

7. Czech & Slovak Gingerbread House 2023

Gingerbread House

1 gingerbread house

Ingredients:

Gingerbread Spice:

- 2 TSP** of whole anise seeds (or ½ TSP of ground anise seeds)
- 1 TSP** of whole fennel seeds (or ½ TSP of ground fennel seeds)
- 1 TSP** of whole cloves (or 1/2 TSP of ground cloves)
- 2 TSP** of ground cinnamon
- 1 TSP** of ground Allspice
- 1 TSP** of ground ginger

Gingerbread dough:

- Gingerbread spice (prepared above)
- 2 ½ cups** of all-purpose flour + **Extra flour** for flouring surface
- ¾ cup** of confectioners' sugar
- ½ TSP** of baking powder
- 2 TBSP** of cocoa powder
- 2 sticks** (8 OZ) of butter - soft (room temperature)
- ¼ cup** of honey
- 2** large eggs

Decorating mixture:

- 2** egg whites – **room temperature**
- 1 ½ cups** of confectioners' sugar
- 2 TBSP** of cornstarch
- 1 TBSP + some extra** of lemon juice with no pulp (fresh lemon juice needs to be filtered over a sieve)

Tools:

- Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups
- Mortar and Pestle or small food processor
- Kitchen Mixer with Whisk and Flat Beater Attachment or Hand Mixer
- Whisk

Plastic Wrap
Bowl Scraper or Silicone Spatula
Rolling Pin
Knife or pizza cutter
Icing Spatula
4 Medium Size Baking Sheets with Parchment Paper or Silicone Mat
Sieve
Small decorating bag (with a fine round tip) or a small freezer bag *

* I use a round tip, 01 (opening about 1.5 mm) or 02. You can avoid using a tip, but it will make it a little harder to decorate.

Directions:

Already prepared:

1. Gingerbread spice:

1.1. Place into the mortar:

2 TSP of whole anise seeds
1 TSP of whole fennel seeds
1 TSP of whole cloves
2 TSP of ground cinnamon
1 TSP of ground Allspice
1 TSP of ground ginger

And process using a pestle until a fine texture is reached.

Note: If you don't have a mortar and pestle, you can use a small food processor.

2. Gingerbread dough:

2.1. Place into a kitchen mixer with a flat beater attachment:

Gingerbread spice
2 ½ cups of all-purpose flour
¾ cups of confectioners' sugar
½ TSP of baking powder
2 TBSP of cocoa powder

Shortly stir together using a hand whisk until nicely combined (about 1 minute).

2.2. Add:

2 sticks (8 OZ) of butter - soft (room temperature)

¼ cup of honey

2 large eggs

And process on slow speed until all ingredients are partially combined.

2.3. Then increase the speed to medium-high and process until the dough is formed (about 2 - 3 minutes).

Note: The cookie dough will be sticky after processing. It will harden during the following resting time in the fridge.

3. Dough resting time:

3.1. Wrap the dough with plastic wrap (scoop it on the wrap and then cover it with the wrap).

Tip:

If you want to work with the dough soon, form it into a disk, not into a roll shape.

3.2. Let cool in the refrigerator until partially, but not totally, hardened (about 1 hour).

Important: If the dough in the refrigerator fully hardens (if left for a longer time, for example, overnight), remove from the refrigerator about a half hour before cutting into shapes.

Start here:

4. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

5. Cut the parts:

5.1. Place the dough on a floured surface and lightly flour the top of the dough.

5.2. Using a rolling pin, flatten the dough into about 3/16" – ¼" thickness (based on your preference). If the dough starts sticking, add flour.

Note: The dough needs to always sit on a floured surface during flattening to be able to separate the cut parts that are ready to bake.

- 5.3. Cut the dough into the various shapes using the templates below the recipe or your own templates.
- 5.4. Gently place cut pieces on a baking sheet with parchment paper using an icing spatula. Make sure they are not touching each other.
- 5.5. With the leftover dough, cut the cookies using cookie cutters.

Important:

- It is important to work fast with the dough.
- Optionally, you can keep placing scraps from the dough into the fridge before further processing to prevent the dough from softening.

6. Bake:

- 6.1. Bake in a preheated oven until fully baked. The surface turns from a doughy texture to a solid but slightly fluffy (about 9 - 12 minutes) texture.
- 6.2. Rotate the baking sheets in the middle of baking.

Important: If the dough is flattened unevenly (even just slightly), each piece can have a slightly different baking time, so closely watch when you get close to the end of baking and remove each, one by one, if necessary.

- 6.3. Let totally cool on the baking sheet before decorating (or using an icing spatula, move to the cooling rack).

7. Decorating mixture:

- 7.1. While parts are cooling, sift over a fine sieve into a kitchen mixer bowl with a whisk attachment:

1 ½ cups of confectioners' sugar

2 TBSP of cornstarch

Note: Sifting will help to make sure that no lumps are present. This is important to have an easy piping time later (the tip will not get clogged).

- 7.2. Add:

2 egg whites – room temperature

1 TBSP of lemon juice with no pulp

And process at a slow speed until partially combined.

- 7.3. Then increase the speed and process until done – the decorating mixture reaches a texture of soft peaks and holds the shape (about 3 – 6 minutes and longer in some cases).

Tip:

If you accidentally make the mixture too thick, consider diluting it with some extra lemon juice.

- 7.4. Using a soup spoon, fill part of each decorating mixture into its' own pastry bag and tighten the ends with a rubber band.

Important: Do not overfill the bag to more easily work with the contents (rather refill the bag a few times during decorating).

- 7.5. Place extra of each mixture into a box with a lid for later steps (leave on the countertop during decorating).

Important:

Use the mixture only during the decorating cycle; do not prepare it ahead. Even in a sealed container, the mixture will start hardening, making it harder to work with.

8. Assemble:

- 8.1. Cut the paper templates below with scissors. Optionally prepare and cut your own templates.
- 8.2. Decorate the surface of all 4 side walls of the gingerbread house based on your fantasy and creativity (the bottom sides and roof will be decorated later).

Tip:

If creating lines, it is best to keep part of the decorating mixture in the air while piping out (let the decorating mixture gradually sit on the top). That will give you straight lines with less effort.

- 8.3. When all sidewalls are decorated, assemble walls together on the bottom part:
 - 8.3.1. Pipe a thick layer of the decorating mixture around the side diameter of each side wall (do not pipe just on the top part, which will connect the roof).
 - 8.3.2. Place one by one to the center of the bottom part

Important:

The most challenging aspect is connecting the first two walls. The first wall will need to be held while connecting the second. Consider using the temporary help of others while assembling it. You can use toothpicks as a temporary support as well.

Tip:

To get better structural integrity, every time two pieces are connected, pipe some extra decorating mixture on the inside seam and also on the bottom diameter to make the whole structure hold together well.

- 8.4. When all walls are placed on the bottom part, decorate the roof pieces.
- 8.5. Then, pipe a thick layer of the decorating mixture on the entire diameter of the gingerbread house (not on the roof parts itself) and place the roof parts on the top.
- 8.6. Then, pipe the decorating mixture on the top between the two roof parts to connect them together.
- 8.7. After the roof is installed, optionally decorate the bottom piece.

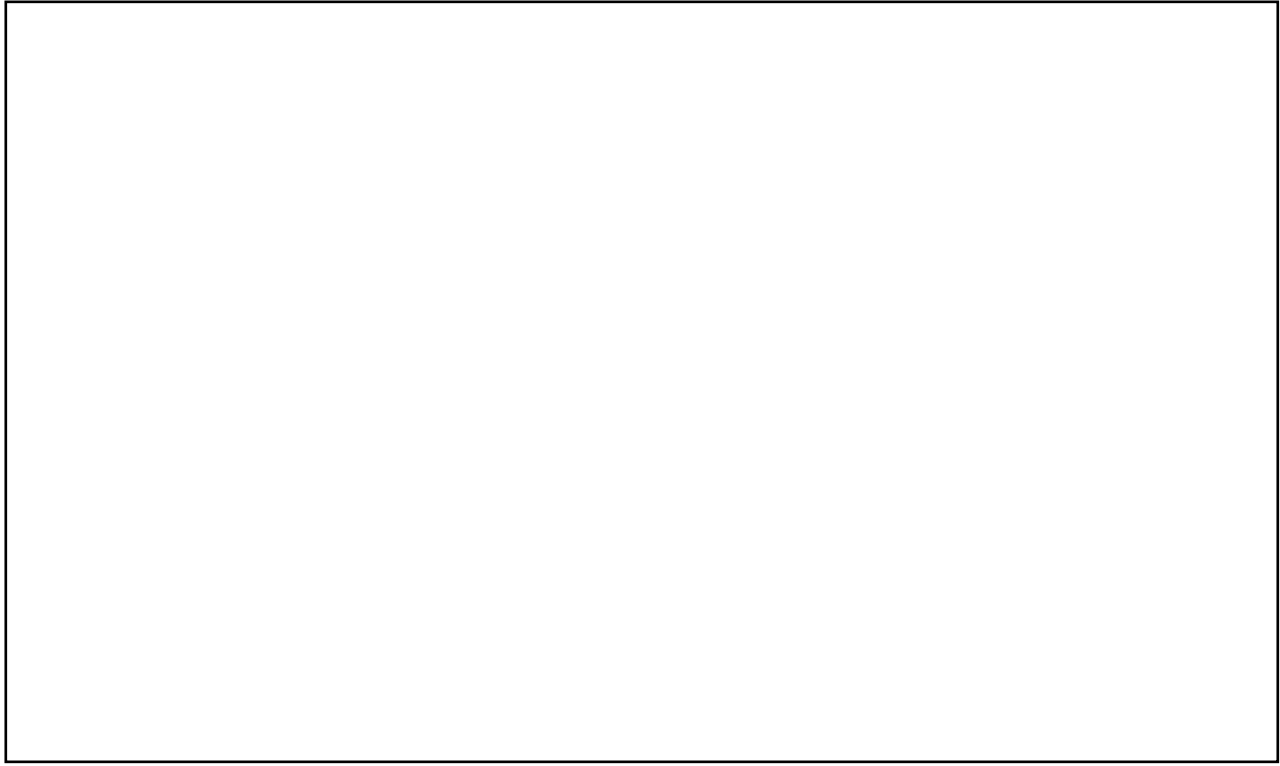
9. Air drying & storing:

- 9.1. For best results, let the decorated house dry, preferably up to 24 hours, before serving. Try to avoid manipulation during this time.

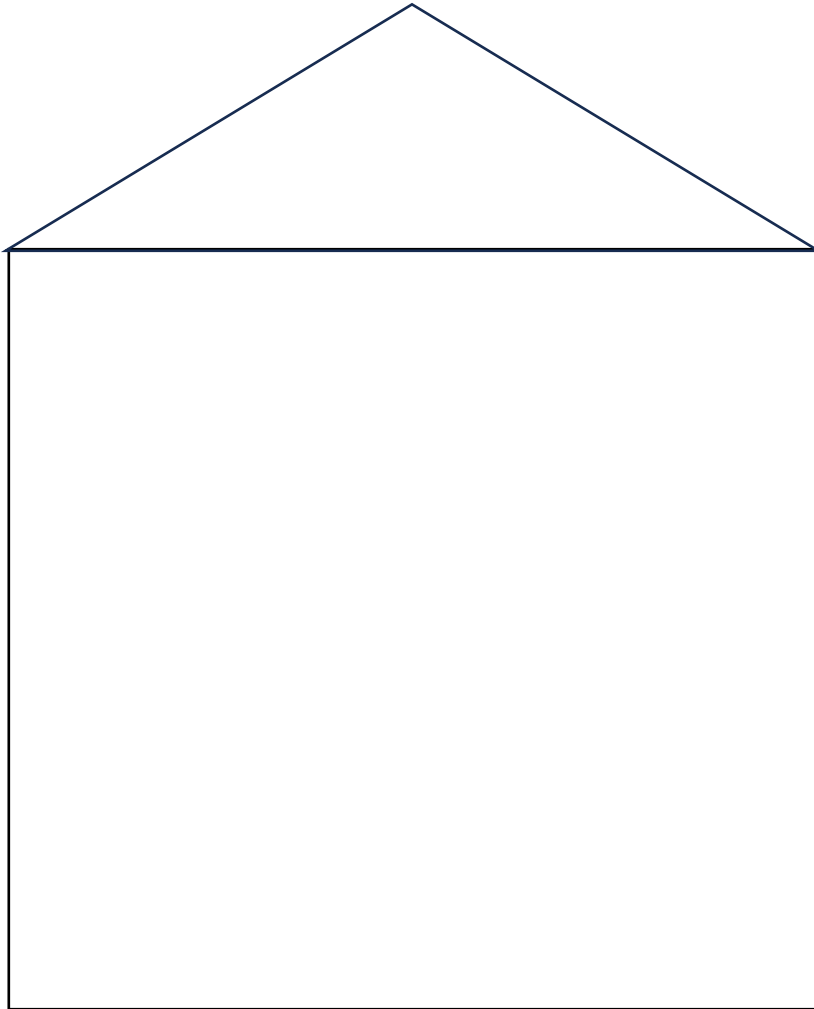
Tips:

- If parts of the ingredients stick to the side of the kitchen mixer during processing, stop the mixer and use a spatula to mix it back in. Then, continue processing.
- You can leave the dough to rest in the refrigerator longer (up to 3 days) - Remove and leave at room temperature for about 1 hour before processing.

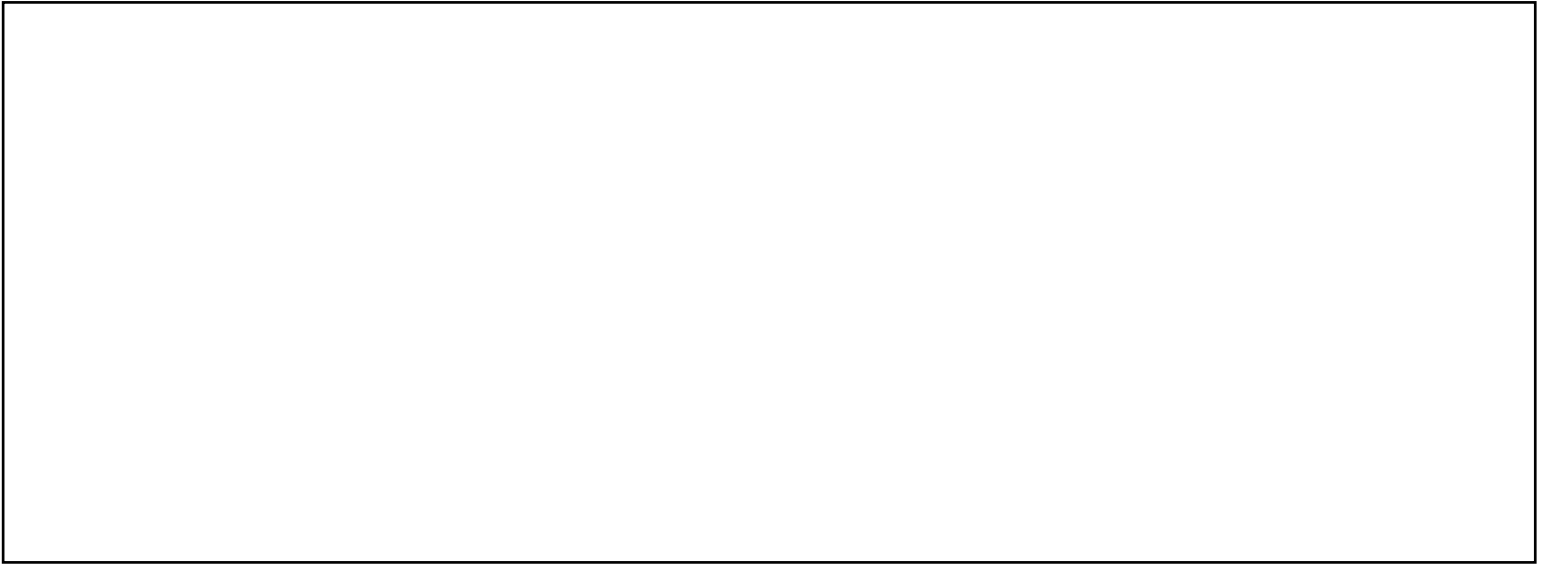
Sidewall – type 1 (you will need 1 template, use 2x = 2 side walls type 1)



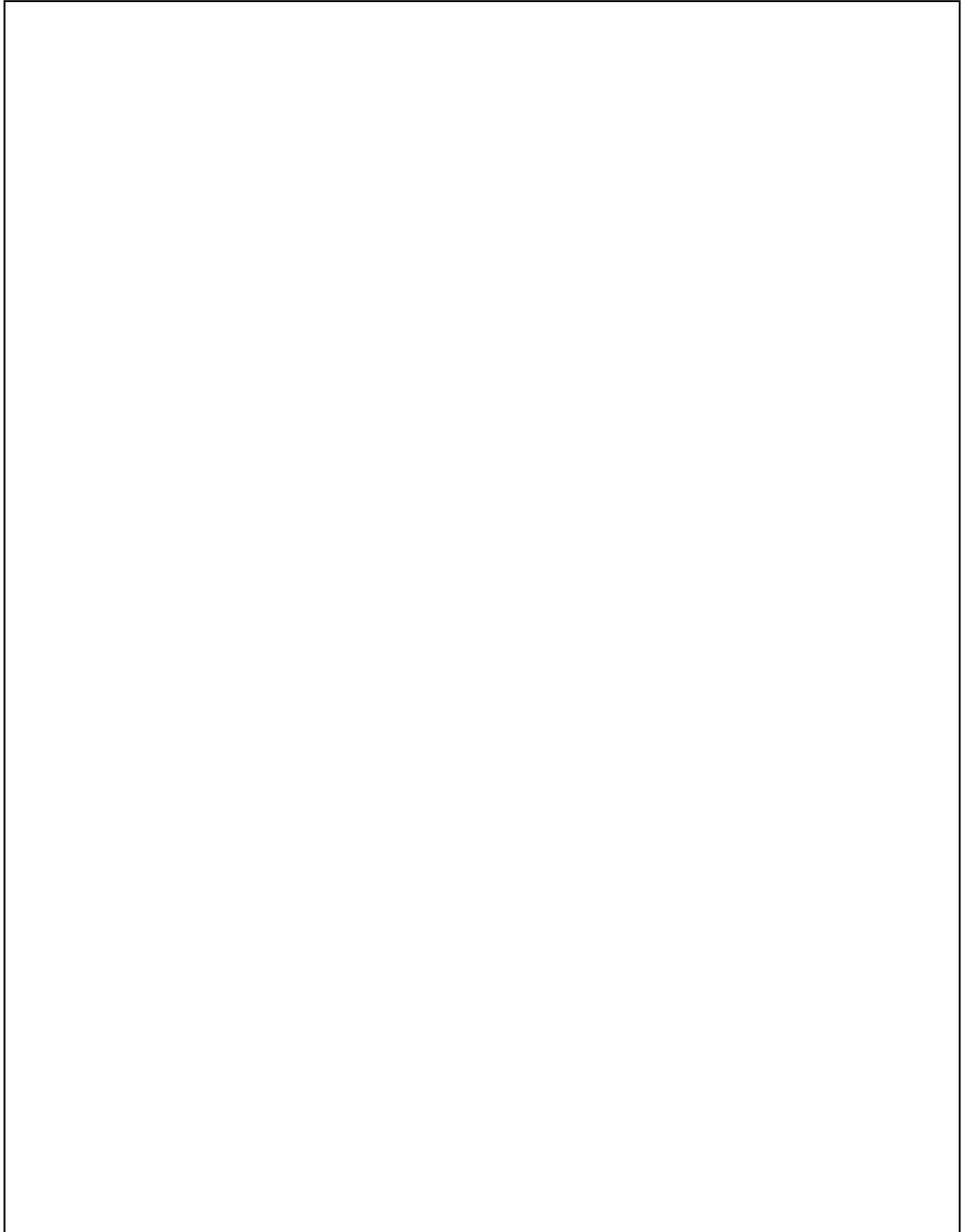
Sidewall – type 2 (you will need 1 template, use 2x = 2 side walls type 2)



Roof part (you will need 1 template; use 2x = 2 roof parts)



Bottom part (you will need 1 template; use 1x = 1 bottom part)



Disclaimer:

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- outcome of preparation
- any health risk related to the incorrect handling of food and/or not following USDA recommendations, such as but not limited to, following the minimum safe serving temperatures
- provide health and dietary advice to readers
- safety during preparation, including incorrect handling of equipment and the equipment's suitability for food preparation, improper cooking techniques, sourcing of ingredients, and anything related to the preparation and consumption of the products of this recipe

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