

Making Gingerbread Houses



Making gingerbread houses has become a new tradition in our home. It all happens during the afternoon of Thanksgiving. While I am busy in the kitchen, my kids are busy right at the kitchen counter, making gingerbread creations right in front of my eyes. I love it, my mom loves watching and giving

advice, and the kids get a real kick out of it. The competition is steep even though there are 13 years between them! Of course, my daughter's is perfectly neat and even on all sides, but my 10 year old son's is always very colorful and imaginative. It is a great way to pass the time and we will continue to do it as long as I can purchase gingerbread kits! Hahaha!

No, we've never started from scratch with the whole sheets of gingerbread and cutting out shapes. I guess we have patience for decorating but not baking! However, while surfing the internet I came across a lovely gal named Vanessa. She makes some pretty great gingerbread houses and the one at the top of the page is hers. Her recipe follows if you are interested in making them from scratch. If you'd like to visit her site, the address is www.zinke.wordpress.com.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1-1/3 cups molasses
- 4 eggs
- 8 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and brown sugar until smooth. Stir in the molasses and eggs. Combine 1 ½ cups of the flour, baking soda, salt, allspice, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger; beat into the molasses mixture. Gradually stir in the remaining flour by hand to form a stiff dough. Divide dough into 2 pieces.
3. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/8 inch thickness. Cut into desired shapes. Place pieces 1 inch apart onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Refrigerate for 15 minutes. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven. Cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.

ROYAL ICING:

(a.k.a super glue for ginger bread houses)

3 egg whites

4-5 cups powdered confectioner's sugar

Directions: beat until nice foamy stiff peaks form.

This recipe decorated 2 houses, generously. Truly, this stuff is amazing! It could double as nail hole filler. I learned that a little ziploc bag is handy for piping the icing if you don't have the fancy cake decoration bags, couplers and metal tips.

Ok, back to the Hiller creations and don't you dare compare ours to the gingerbread houses that Vanessa makes!! She's a real pro!

Last year, Dad got involved helping Cam put the house together from the kit. Once the walls were up...Dad had other things to do!





Brittany got busy too, but Dad didn't have to help put her kit together! Hahaha! In fact, she may have helped Dad, help Cam, put his house together!! Isn't that what holidays are all about?

Cam moved forward with his very quickly, using the candy that came in the kit along with Halloween candy left over from the big even a few weeks before. (I think this is a great way to keep kids from eating all the candy...remind them to save it for the gingerbread house!!)



Brittany worked slowly and deliberately making sure every detail was as perfect as possible. (That's my girl!)

Cam was proud of his creation and so were we. He spent more time working on it than I thought he would and if nothing else, it created memories that we'll hang on to for a long time!





Brit's creation used less frosting this year and did something quite unique on the roof. She coated it as if the snow had drifted down the slant of the roof and then she added red to one side and green to the other in an artistic shingle shape.



Her gumdrops and round candies lined up perfectly and then Santa was placed at the front door to greet any visitors!

The year before, Brittany used a lot more frosting and candies, and I'm not sure if you can see it, but Cameron made a flag out of a Tootsie Roll wrapper and a toothpick and it's coming out of the left side of his roof – very clever!





Ok, I feel I need to end this with another house made by Vanessa. This is her Halloween Gingerbread House. Is this wonderful or what? The detail is incredible and it looks so yummy!! I need to ask her if they end up eating the houses or just keeping them until they fall apart!!

And just look at the areal view! The patterns are so intricate and vibrant. I wonder how long it takes her to put these together? For me it would take weeks, but I'll bet it is a fun and sweet evening!



So the gauntlet has been thrown out there, can you beat the designs of Brittany, Cameron and Vanessa? Take the time to give it a try, I promise you'll enjoy every minute of it whether it's from a kit or from scratch!!

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