



LEARN SOMETHING NEW
EACH WEEK ON OUR
WORLD OF WONDER PAGES!



WORLD OF WONDER

Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

GINGERBREAD

By Laurie Triefeldt

This sweet and spicy confection has become a fall and winter tradition for many families. It can be baked into cookies or loaves of bread, or even constructed into sugary, edible houses.

What's in a name?

In ancient Sanskrit, the knobby, twisted ginger root was called "srigavera," which translates as "root shaped like a horn."

In medieval England, gingerbread, called "gingivere" at the time, referred to preserved ginger. (Ginger was used to help preserve foods and to disguise the taste of food that was going bad.)

The word "gingivere" was from the Old French word "gingebras," which was derived from the Latin name "zingibar."

It was not until the 15th century that gingerbread actually referred to the ginger-flavored breads, cakes and cookies that we still enjoy today.

In Germany, they make a soft gingerbread called "Lebkuchen."

Scandinavians make a thin, crisp, ginger cookie called "pepparkakor."

Way back when

The ancient Chinese cultivated ginger and used it as a medicine for upset stomach and other ills. The ancient Egyptians and Romans used ginger to flavor their foods. Ginger traveled the Silk Road to the Middle East and made its way to Europe in the 10th century.

Ginger was an expensive spice, so it was used sparingly and often only during religious celebrations like Christmas or Easter.

When ginger became more affordable, it was sold in many shapes at markets and fairs.

Gingerbread houses

Gingerbread houses originated in Germany during the 16th century. The gingerbread house may have been inspired by the edible house in Grimm's fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel," or the Brothers Grimm may have been inspired by gingerbread houses. Like the Christmas tree, gingerbread houses were brought to North America by early German settlers.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; www.pbs.org; The Gingerbread Book, Arco Publishing; http://easteuropeanfood.about.com; http://www.smithsonianmag.com; http://epicureandculture.com; www.wilton.com/decorating

Did you know?

Queen Elizabeth I of England is credited with the invention of the gingerbread man, which she presented to visiting dignitaries.

India grows more than 33 percent of the world's ginger. China grows about 20 percent.

In the Middle Ages, ginger was the second most highly traded spice after pepper.

Nuremberg, Germany, is called the gingerbread capital of the world.

Official gingerbread-baking guilds were established across Europe in the Middle Ages.

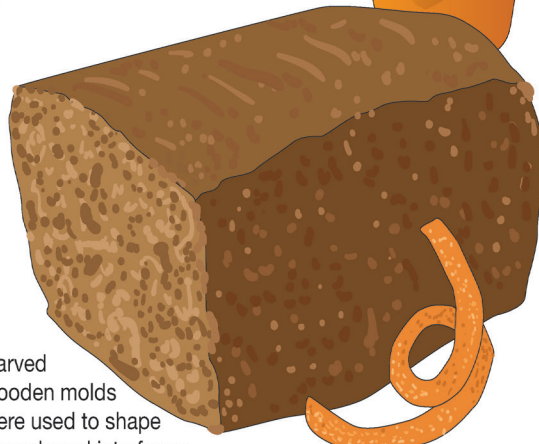


There are competitions around the world that celebrate the most beautiful and elaborate gingerbread houses.



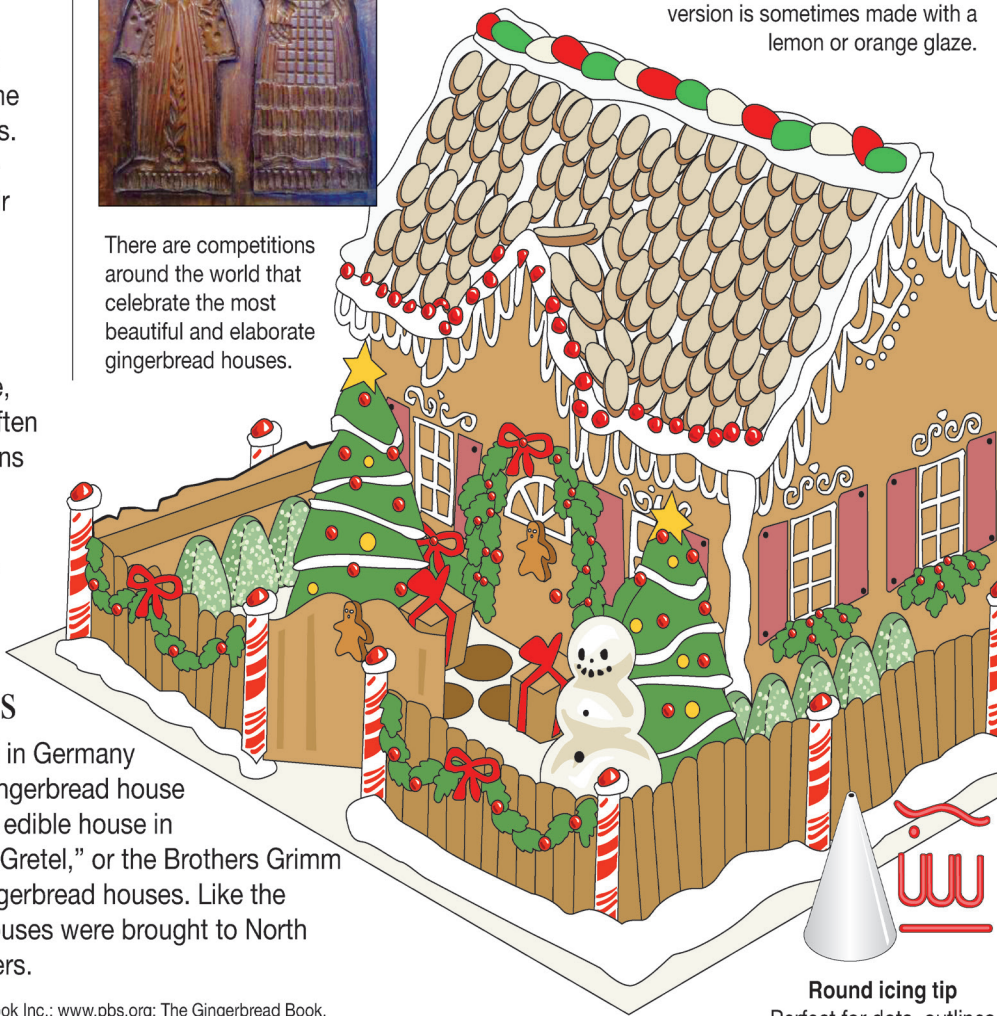
Ginger was first cultivated in Southeast Asia and has been used in medicines and cooking recipes for thousands of years.

In 1565, ginger became the first Oriental spice to be cultivated in the Caribbean.



Carved wooden molds were used to shape gingerbread into fancy works of art, sometimes decorated with real gold in addition to icing.

Dark, spicy gingerbread loaves like Polish "piernik" are another way to make gingerbread. The American version is sometimes made with a lemon or orange glaze.



Round icing tip
Perfect for dots, outlines and icicles.

Gingerbread man

Various cookie-cutter shapes can be used to make this recipe for 18 to 24 cookies.

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1 stick soft butter • 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs • 1/4 cup molasses
- 3 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

Directions

Combine sugar and butter, blend with an electric mixer on low speed. Add eggs and molasses, mix well.

In a second bowl, sift flour and stir in the ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt.

Gradually combine the dry flour mix to the butter mixture.

Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for about an hour.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

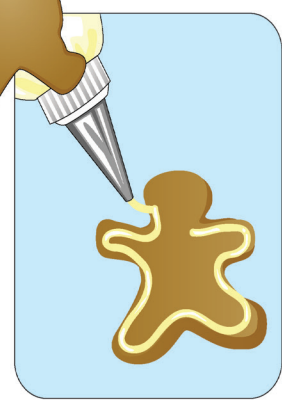
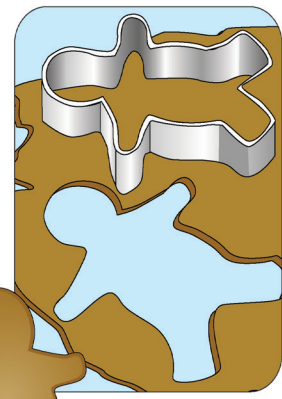
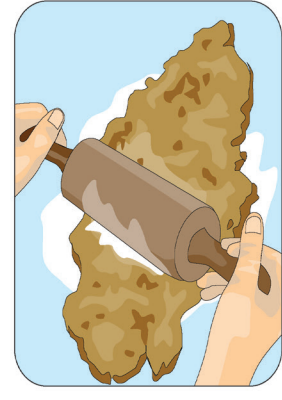
Allow the dough to soften at room temperature. Take about 1/2 cup of dough at a time and roll onto a floured surface to about 1/8 inch thick.

Cut gingerbread with cookie cutters. You can reroll the scraps. Place cookies onto cookie sheets lined with parchment paper, about 1 inch apart.

Bake for 7 to 10 minutes, until just beginning to brown at the edges. Place on wire rack to cool before decorating.

Decorating

Decorating gingerbread cookies and houses takes some practice, but special icing tips and icing bags can make the job easier. Decorating kits may be found at many craft and cooking shops.



Chat with the author and like us on Facebook — www.facebook.com/worldofwonder2014

© 2015 Triefeldt Studios, Inc.
Distributed by Universal Uclick

LEARN ABOUT DEER IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF WORLD OF WONDER

CASA GRANDE
Dispatch
Serving Pinal County For More Than A Century

Newspapers
in Education



OUR WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION PAGE CAN BE A FUN LEARNING TOOL FOR YOUR KIDS. CHECK BACK EACH TUESDAY FOR A NEW, EXCITING TOPIC!

CASA GRANDE
Dispatch

TO SUBSCRIBE:
(520) 423-8685