

Loreta's Favorite Gingerbread Dough

5 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ginger
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon cloves
1 cup shortening
1 cup sugar
1 ¼ cups molasses
2 eggs, beaten

In large saucepan, melt shortening on stove over low heat. While shortening is melting, in a separate bowl stir together flour, salt and spices (if using for cookies, add 1 tsp. baking soda). When shortening is half melted, remove from heat and continue to stir until completely melted. Add sugar, molasses and beaten eggs. Mix well and quickly (to prevent eggs from cooking). Add molasses mixture to flour mixture. Mix well. Dough will be soft. Cover and refrigerate until firm enough to handle.

When dough is firm enough to handle, remove from refrigerator and let sit until room temperature (about an hour). Preheat oven to 350 degrees. To prevent aluminum foil** from slipping, wipe counter with wet sponge then smooth aluminum foil over damp counter. This will prevent the foil from slipping while dough is being rolled out.

Working with a small handful of dough (about the size of a baseball), roll dough onto aluminum foil that has been sprinkled with flour. Sprinkle dough with flour to prevent dough from sticking to rolling-pin.

IF DOUGH IS TOO STIFF, MICROWAVE FOR 10-15 SECONDS TO SOFTEN THE DOUGH.

Roll dough to about 1/8" thickness. Place gingerbread house pattern pieces onto dough and cut-out dough pieces (don't forget to cut out windows). A pizza cutter works great for cutting out walls and roof sections. Remove excess dough pieces. Lift entire piece of foil and place on large cookie sheet.

Place cookie sheet in oven. Check frequently to prevent burning. Bake until golden brown. Large pieces may bake as long as 14 minutes. Smaller pieces might take 6 – 7 minutes. Unused dough may be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated for up to 2 weeks (bring to room temperature and knead briefly to use again). To prevent from sagging, I bake my roof sections until dark brown, almost burnt.

When dough pieces are done baking, remove baking sheet from oven. Quickly lift foil** from baking sheet and place on a flat area for gingerbread pieces to cool. If pieces have distorted while baking (almost ALWAYS and highly recommend doing this with ALL pieces), while still warm, run knife or pizza cutter along sides of walls/ roof sections to create a straight edge. If pieces have curled up during baking, while still warm, gently push edges down to lay flat.

With gingerbread pieces still on the foil, let cool overnight. Next day – gently peel foil off of gingerbread pieces. You are now ready to assemble, or add windows!

**I use Silpat mats and highly, HIGHLY recommend them in place of aluminum foil. Just be careful when you are cutting that you don't cut into the mat.