# 5 Easy Steps for Creating the Perfect Homemade Gingerbread House

A picture-perfect gingerbread house complete with a cute gingerbread family takes a lot of time, a bit of skill, and some serious baking smarts. Read on for tips for building your own edible dream house.

BY CARINA WOLFF

## Create the blueprints

COURTESY YOUNG CHEFS ACADEMY

So you want to know how to make a gingerbread house? The first thing you want to do is make your dough, and place in the fridge to chill for at least four hours. "Chilled dough will hold its shape," says Julie Burleson, founder and CEO of Young Chefs Academy. "It won't stick to your hands, the rolling pins, or any surfaces." While it's in the fridge, create your templates out of poster board, making sure to cut out the windows and doors—those gingerbread men and women have to see the daylight, after all! Place the templates on top of parchment paper to trace and create the templates you will lay on the dough. Don't miss these creative ways to decorate your real Christmas tree.

## Measure twice, cut once

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If the gingerbread walls are too soft or thick, they will collapse. If the walls are too thin, they will break at the slightest touch. Roll out your dough to 1/4 in thickness, says Burleson. "Use a ruler to measure the thickness of your dough before cutting out shapes." Make sure to avoid these baking mistakes.

## Build your foundation

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First, prepare a large batch of thick royal icing, and keep it covered with a damp cloth. "Make sure the frosting is thick enough that it holds its shape when squeezing out," suggests Burleson. Begin with two walls, piping royal icing along all contact points, making sure the two pieces form a right angle and hold in place until set. Move on to the third and fourth walls of the home, allowing time for each wall to set before moving to the next. Once all four walls are in place, pipe extra royal icing around the inside and outside of the bottoms and corners for additional reinforcement. Let the structure set overnight.

## "Cheat" the roof

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Instead of using gingerbread for your roof, use cardboard instead. Why? "Cardboard is lighter than gingerbread and puts less pressure on the walls," says Burleson. "This means you can completely cover it with royal icing and edible decorations and your house won't fall apart." Burleson likes to use shredded wheat cereals to create a tiled roof. Gingerbread is a quintessential holiday scent. Check out these DIY ways to make your home smell like Christmas

## Decorate, decorate, decorate

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After days of work, now comes the fun part: Decorating! "Make evergreen trees using sugar cones and green royal icing, Rice Krispy treat wreaths by coloring marshmallows green and using red-hot candy as ornaments, and make lamp posts using peppermint candy sticks and mini marshmallows," says Burleson. While you're at it, check out these other decorating ideas for a picture-perfect gingerbread house.