

Gingerbread House

Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa

Makes 1 7 1/2" tall gingerbread house

Honey Dough

6 1/2 cups honey
12 cups bread flour

Spice Dough

1 1/2 ounces powdered baker's ammonia (ammonium carbonate)
1 cup water
4 eggs
2 cups light corn syrup
8 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
4 tablespoons ground cinnamon
3 1/2 tablespoons ground nutmeg
4 tablespoons ground clove
4 tablespoons ground ginger
12-ounce package of chocolate candy melts, melted

Royal Icing

4 egg whites, room temperature
5 cups confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon cream of tartar
1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice

For honey dough:

1. Bring honey to a boil in a large saucepan over medium heat, immediately removing from heat as soon as it comes to a boil. Pour into a large mixing bowl; slowly add the bread flour using bread hook on an electric mixer. Continue mixing for 10 to 15 minutes or until dough is smooth.
2. Allow the dough to cool; wrap with plastic wrap and set aside overnight at room temperature. (This dough needs to set up at room temperature at least 12 hours, but can rest at room temperature, up to 2 months, in a sealed covered container.)

For spice dough:

1. Dissolve baker's ammonia in the water in a large mixing bowl. Add the eggs and corn syrup and mix until combined.
2. In a separate large bowl, sift the flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, clove and ginger. Gradually add the flour mixture to the wet mixture using the bread hook on an electric mixer just until flour is incorporated. The dough will become very stiff; do not overmix.
3. Cut the honey dough into 3 portions and add into the spice dough one portion at a time, blending well. Knead the mixture by hand in a fold-and-press motion on a lightly floured work surface. (This is time consuming, but important so that pieces cook evenly.)

4. Preheat oven to 350°F. Divide dough into 4 equal portions. Lightly flour work surface; work with 1 portion at a time. Using a rolling pin, roll the dough out until about ¼-inch thick. While rolling, flour the work surface and rolling pin as needed.
5. Using gingerbread house template (sample below), cut out shapes with a floured butter knife. Transfer the shapes to a greased cookie sheet using a large floured spatula, placing them 1 inch apart. Lightly brush dough with milk.
6. Bake until firm to the touch in the center and the edges begin to darken, 10 to 14 minutes. If the dough begins to bubble, pierce it with a toothpick to allow the air out, then carefully smooth the surface.
7. Allow to completely cool on the cookie sheet. Bake in batches, re-rolling scraps to make additional cookies or decorations.
8. Brush each gingerbread piece (except 10-inch round base) liberally with melted chocolate candy coating using a pastry brush. Allow chocolate to completely cook and harden before assembling.

For royal icing:

1. Do not begin to make the icing until the gingerbread house pieces are completely cooled and you are ready to assemble. For the icing, be sure mixing bowl and utensils are free of oil – the smallest trace will keep icing from getting firm.
2. Beat egg whites until light and fluffy (5 to 7 minutes) in a large mixing bowl using an electric mixer on medium speed.
3. Gradually add the confectioners' sugar and cream of tartar. Add the lemon juice and beat on high for at least 5 to 7 minutes or until mixture forms stiff, glossy peaks.
4. Cover icing with plastic wrap, making sure the wrap touches the icing to keep it from drying out.

For gingerbread house:

1. Cut out a cardboard base that is large enough for the gingerbread house, and strong enough to hold the weight. Cover with aluminum foil or wrapping paper.
2. Pipe an 8-inch circle of royal icing in center of the base and place the gingerbread base on top of the icing. Assemble the walls on the base, piping thick lines of the icing as "mortar" where the walls meet. (Canned goods can support the walls until they dry.) Straighten any edges, or smooth with a nutmeg grater. Allow the icing to dry before attaching roof pieces.
3. Once roof is secured and icing is hardened, decorate with the remaining icing, cookies and candies.

Cooks' notes:

Set aside a few days for this project! The honey dough needs to rest overnight. Once the pieces are baked, allow them to cool for at least 4 hours. Allow the "mortar" icing to completely dry and harden before decorating.

Finely ground baker's ammonia, or ammonium carbonate, can be found at drugstores. If you notice an odor of ammonia while baking, it quickly will dissipate (and does not leave an odor or taste after baking).

