



MAKING A GINGERBREAD HOUSE

"Where are you going with all of those tools, Jasper?" Roland and Balthazar asked.

"Mom and I are going to build a gingerbread house!" Jasper continued marching on with his arms loaded with hammer, saw, nails, and paint brush.

"Whoa," said Roland. "We made a gingerbread house last year and we used cooking tools, like mixing bowls, spoons, measuring cups, and the oven."

"Really? No hammer and nails? Then how will the house stay together."



EARN THIS NUGGET

Have a family meeting to decide what kind of gingerbread house to make and plan the days to do each step. Build your house and if you'd like, take some pictures to go in the Skill Trek Hall of Fame. We'd love to see them.

"Jasper, a gingerbread house isn't made from wood and nails. It's made with gingerbread cookies and frosting. Here's what you need to know."

You will need a recipe, some cardboard, parchment paper (special paper for baking), and a large area to build and decorate your house.

Just like building a real house, building a gingerbread house can take a long time. Well, long time for a cookie house anyway. Some people plan to do it over three days.

The first day, follow the recipe for making the gingerbread dough. There are two kinds of gingerbread cookies. Some are soft and some are hard. Naturally, for your house, you'll want the cookies to be hard. After the dough is made, it will need to chill in the refrigerator. It's best to leave it overnight.



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On day two, you will bake the parts of the gingerbread house. Follow the instructions to cut out the house parts before baking.

The recipe will have all the details about how to cut them out, place them on the cookie sheet, and bake them. Depending on the size of the cookie sheet and the size of your house, you may need to bake the pieces in batches. If there is leftover dough, make some gingerbread boys and girls. The house parts need to cool completely, so let them set overnight. But you can enjoy a warm gingerbread person cookie after all that work.



The third day; the fun day. You will build and decorate the house. Instead of nailing the house together, you'll "glue" it together with royal icing. Royal icing is made with sugar and egg whites. Follow the recipe to get it just right.

To put the house together, first decide what your house will set on: a flat plate, cookie sheet, or sturdy cardboard can be used. Cover this base with aluminum foil.

Following the gingerbread house instructions, glue the walls together. Be sure to have a family member or friend around to help hold the pieces together. Start early in the day because there will be times the frosting glue needs to dry for at least an hour before going on.

Once the house is constructed and dried. The fun begins. Decorating the house with candy. You can follow a pattern or just have fun. Maybe each family member can decorate a side of it.

"I learned a few things about gingerbread houses when we made ours last year," Roland told his friends. "Gingerbread houses started in Germany in the 16th century. They became popular when the Brothers Grimm wrote the story of Hansel and Gretel.



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“The world’s largest gingerbread house was built at the Traditions Golf Club in Bryan, Texas. It was 40,000 cubic feet. They used 4,000 gingerbread bricks to build it.”

“Wow!” Jasper exclaimed. “Even the simple one sounds like a lot of work. I sure don’t want to build the world’s biggest gingerbread house.”

Balthazar explained that an easier method of a house, which looks like a gingerbread house, can be done with graham crackers. No baking involved with this one.

"Plus," he went on, "there are kits available to make a gingerbread birdhouse, castle, tree, or sleigh."

"It's going to take a few days, but this is going to be fun," Jasper said to his friends as he turned to scamper home.



Resources

How to Make a Gingerbread House

http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/how_to_make_a_gingerbread_house/

Easy Gingerbread Houses with Graham Crackers

<https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-make-easy-gingerbread-houses-2104319>

Easy Gingerbread House Kits

<https://www.thisoldhouse.com/ideas/17-easy-gingerbread-house-kits>

The History of Gingerbread

<http://www.pbs.org/food/the-history-kitchen/history-gingerbread/>

Books to read while waiting for the gingerbread to be ready:

Damperman: An Australian Version of a Gingerbread Tale

by Karen Herps and Cal Herps

Jake and the Gingerbread Wars by E. G. Foley

Gingerbread for Liberty: How a German Baker Helped Win the American Revolution by Mara Rockliff

The Gingerbread Man by Brighter Child