

# Construction-grade Gingerbread

**Makes:** Enough for 3 small gingerbread houses

## **Ingredients:**

7 ounces vegetable shortening, melted

3 ½ cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon ginger

½ teaspoon nutmeg

½ teaspoon cloves

½ teaspoon salt

¾ cup sugar

2 cups corn syrup or molasses

1 large egg

## **Directions:**

Melt the shortening in the microwave or on the stovetop until fully liquid; set aside to cool for 5 minutes.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, spices and salt until well combined; set aside. You could also use 2 ½ teaspoons of a pumpkin spice blend, or skip the spices altogether

Using a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, add the melted and cooled shortening, corn syrup (or molasses) and sugar. Whisk on medium-low speed for 1 minute to combine. Add the egg and mix again on medium speed for 30 seconds.

Switch to the paddle attachment and add the flour mixture. Mix on the lowest speed until the flour begins to incorporate, then increase the speed to medium and mix until the dough comes together, about 1 minute.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and gently knead it into a ball. Divide the ball in half and press each half into a rectangular disk about 1-inch thick. If not using immediately, wrap each half in plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use, up to 1 week, or freeze for several

months in an airtight container. Thaw frozen dough at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Position one oven rack in the lower third of the oven, and the other rack in the center so that you can bake 2 sheets at the same time.

Roll the disk out on a piece of parchment paper or lightly floured surface, rolling as evenly as possible, until it is ¼-inch thick. Sprinkle the dough and your rolling pin with flour as needed to prevent the dough from sticking as you roll. Place the rolled dough in the freezer for 20 minutes to help the cut-outs hold their shape in the oven.

#### **To make the cut-outs:**

Keep the dough on the parchment paper. Place your templates on the dough, leaving at least 1 inch between each piece. Use a sharp knife or bench scraper to cut evenly around each shape and remove the scraps to roll out again for additional pieces. Place the baking sheets in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to chill before baking.

Bake at 300 degrees until the gingerbread is firm and the edges are golden brown, about 1 hour. Remove the gingerbread from the oven and keep the shapes on the baking sheets until completely cool before moving. For the best result, let the cut-outs sit at room temperature overnight, uncovered, so that they are fully dry before assembling. Assemble the next day, or store indefinitely.

#### **Sarah's tips:**

- This is a very firm, construction-grade gingerbread and is not ideal for eating. As such, I highly recommend using a hot glue gun to assemble your gingerbread house instead of royal icing – it is fast and easy and dries almost instantly.
- Royal icing is ideal for decorating gingerbread houses, and you can make your own or buy it from a craft store. Water may be added by the half-teaspoon to thin the icing out to desired consistency. Buttercream may also be used but is not as reliable as royal icing.
- Corn syrup makes the dough more pliable for rolling, while molasses adds richer color. Both work well, so the choice is yours.