



MERRY CHRISTMAS

Well here we are preparing for our Christmas bake. It doesn't seem that a whole year has gone by. Many of our kitchens will be making their same old favourites, but I'm sure there will be a few new things attempted. One of my groups has expressed a desire for Gingerbread Men which we have not made in quite some time.



While perusing for recipes I decided to educate myself on the subject of gingerbread and why it is used during the Christmas season. Gingerbread was introduced to Europe in 992 by a monk from Nicopolis Pompeii. He taught Gingerbread cooking to French priests and Christians. It made its way to Germany and in the 13th century was brought to Sweden and Poland. Gingerbread became a popular treat for all holidays. Gingerbread Men date back to the 15th century when many of the pagan rituals of saturnalia were being integrated into Christian celebrations. The ancient Romans ate human-shaped biscuits and performed song and dances in the street both precursors to gingerbread men and caroling.

I found this gingerbread recipe that looks promising. It is the one that my group will be using, the only differences between it and our old recipe are the amount of molasses used and the addition of ginger.

CLASSIC GINGERBREAD CUTOUTS

Approx. 36 servings

½ Cup Butter, softened
½ Cup Brown Sugar
2/3 Cup Molasses
2 Eggs
4 Cups Flour, divided
½ Tsp. Baking Soda

½ Tsp. Salt
½ Tsp. Ground Allspice or Nutmeg
½ Tsp. Ground Cloves
1 Tsp. Ground Cinnamon
1 ½ Tsp. Ground Ginger

1. Preheat oven to 350° F (175°C).
2. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and brown sugar until smooth. Stir in the molasses and eggs.
3. Combine 1 ½ cups of the flour with all dry ingredients. Beat into mixture. Gradually stir in remaining flour by hand to form a stiff dough.
4. Divide dough into two pieces. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/8 inch thickness. Cut into desired shapes using cookie cutters. Place cookies 1 inch apart onto ungreased cookie sheet.
5. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes before removing to wire rack to cool completely.
6. When cooled decorate using frosting recipe below and small candies or sprinkles, if desired.

DECORATING FROSTING:

3 Egg Whites 3 ½ to 4 Cups Icing Sugar

Using mixer, whip egg whites till frothy. Gradually add in icing sugar until icing is thick enough to form peaks.

Note: Icing dries rapidly, keep covered at all times. A piping bag with a plain tip is a good tool to use when applying icing.