

Christmas gingerbread house easy to make in a microwave

A charming little gingerbread house makes a delightful holiday table centerpiece. Maybe you've received one made by a creative friend or relative that you've tried to preserve by wrapping carefully and storing each year — hoping it would last until next Christmas.

Home economists from Whirlpool say, "This year don't store it — eat it." In fact the recipe and directions for making gingerbread houses in the microwave oven are so easy you'll want to make some extras for your friends and family.

The gingerbread house was first developed by Mary Jo Bergland, owner of Microcooking, Incorporated — a microwave accessory shop in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

It is completely edible and the old-fashioned gingerbread is such a delicious treat that you'll want your family and friends to savor every crumb.

More ideas

The home economists also say, "don't stop with the houses — make some gingerbread boy and girl cookies to hang on the tree for treats to please young visitors' appetites."

Here are Mary Jo's recipe directions:

GINGERBREAD

- ¾ c shortening
- ¾ c sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 c dark molasses
- 1 T vinegar
- 5 c sifted flour
- 1 t baking soda
- 1 T ginger
- 1 t cloves
- 1 t cinnamon
- ½ t salt

Cream shortening and sugar; beat in egg, molasses and vinegar.

Sift remaining ingredients together and stir into creamed mixture one cup at a time, until evenly mixed.

Chill dough uncovered for two hours.



"GINGERBREAD HOUSES can be charmingly simple, or beautifully elaborate," say Whirlpool home economists. You can even make one to look like your own home, with little gingerbread figures to represent each family member. Let your creativity and imagination soar. It's a fun project for the whole family made easier and faster with a microwave oven.

Pinch off enough dough for each shape (see gingerbread patterns, assembly and decorating instructions) and roll ¼ inch thick on lightly floured waxed paper.

Cut out shapes and remove excess dough.

Slide sheet of cardboard underneath waxed paper.

Cut out necessary doors and windows as desired.

Cook each piece on medium power (50%) for 4-6 minutes, depending on size of piece.

Cool completely and assemble with ornamental icing.

Prop up and air dry for 30 minutes.

If you wish to decorate house interior, do it now.

When dry, remove prop and join other end and side wall as above.

Prop and dry for 30 minutes.

Attach one roof piece with icing.

Prop and hold until very dry.

Repeat with other roof piece.

Decorate base with gingerbread trees, Santa cookies, gum drops, mints, hard candy, Life Savers, etc.

ORNAMENTAL ICING

- 4 egg whites
- 5 c sifted powdered sugar

Beat egg whites until stiff and slowly beat in powdered sugar.

Keep covered when not using as it dries very quickly.

Assembling and decorating

Decorate door, windows and roof while flat.

Place 10" round base on foil covered tray.

Using Ornamental Icing, secure one end and one side wall to base and up corner where ends meet.

Miniature houses

Use one half the dimensions of gingerbread patterns, and do not cut out round base.

Roll dough on lightly floured waxed paper, cut out shapes and microbake on cardboard sheet.

Cook each piece 2 to 3 minutes on MEDIUM (50%) or until no longer doughy looking and dry to the touch.

Decorate and assemble on paper plates as directions above.

When dry, cover with plastic wrap, label and tie for a great friendly gift.

FIRE SAFETY TIPS

Holidays are high risk times for fires. Christmas parties and family get-togethers frequently mean smoking in crowded areas, and can result in careless smoking habits. And careless smoking habits, according to the experts at the Polyurethane Foam Association, are the leading cause of home fires in the U.S.

Follow these easy steps for holiday time fire safety:

- After a party, lift all furniture cushions and look for live cigarette ashes. A hidden cigarette butt can lead to a smoldering cushion that bursts into flames hours later.

- Don't empty ashtrays directly into the trash. A partially lit cigarette can ignite wrapping paper or other trash, resulting in a house fire. Wet down ashtrays before emptying.

- Be careful with candles and other decorations.

- Be sure not to overload household wiring.

- Water a live Christmas tree often, and plan to remove it from the house two weeks after buying it.

Enjoy the holidays, but remember to keep your house fire-safe.

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