
Cutting out the house panels

1 recipe of gingerbread dough	additional flour
sharp knife or pizza cutter	house panel templates
manila folders or foam core (optional)	parchment paper
rolling pin	baking sheets

1. Remove half of the dough mixture from the refrigerator and let it sit for 10 minutes. Roll it out evenly onto a sheet of parchment paper to between 1/4- and 1/8-inch thickness, dusting the dough occasionally with flour to avoid sticking.
2. Cut out the house panels from the templates provided. If you intend to re-use them, trace them onto a manila folder or foam core. Place the templates onto the dough, as many as will fit, with about 1/2 inch between the pieces. Use a pizza cutter or sharp knife to trace around the panels. You should end up with 6 pieces: 1 front, 1 back, 2 sides and 2 roof panels. If you can't fit all the pieces on the rolled-out dough, use the same steps on the remaining dough in the refrigerator for the rest of the pieces. You can also use cookie cutters to make cookies from the leftover dough for the kids to decorate. Frosted cookies make great embellishments for your birdhouse (and an even better tasty treat).
3. For the front piece, cut the center hole using a knife or circular cookie cutter. If you want to add a bird perch to your finished house, use a straw or paring knife to cut the small hole.
4. Preheat oven to 350°F with the oven rack in the middle. While oven is heating, place the cookie sheets with the dough in the freezer about 5-10 minutes to help them bake evenly.
5. Bake dough pieces until the edges are just beginning to darken, approximately 20-25 minutes. Rotate the cookie sheets halfway through the baking time for more even browning. Remove the sheets from the oven and place on cooling racks.
6. While the pieces are still slightly warm, lay the paper templates over them and use a large serrated knife to trim off any uneven parts or areas that have spread past the pattern. Let pieces cool completely before assembling the house.



BERNARD'S BAKING TIPS:

- *Leave about 1/2 inch between pieces when cutting out the dough, and transfer the dough to the baking sheet without removing it from the parchment paper. This will keep the dough from stretching out of shape and keep the pieces from running into each other when baking.*
- *Dough scraps can also be re-used and rerolled, but keep in mind the more you reroll the dough, the "tougher" the dough becomes and the pieces will bake differently.*
- *After you've transferred the parchment paper to the baking sheets, place some small pieces of leftover dough on the corners to keep the parchment paper from curling up against your house panels and causing them to warp.*



Assembling and decorating the house

See step-by-step assembly photos at Hallmark.com/easter/ideas/gingerbread-house

parchment paper

1 recipe royal icing

food coloring (optional)

thin pretzel stick (optional)

decorating bags or parchment paper

decorating tips (I used a size 4 round tip for the basic house and size 3 round and size 16 star tips for the more advanced houses)

various candies for decorating

1. Pick a solid base for your gingerbread house—a thick, sturdy piece of cardboard lined with florist foil, a cake stand, or plate. If you want to create a gingerbread base, roll out your remaining dough and cut a circle using a round 8- or 9-inch cake pan as a template. Bake at 350° for approximately 30 minutes and let cool.
2. Color your icing (optional). Drop a decorating tip (I used size 4 round) into a decorating bag and add your icing. Pipe a thick line of icing along the bottom and sides of the front piece, and along the bottom (long end) of one side piece. Press the front and side panels together down on the base. Hold in place for a few minutes until the icing is partially set. Pipe another thick line of icing on the short and long end of a side panel and place it against the edge of front piece and base. Hold in place to set. Repeat with the other side panel and back piece. Get an extra set of hands or cans from your pantry to help hold the panels in place if necessary. Pipe icing along any seams, inside or outside of the house, to fill in any gaps and to add extra stability. Let stand for at least 20 minutes before adding the roof pieces.
3. For the roof, pipe icing all along the top edges of front, back and two sides. Place both roof panels on the structure at the same time, making sure the top edges of the roof panels are touching each other. Hold in place for a few minutes to set. Pipe icing along the top seam. Let stand for at least an hour before decorating.
4. Pipe icing with various tips to make decorative designs around the walls of the house and roof.
5. Use icing to “glue” pieces of candy to the house, beginning with the roof. If you added a small hole to the front panel for a bird perch, dab it with icing and insert a thin pretzel stick broken in half to create the perch (optional).
6. You can add grass around your house by tinting your remaining icing green and spreading it in a thin layer around the base of the house. Or cover with edible grass (available at most candy-making supply stores or wherever Easter candy is sold) or green-tinted coconut.





Assembling and decorating the house



BERNARD'S BAKING TIPS:

- *Don't have an extra set of hands to help in the kitchen? Grab some cans from your pantry to help hold the gingerbread panels in place.*
- *If you don't have decorating tips, just cut the end off your parchment bag and ice away.*
- *These are some of my favorite candies for decorating: gumdrops, jelly beans, orange slices, chocolate-covered candies, candy coins, Jordan almonds and Necco wafers (used to create the roof tiles on the advanced version).*



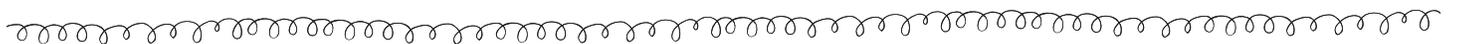
Easy



Intermediate



Advanced





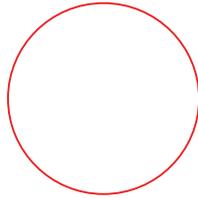
Gingerbread Birdhouse Template

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Front & Back Panels



A straw works
great to cut out
the bird perch
(for front panel only)



Cut this circle and
the bird perch for the
front panel only

Quick Tip

You'll need to cut out 2 panels of
dough for each template to build your
gingerbread birdhouse.

Side Panels

Roof Panels