

Gingerbread House



Ingredients

375g/13oz unsalted butter
300g/10½oz dark muscovado sugar
150g/5½oz golden syrup
900g/2lb plain flour
1 tbsp. bicarbonate of soda
2 tbsp. ground ginger

For the icing

3 free-range eggs
675g/1½lb icing sugar, sifted
3 tsp lemon juice

To decorate we suggest

15 yellow or orange boiled
1 x 30cm/12in square cake board
200g/7oz giant milk chocolate buttons
6 cocktail sticks

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6 (fan 180C).
2. Melt the butter, sugar and syrup together in a large pan. Sieve the flour, bicarbonate of soda and ground ginger together into a large bowl and make a well in the centre. Pour in the melted butter mixture, stir it in and, when cool enough to handle, knead to a stiff dough.
3. Divide the mixture into five equally-sized pieces, cut one of these pieces in half (so you have six pieces in total). Roll each piece out on a sheet of greaseproof paper to ¼cm/1½in thick. Using templates, cut out the sections for the roof, sides, front and back of the house. Slide onto three baking trays lined with baking parchment. Cut out windows into the side walls of your house. (Templates available here: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/tv/christmasbakeoff/gingerbread_house.pdf)
4. Re-roll the trimmings and use to cut out the chimney pieces. You can use any extras to cut out Christmas trees. Bake the gingerbread for 7-8 minutes.
5. Meanwhile crush the boiled sweets with a pestle and mortar.
6. Remove the gingerbread from the oven. Trim the windows if they have spread and sprinkle the crushed sweets into the windows. Return to the oven and continue to cook for 3-4 minutes, or until the sweets have melted and the gingerbread is firm. Remove from the oven and leave to cool for a few minutes, then trim around the templates again to give clean, sharp edges. Leave to cool.
7. For the icing, whisk the egg whites until frothy. Using a wooden spoon or electric mixer on slow speed, add the icing sugar a tbsp. at a time. Stir in the lemon juice and beat until it is very stiff and white and stands up in peaks.
8. Pipe some icing along the wall edges and join the house together on to an iced cake board. Leave the icing to dry and harden for a minimum of four hours, but preferably overnight.
9. Cut the pointed ends of the cocktail sticks into 1cm/½in pieces (you should have 12 small pointed pieces). Push the blunt end of the cocktail stick pieces into the sloping edges of the front and back of the house, leaving the pointed ends sticking out to act as peg supports to attach the roof. Pipe icing between the cocktail sticks and fix the two roof panels onto the house. Pipe icing around the base and edges of the chimney and attach to the roof.
10. Decorate as you like!