Gingerbread Houses

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

Gingerbread (without ginger, feel free to add a teaspoon):

2 and 1/4 c. Self-raising flour

1 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp ground cloves

1/2 tsp nutmeg

90g butter

1/2 c. brown sugar

1/4 c. treacle (i.e. golden syrup)

1 egg

Icing:

1 egg white

1 and 1/2 c. icing sugar

This recipe comfortably makes 3 gingerbread houses that are 8cm wide, app. 9cm long,

9cm tall. The dimensions I use for my template are:

roof: 6cm by 9.5 cm

wall: 8cm by 5.25 cm

front: first draw a 9cm by 8cm rectangle, then measure to the 4cm point along the 8cm edge and make two 5.5 cm gables

I found that a packet of m&ms with some cut in half and some round lollies (chocolate freckles are good) work well, especially if you want to minimise your operation.

Instructions

Either process the flour, sugar and spices together with the butter, or sift the flour, sugar and spices together before rubbing through the butter until it resembles bread crumbs (about 5-10 minutes, depending on your rubbing skills). Then add the treacle and egg and (I use my hands to) form a crumbly dough with the mix. Turn it out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth (it doesn't look like it will form a dough at first, don't worry). Cover and refrigerate (about 1/2 an hour works for me).

During this time I would make my templates (as well as clean the kitchen), get my lollies ready and my designs into my head. Then roll the gingerbread out quite thin (not too thin, about 3-4mm) between sheets of baking paper, and use your templates to cut out 2 roofs, 2 walls and two fronts for each house you're making. Bake each set of shapes for 12 minutes (turn 'em round at 6 minutes).

When the last set are baking it's a good idea to make icing. Beat the egg white until frothy, then gradually add the (sifted) icing sugar. Seperate it into different bowls if you want to add different colours and cover with a tea towel when you're not using.

Next simply spread icing on each piece, add your lollies, and allow the icing to dry. Get a piece of cardboard 12cmx12cm for each house, spread a little icing on the bottom of the front piece and use a glass to hold it up while you attach each side and the back. Once these pieces are together it's fairly stable, but I often gently have a glass keeping the front and back pieces in place (sides too if I'm paranoid). Once the icing on the house is dry add the roof, using glasses once again to make sure it stays on.

It sounds like a lot of effort, and you certainly should put a good few hours aside (I have whittled it down to 4 hours all up), but it is certainly worth it at the end!