
Bernard's Gingerbread Dough

This is my favorite recipe for gingerbread houses because it creates firmer wall panels and holds its shape well when baked.

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
¾ cup molasses
5 cups all purpose flour
1½ tsp baking soda
2 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp ground ginger
½ tsp cloves
1 tsp salt
¾ cup ice cold water



1. Cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add molasses and blend at low speed until incorporated, scraping the bowl once or twice during mixing.
2. Sift flour, baking soda, all spices and salt together, and add to the mixture. Once incorporated, mixture will be dry and crumbly.
3. Add water to mixture until incorporated.
4. Cover the dough and chill overnight or at least three hours.



BERNARD'S BAKING TIPS:

- *Recipes that contain eggs are better for eating but are sometimes too soft for construction purposes.*
- *A heavy-duty mixer is best for this recipe; if you don't have one, some hand mixing/kneading may be necessary.*
- *I prefer to transfer my dough to a 1-gallon-size plastic freezer bag to chill—it keeps the dough airtight and is easier to handle.*



Bernard's Royal Icing

Royal icing is the perfect choice for assembling and decorating gingerbread houses because it sets up firm (it's the same basic ingredients as those candy dots you peeled off strips of paper and ate as a kid). Most other icings contain shortening or butter that will soak into the gingerbread and can cause your house to soften and collapse.

¼ cup Meringue Powder (available at most craft stores and cake-decorating stores)

½ cup water

Approximately 6 cups confectioners' sugar

1. In a spotlessly clean and grease-free mixing bowl (I recommend glass or metal), beat meringue powder and water until foamy and powder is dissolved.
2. Add confectioners' sugar to mixture and blend until incorporated. Beat on high about 5 minutes until stiff peaks form. **Make sure you beat the icing long enough—it should be glossy white and similar in consistency to caulk for best results.**
3. Cover bowl immediately with a damp towel or plastic wrap to prevent it from drying out—keep it covered both before and during use.



BERNARD'S BAKING TIPS:

- *If you can't find meringue powder, substitute the meringue powder and water ingredients with ½ cup fresh egg whites.*
- *You can adjust the amount of sugar to make icing stiffer or thinner as desired.*
- *Keep icing stored in an airtight container when not in use. Re-beat at low speed before using again.*

