



---

## Soft and Chewy Gingerbread Cookies

From *Cook's Country* | December/January 2017

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Some recipes for soft and chewy gingerbread cookies that we tried turned out specimens that were gummy rather than chewy. For our recipe, we were after the perfect soft, chewy gingerbread cookie. After many tests, we identified the key to consistently soft and chewy gingerbread cookies—rolling the dough out to an even 1/4 inch every time. Watching the cookies carefully as they baked and removing them from the oven as soon as the edges set (but the centers remained puffy) also ensured the proper texture. We streamlined the recipe by skipping the creaming step, opting instead to add melted butter rather than room-temperature butter.

### MAKES ABOUT 24 COOKIES

Let the melted butter cool before adding it in step 1, or the dough will be too sticky to work with. Because we roll the dough between sheets of parchment paper (no additional flour is added), the scraps can be rerolled and cut as many times as necessary. The cookies can be stored in a wide, shallow airtight container with a sheet of parchment or waxed paper between each layer for up to 3 days. Plan ahead: The dough needs to rest for at least an hour before rolling.

### INGREDIENTS

- 3** cups (15 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 3/4** cup packed (5 1/4 ounces) dark brown sugar
- 1** tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1** tablespoon ground ginger
- 3/4** teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2** teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2** teaspoon Salt
- 12** tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 3/4** cup molasses
- 2** tablespoons milk

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Process flour, sugar, cinnamon, ginger, baking soda, cloves, and salt in food processor until combined, about 10 seconds. Add melted butter, molasses, and milk and process until soft dough forms and no streaks of flour remain, about 20 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed.
- 2.** Spray counter lightly with baking spray with flour, transfer dough to counter, and knead until dough forms cohesive ball, about 20 seconds. Divide dough in half. Form each half into 5-inch disk, wrap disks tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.
- 3.** Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Working with 1 disk of dough at a time, roll dough between 2 large sheets of parchment to 1/4-inch thickness. (Keep second disk of dough refrigerated while rolling out first.) Peel off top parchment sheet and use 3 1/2-inch cookie cutter to cut out cookies. Peel away scraps from around cookies and space cookies 3/4 inch apart on prepared sheets. Repeat rolling and cutting steps with dough scraps. (Depending on your cookie cutter dimensions, all cookies may not fit on sheets and second round of baking may be required. If so, let sheets cool completely before proceeding.)

4. Bake until cookies are puffy and just set around edges, 9 to 11 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Let cookies cool on sheets for 10 minutes, then transfer to wire rack and let cool completely before decorating and serving.

---

#### TEST KITCHEN TIPS: DECORATING WITH CONFIDENCE

Decorating gingerbread cookies is easy—and fun—when you have a little knowhow. Simple designs are often the most successful. After all, this type of cookie is a very small canvas.

---

---

### FILLING THE PASTRY BAG

Set a pastry bag fitted with a small round pastry tip in a liquid measuring cup or tall pint glass. Fold the bag over about halfway down into a cuff. Using a rubber spatula, load the frosting into the bag, packing tightly to eliminate air spaces. Twist tightly while again pushing on the frosting to squeeze out air.



---

### NO PASTRY BAG? DON'T LET IT STOP YOU

If you don't own a pastry bag, a zipper-lock bag makes a great stand-in. Load the bag with frosting, pushing it into one corner of the bag, and then make a very small snip in the corner (you can always make the cut larger if necessary).



---

### LET 'EM COOL

Frosting will liquefy if it's piped onto hot cookies. Let the gingerbread cookies cool completely on a wire rack before you start decorating them.

---

---

### HOLD THE BAG LIKE A PRO, AND DO A TEST RUN

Once your icing is loaded into the pastry bag, grab the bag at the base of the twist with one hand. Using your other hand as a guide, hold the tip at a 90-degree angle about 1/2 inch above the cookie and gently squeeze to decorate. Practice your design on a sheet of parchment paper—or on a sacrificial cookie—before you start decorating in earnest.



---

#### TEST KITCHEN TIP: WHEN ARE THEY DONE?

Even professional bakers have trouble deciding when cookies that start out brown should come out of the oven. Our solution is to carefully observe them during baking and remove them when they are puffy and just set around the edges.



Common food lore attributes a famous gingerbread recipe to Martha Washington, wife of the first U.S. president George Washington, but according to the Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center at Mount Vernon, no such recipe exists. There is, however, evidence that Martha loved the stuff—a bill of sale for 49 pounds of gingerbread cake, sent initially to the estate of Martha’s first husband Daniel Custis, was chivalrously paid by her second husband, George.



The mistake is easy to understand because a recipe for gingerbread cake from Mary Ball Washington (below), George’s mother, does exist. Besides the ample presence of spices, including cloves, allspice, cinnamon, and ginger, the elder Mrs. Washington added orange juice and orange zest, uncommon (and uncommonly expensive) ingredients at the time.