 lbs powdered sugar (about 6-7 cups)
- 2 tsp Cream of tarter

1. Make the Gingerbread Dough:

- In a large saucepan combine molasses and shortening. In a small bowl, combine baking soda and water and stir to dissolve, set aside.
- Bring the molasses and shortening to a boil, stirring frequently. Once boiling, remove from heat and stir in the soda/water mixture, mixing well to combine.
- In a large mixing bowl use an electric mixer or stand mixture to combine the sugar, eggs and vanilla.
- Add the molasses mixture to the sugar/egg mixture and mix well to combine.
- Add the flour, salt, and spices and mix to combine. Place dough in a large ziplock bag and smash use the palm of your hand to shape it into a large, flat disk inside of the bag.

2. Chill the dough:

- Chill the gingerbread for several hours, or make up to 1 week in advance.

3. Make the Royal Icing:

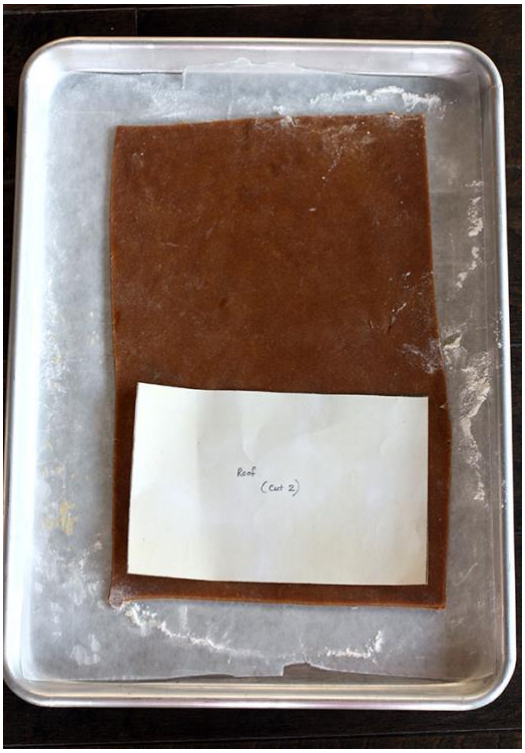
- Place all ingredients in a metal mixing bowl. Beat until smooth and standing peaks (about 4-6 minutes).
- Keep bowl covered with a damp cloth as you use the frosting (this will help keep the frosting from drying out).

4. Bake and Cut the Gingerbread

*NOTE: A trick I have learned over the years is to cut the house pieces out *after* the gingerbread is baked. This results in smoother and more even edges.

- Remove the gingerbread dough from the fridge and allow it to sit at room temperature for 20 minutes. Cut dough into four equal pieces, and use your hands to mold each piece into a thick rectangle, as best as possible.

- Place a damp towel on your countertop and place a piece of wax or parchment paper on top of the towel. (The damp towel will keep the parchment paper from sliding as you roll out the dough.)
- Lightly dust your hands and one of the pieces of gingerbread with flour. Roll the piece into a large rectangle, no more than ¼ inch thick. Before you bake the gingerbread, make sure the pattern pieces you will cut from that piece of



gingerbread fit on top of the dough you've rolled out. Watch the corners particularly.

- Place the gingerbread (still on the parchment paper) onto a large baking sheet or jelly-roll pan and bake for 11-12 minutes. Remove from oven.
- ***Cut your house pattern pieces while the gingerbread is still warm from the oven. As each batch comes out of the oven, place pattern pieces on top and use a sharp serrated knife to cut the pattern out, pulling the scraps away from the pieces you cut. Allow gingerbread to cool completely before removing from the parchment paper.

  NOTE: The gingerbread can be baked and cut days in advance. Store pieces in a dry place.

(Back, Front, and Door, with extra pieces pulled away, to discard)

Assembling the Gingerbread House

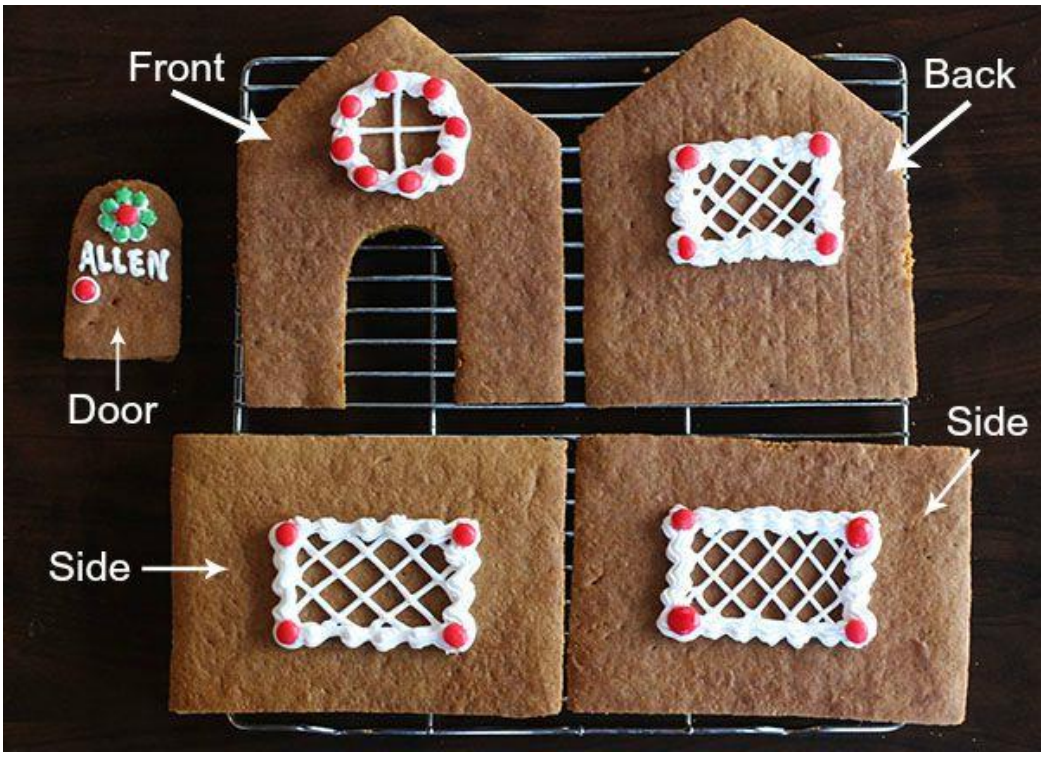
When you are ready to assemble your gingerbread house, make the royal icing.
Have ready:

- Frosting
- Candy
- 2 pastry bags, a small round decorating tip, and a small star decorating tip (We use a Wilton 3 and Ateco 27, but there are many that will work)

1. Frost the windows.

- We've found that frosting the window before assembling the house is key
- For the sides and back pieces, use a small round tip to draw a large rectangle window. Then draw crisscross lines inside of it.

- Next, trace each rectangle window with your star tip and add red hot candies to the corners. We add a circle window to the front of the house and decorate it with red hots. On the front door we make a wreath out of green, star-shaped, sprinkles with a red hot candy in the center. We make a doorknob using a red hot.



2. Melt the sugar; Assemble the house

- Once the windows are decorated, it's time to assemble the house!
- Start by melting about 2 cups of granulated sugar in a large skillet over medium heat. When the sugar begins to soften, stir it constantly so that it doesn't burn. Stir until the sugar is melted (5-10 minutes)

- The next step is the trickiest part of the gingerbread house, and it's a two person job!—Be careful not to burn yourself with the hot sugar!
- Place your cake board (the board that will hold your house) on the counter next to your melted sugar. It's best to have one person dip the pieces in melted sugar and place them on the board, and another person hold them steady together on the board while the sugar dries.
- Begin with the BACK PIECE of the house. Dip the bottom and one of the sides in the melted sugar. Place it on the board, positioning it towards the back, center of the board.

- Now pick up a SIDE PIECE of the house and dip the bottom and one side and stick it to the back piece of the house. Repeat with the other SIDE PIECE.
- Now dip the sides and bottom of the FRONT PIECE and put it in place.

- Hold one of the ROOF PIECES over the melted sugar, inside edge facing up. Carefully spoon sugar onto the piece in the shape of a wide "U" (you want the sugar to stick where the house pieces will touch it.) Repeat with remaining roof piece.

3. Decorate Your House

CONGRATULATIONS! Your house is assembled, and now the best part begins!

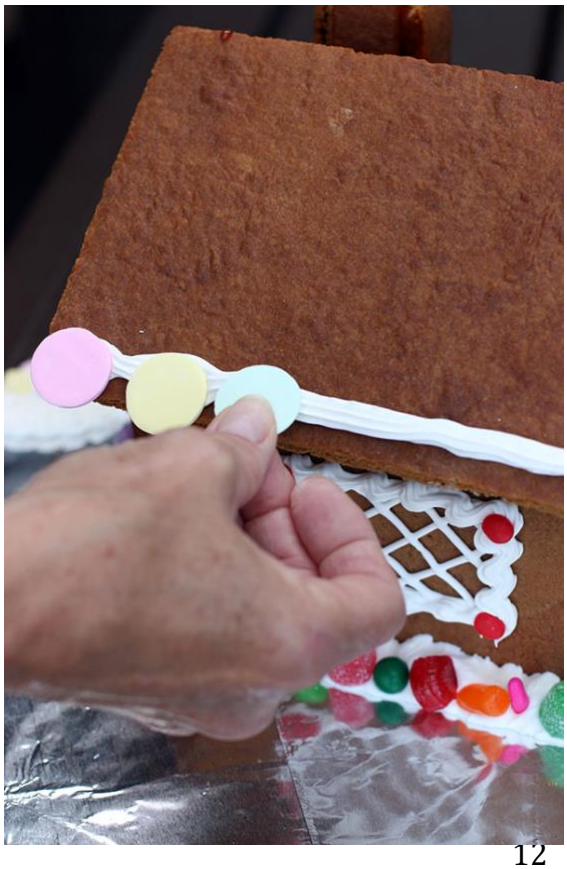
- Cover every standing edge of the house with frosting. That includes up and down the sides, across the bottom, under the roof, around the edges of the chimney, around the front door, etc.)
- As you frost, decorate with small, bright candies of different shapes and textures. (Don't use chocolate, if you plan on storing your gingerbread house)

Candy Ideas:

- Christmas hard candies
- Candy Canes
- Peppermint Hard Candies
- Spice Drops
- Dots
- Red Hots
- Gumballs or Gobstoppers
- Good n' Plenty
- Sprinkles
- For the Roof: Necco's, Pretzels or Shredded Wheat Cereal
- Tootsie Rolls (for a wood pile on the side of the house)
- Marshmallows (for snowmen in the yard)

To make a Necco roof:

- Start with a horizontal line of frosting ½" up from the bottom edge of the roof.
- Press Necco's into the frosting, ½'' apart. (You should be able to fit about 6 Necco's, in a line across the roof). Alternate colors and have the "Necco" symbol face down.
- In between each Necco, make a thick, vertical line of frosting.



- Place Necco's gently at the top of each line of frosting and press down gently.

- Repeat with another thick, vertical line of frosting between each Necco. And again place a Necco on top.

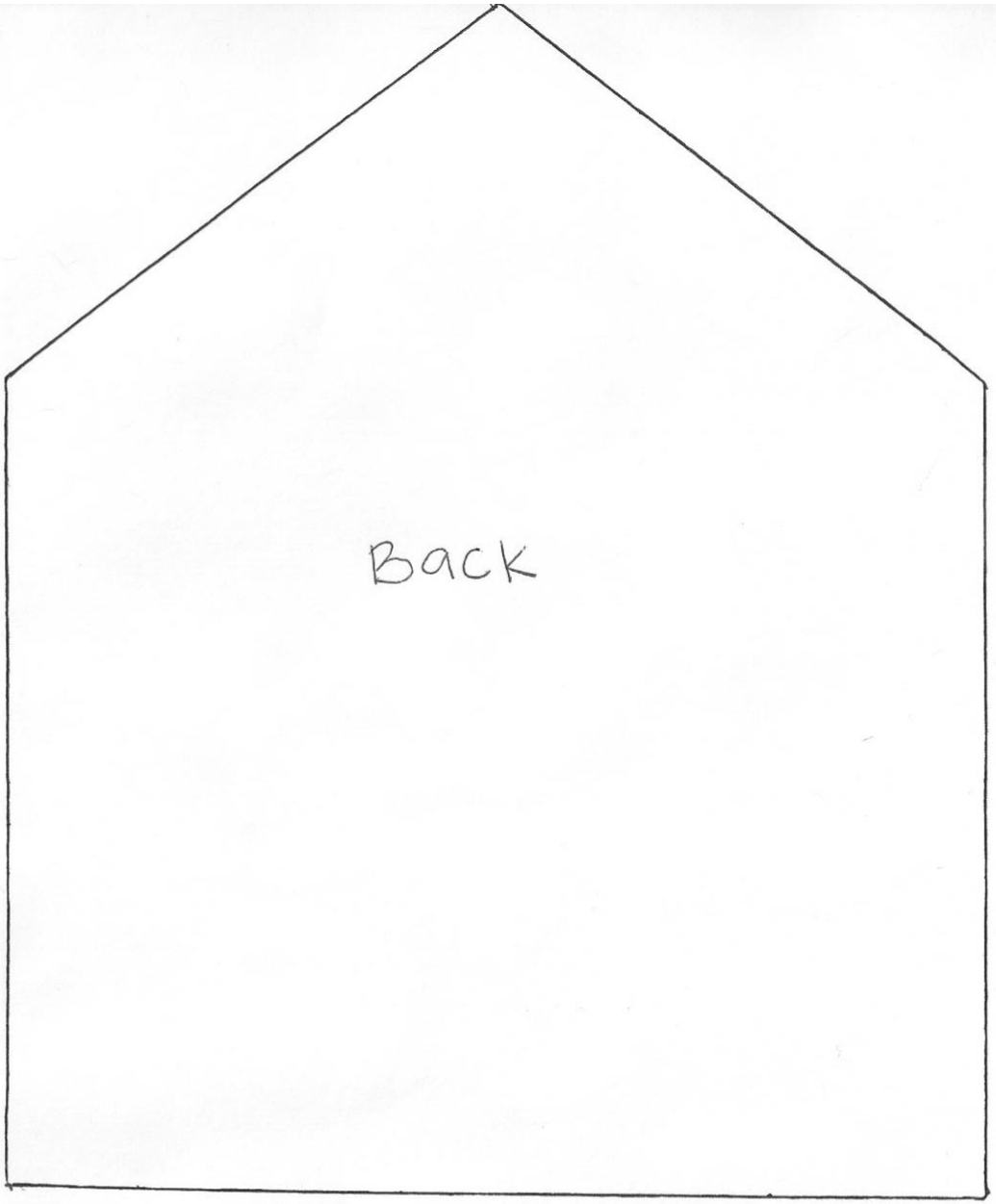
elcome

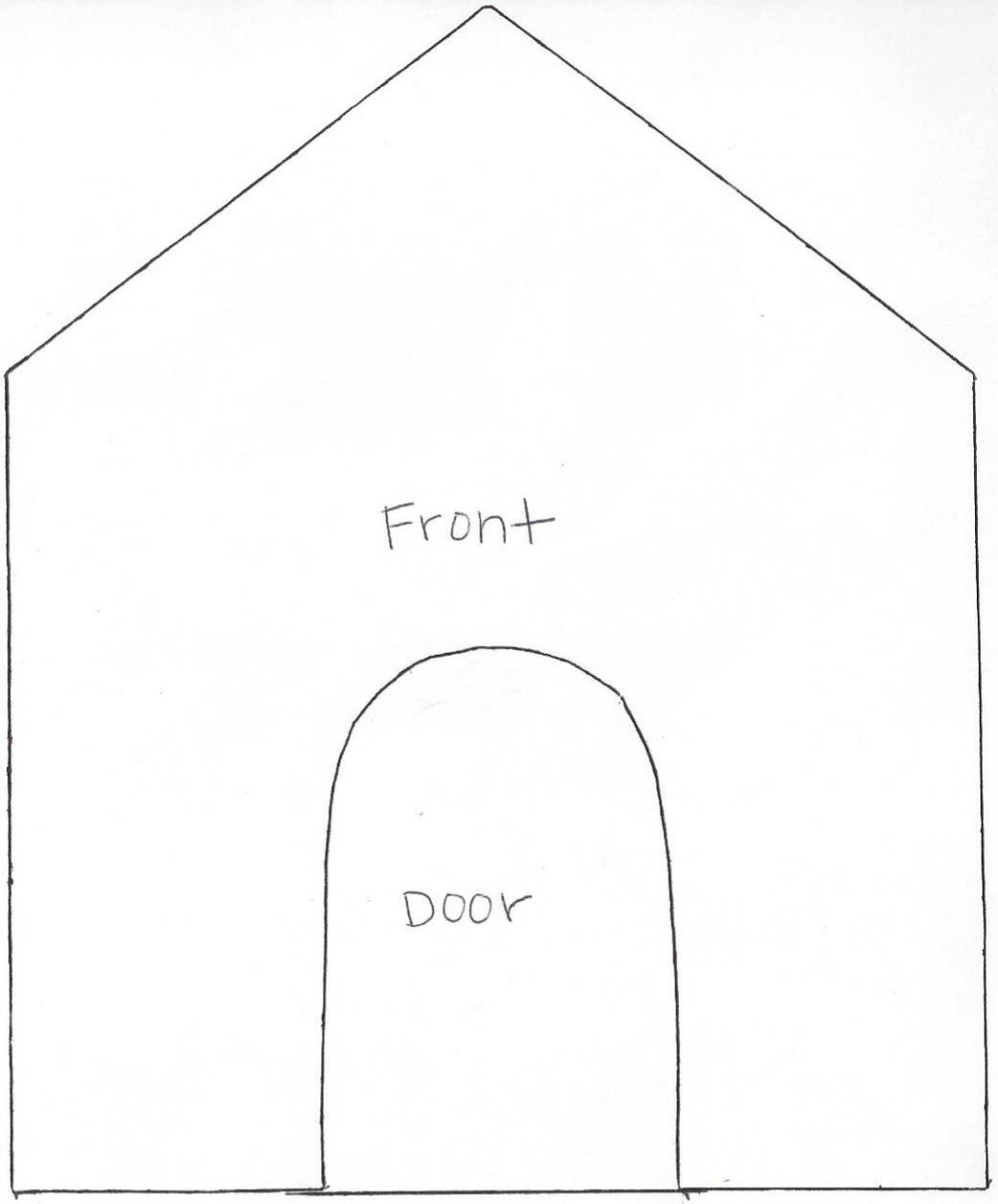
Additional Gingerbread House Ideas:

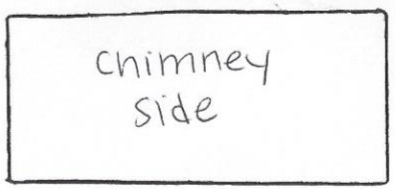
- Consider adding Pretzel or Shredded Wheat to the roof
- Cover the base of the board with frosting, like “snow”.
- Make a fence out of pretzels and gumdrops, or out of candy.
- Make snowmen out of marshmallows
- Make a woodpile out of tootsie rolls and a lake out of blue construction paper with plastic wrap over it.

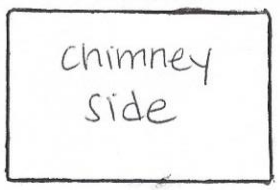
Gingerbread House Pattern

- The gingerbread house pattern is found on the following 2 pages. Print both pages and cut out the pattern pieces before you begin. (You do not need to print the whole Ebook, just set you printer to print pages 16-17.)


Back


Front
Door


chimney side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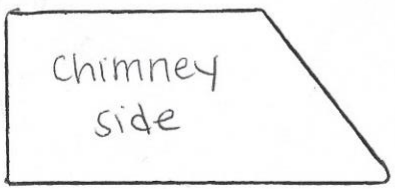
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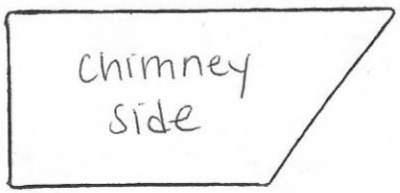
chimney side

Roof (cut 2)

House Side
(cut 2)