

“Adjustable” Gingerbread

I use this recipe for cookies as well as gingerbread houses. It doesn't spread or puff when baked, rolls out easily, and is quite tasty. My kids are a little picky about molasses and heavy spices, so I adjust these to taste (see below)

½ cup solid vegetable shortening

½ cup (1 stick) margarine or butter

1 cup granulated sugar (or ½ cup white and ½ cup light or dark brown sugar)

1 ¼ cups unsulphured molasses (or white corn syrup, dark corn syrup or “brown sugar” corn syrup)

2 eggs

1 tsp real vanilla

*5 to 5 ½ cups all-purpose flour**

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp salt

2 tsp powdered ginger + 2 tsp ground cinnamon +, 1 tsp ground nutmeg + 1 tsp ground cloves OR

2 T Apple Pie Spice OR

2 T Pumpkin Pie Spice OR

Any combination of spices above that equals 6 tsp (2 Tbsp)

I like adding fine black pepper, cardamom, chai spice or other “surprise” spices

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. In a very large bowl, melt shortening and butter in microwave until smooth and liquid (do not burn).
3. Add sugar and molasses, stir, then add eggs and blend together well.
4. Add 4 cups of the flour plus all other dry ingredients and mix until combined.
5. Turn mixture onto lightly floured surface. Knead in remaining 1 to 1 ½ cups flour. * For tender cookies, add only as much flour as necessary to make a firm dough that is easily rolled. Note: corn syrup is lighter in consistency than molasses and so will “take” more flour. Do not make dough dry and crumbly, just stiff enough to hold together when rolled out and cut. If necessary, chill dough for 15 minutes in freezer prior to rolling and cutting. For gingerbread houses extra flour may be added to give strength and firmness to the dough.
6. Lightly dust rolling surface and cutters with flour. Roll to ¼ inch for cookies, slightly thicker for gingerbread houses. If you're using large pieces (walls, etc.) roll on parchment paper and cut shapes; remove excess dough and transfer parchment to cookie sheets to bake. Bake similar sized pieces together as smaller pieces may bake quickly.
7. Bake 6-10 minutes for small to medium cookies, 10-15 minutes for larger pieces.
8. Gingerbread dough may be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for months. Defrost in refrigerator and soften slightly at room temp for use.