

Festive Gingerbread People

Ingredients

3 1/3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
 2 teaspoons baking soda
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 2 teaspoons ground allspice
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1 3/4 cups light brown sugar
 3/4 cup solid vegetable shortening, room temperature
 2 eggs
 1/4 cup honey
 1/3 cup molasses
 2 tablespoons peeled and grated ginger



Preparation

Makes 6 to 8 six-inch cookies

1. Sift the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, allspice and cayenne into a medium bowl. Mix with a spoon until the ingredients are evenly distributed.
2. Place the sugar and shortening in the bowl of your stand mixer. Using a paddle attachment, mix on low for about 30 seconds to start bringing the ingredients together. Increase the speed to medium and continue mixing for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the mixture is smooth and pale in color. Add the eggs one at a time, making sure each egg is fully incorporated before adding another. Add the honey, molasses and ginger and mix on medium for about 30 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula and mix for another 30 seconds to make sure the ingredients are evenly distributed. Remove the bowl from the mixer and scrape down the sides one more time.
3. Fold half of the dry ingredients into the batter with a rubber spatula. After the first batch is incorporated, fold in the rest of the dry ingredients and continue folding just until all of the flour has been absorbed.

4. Using a rubber spatula, scrape the dough from the bowl onto a large piece of plastic wrap. Dust your hands with a little flour and pat the dough into a block, then wrap it tightly in the plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 hours.

5. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.

6. Place the chilled dough on a floured work surface and roll it out 1/2-inch thick. Using a 6-inch cookie cutter, make as many gingerbread people as you can and place them on the prepared baking sheets. These cookies will spread out a little bit during baking, so leave a 2-inch space between each cookie. Roll the scraps of dough into a ball and roll it out again. You should be able to cut a few more cookies from the dough.

7. Bake the cookies, 1 sheet at a time, on the center rack of the oven for 20 to 25 minutes. To help the cookies bake evenly, rotate the baking sheet every 5 minutes or so. Let them cool completely before decorating. These cookies can be made 2 or 3 days before a decorating party and stored in an airtight container.