

GINGERBREAD PEOPLE

Not just for gingerbread people – look out for cutters in the shape of a princess, pony, teddy bear, star, Christmas tree or letters of the alphabet. The dough is made in a saucepan and mixed with a wooden spoon. After baking you can have fun with the icing pens, silver balls, choc chips, hundreds and thousands!

Makes about 30 large figures

1050g Marriage's Finest Plain Flour (or other brand of fine plain flour)

3 tablespoon ground ginger

3 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

525g unsalted butter

450g soft light brown muscovado sugar

12 tablespoons golden syrup

Gingerbread cutter

6 baking trays

For the Royal Icing:-

600g of Icing Sugar

3 Egg Whites

1. Ask an adult to help you preheat the oven to 180°C, 350°F, Gas Mark 4. Line several trays with non-stick baking paper.
2. Set a sieve over a large bowl. Tip the weighed flour, ginger and bicarbonate of soda into the sieve and sift into the bowl. Put on one side until needed.
3. Put the butter, sugar and golden syrup into a saucepan large enough to hold all the ingredients. Ask an adult to help you melt the butter and syrup gently over very low heat – warm the pan just enough to melt the ingredients. Don't let the mixture become hot.
4. Carefully remove the pan from the heat and stand on a heat proof surface – ask an adult to help you do this. Add the sieved flour mixture to the pan and mix very well with a wooden spoon to make a firm dough. Leave until cool enough to touch comfortably.
5. Tip out the cold dough onto a work surface lightly dusted with flour – in hot weather or if the dough feels very soft and sticky wrap it in clingfilm and chill for about 20 minutes.
6. With a rolling pin. Gently roll out the dough to a rectangle about 5mm thick.

7. Dip the cutter in flour then cut out figures. With a fish slice or large spatula carefully transfer them to your prepared baking trays, placing them slightly apart. Don't worry if their limbs or heads fall off – just press them back together again. Gather up all the trimmings into a ball, then roll out again and cut more figures as before.
8. Decorate with raisins, sugar balls, choc chips. Ask an adult to help you bake the figures – they will take about 8 to 10 minutes until a light golden brown. Carefully remove the trays from the oven and set on a heat proof surface. Leave until completely cold.
9. When the figures are firm gently lift them off the trays, then decorate with writing icing pens or a little royal icing (see below). Leave for a few minutes for the icing to set.

ROYAL ICING: This can be left white or coloured with a few drops of icing food colouring (from supermarkets). It is easy to pipe lines and squiggles with this icing using a greaseproof paper icing bag or with a small plastic bag (sandwich bags work well) with the tip snipped off. Sift 600g icing sugar into a bowl and stir in three egg whites to make an icing that is stiff but can be piped or spread. Spoon into the piping bag and snip off the end when ready to pipe. Leftover icing can be stored in a small airtight container for a couple of days. Add a few drops of water if it has become a bit stiff.