

1. Gingerbread Heart Cookies 2024

Gingerbread Heart Cookies

3 – 4 large cookies

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
- 1 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

Optional: for shiny surface:

- 1** egg
- 3 TBSP** of milk

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

Icing Spatula

Small mixing bowl

2 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 a 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
- 1 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

Process at a 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). 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 half an hour before cutting to hearts.

Start here:

4. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

5. Cut the cookies:

- 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 ¼" -3/8 " thickness (based on your preference). If the dough starts sticking, add flour.

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

- 5.3. Cut the dough into hard shapes using the template below the recipe or your own templates.
- 5.4. Gently place cut hearts on a baking sheet with parchment paper using an icing spatula. Make sure they are not touching each other.

Tip:

With the leftovers from the cut dough, quickly form the dough from them (with your hands), then flatten them with a rolling pin, and cut a few small cookies for taste using your favorite cookie cutters. Or make it even easier and place leftover dough on the baking sheet and bake along with hearts (they will not look pretty, but they will taste just the same 😊).

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 15 - 20 minutes) texture.
- 6.2. Rotate the baking sheets in the middle of baking.

Important:

If the dough is flattened unevenly (even just slightly), each cookie 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. For optional shiny surface, prepare into a small mixing bowl:

1 egg

3 TSBP of milk

And thoroughly whisk.

- 6.4. Immediately after you finish baking the cookies, brush them with the optional mixture prepared in the previous step (heat from the oven will cook the egg and provide each cookie with a shiny surface).
- 6.5. Let totally cool on the baking sheet before decorating to make sure they harden enough to be moved.

7. Decorating mixture:

- 7.1. While cookies 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 speed and process until done – the decorated mixture reaches a texture of soft peaks and holds the shape (about 3 – 6 minutes and longer sometimes).

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 the decorating mixture into a pastry bag and tighten the ends with a rubber band.

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

- 7.5. Place the remainder of the 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. The mixture will harden even in a sealed container, making it harder to work with.

8. Decorating:

- 8.1. Start decorating the cookies When hearts are fully cooled and the decorating mixture is prepared.

Important:

Manipulate hearts very gently because even after they cooled, they still didn't fully harden. They will harden more after fully decorated and the decoration mixture is fully dry.

- 8.2. The best is to start with a text. Write anything in your own language or use one of the Czech ideas:

Z lásky = From love.

Pro Tebe = For you

Pro (name) = For (name)

Všechno nejlepší! = All the best! (more suitable for birthdays)

Miluji Tě! = I love you.

Mám Tě rád! / Mám Tě ráda! = I like you! (First option for gentleman expressing feeling, second option for lady expressing feelings.)

- 8.3. Then decorate the gingerbread hearts based on your fantasy and creativity.

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 of the cookie). This will give you straight lines with less effort.

9. Air drying & storing:

- 9.1. Let the decorating mixture air dry until fully dried (sometimes just an hour, but usually overnight or up to 24 hours) before serving or packaging.
- 9.2. Optionally wrap up with a see-through plastic film to give these heads as a gift.
- 9.3. Do not refrigerate.

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 it and leave it at room temperature for about 1 hour before processing.

Disclaimer:

All steps in this recipe are just suggestions, and the author and/or publisher of this recipe is not responsible for the following:

- 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

All readers are responsible for evaluating if the recipe and its' ingredients and steps fit with their dietary restrictions and can adjust accordingly.

