

EN LA CASA

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House Party

Gather 'round to make an old favorite with a New Mexican twist

SOME THINGS in New Mexico just naturally go together during the holidays—posole and red chile, a snow-covered dirt road and *farolitos*, harmonious carolers and small *luminaria* bonfires. This month, Andrea Clover, the executive sous-chef at the Hotel St. Francis, in Santa Fe, introduces us to another ideal pairing: adobe architecture and freshly baked gingerbread.

Clover's technique for making an adobe-look gingerbread house is an original project involving the entire family. Her next feat: a scale model of the Hotel St. Francis—in gingerbread—to be displayed in the hotel's lobby in early December. For info: (505) 992-6300

Gingerbread Dough

6 cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
4 teaspoons ground ginger
4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground cloves or allspice
½ teaspoon salt
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) butter, softened
1½ cups light brown sugar, packed
2 large eggs
1 cup dark molasses
1 tablespoon water

Whisk dry ingredients in large bowl and set aside. With electric mixer, beat butter and brown sugar on medium speed until fluffy and well blended. Beat in eggs, molasses, and water until well combined.

Beat half of flour mixture into molasses mixture until well blended and smooth. Stir in remaining flour. Knead until well blended. If dough is soft, add a little more flour; if too dry, add water.

An adobe house crafted with gingerbread and other goodies makes for a fun holiday season.



Wrap dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 2 hours, preferably overnight. (Dough can be made up to 3 days ahead.) Let sit at room temperature for at least 10 minutes before rolling.

Create Gingerbread Pieces: Make a gingerbread-house pattern by cutting out shapes from stiff paper, such as a manila folder or baker's parchment. Cardboard is ideal if you plan on making more than one house, and it's about the thickness of the actual gingerbread pieces—you can use it as a guide when rolling out the dough.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line cookie sheets with baker's parchment. On floured board or directly on the cookie sheet, roll out dough until about ¼ inch thick. Partially bake gingerbread (about 5 minutes) and remove from oven.

Once gingerbread is cool to the touch, use patterns to cut all pieces out of still-soft gingerbread (see materials list below), then place pieces back in oven and bake until golden-brown around the edges (about 3 minutes). Remove from oven and place on wire rack. As they cool, prepare the icing.

Royal Icing: For a detailed recipe for Royal Icing, visit www.nmmagazine.com. You can also use your own recipe, buy an icing mix, or use a prepared version that can be applied with a pastry bag. 🍷

Materials

gingerbread: 4 walls (5" x 8"), roof (8" x 8"), 2 doors (2" x 1½"), portal (4" x 2"), chimney (four 1" squares)

twist pretzels for fence (or pretzel sticks to make coyote fence)

almond bark, melted (for viga mortar, deep-snow effect)

green & white icing (for foliage, wall mortar, snow effect)

2 pastry bags (or ziplock freezer bags with a small piece of one corner cut off)

yellow & red sugared fruit slices, square cookie cutter (for windows, ristas)

2 sugar ice-cream cones (for trees)

large marshmallows (for bushes)

jumbo pretzel sticks (for portal supports)

2 KitKat candy bars (for front/back steps)

small Tootsie Rolls (for wall vigas)

graham-cracker crumbs (for landscape dirt)

Cocoa Puffs (for roofing material)

4 cans less than 5" tall (for structural support during mortaring of walls)

powdered sugar (for snow-dusting effect)



STEP 1. Trees and shrubs: Fill pastry bag with green icing. Stick pretzel rod into marshmallow for a handle. Cover marshmallow with small dollops of icing for foliage. Repeat, set bushes aside. With two fingers inside sugar cone, dollop icing to create evergreen tree. Repeat as desired and set trees aside. (Option: To make door wreath, squirt numerous dollops in a circle on baker's parchment and let dry.)



STEP 2. Front and back steps: Break KitKat candy bar into sections. Measure width of gingerbread door and cleanly cut at least 3 KitKat sections the same width (1½" in this demonstration). If your gingerbread house has a back door, cut at least 6 sections. Once gingerbread frame is complete, stack 3 KitKat sections at each doorway.



STEP 3. Fence: Melt almond bark on stove or in microwave and cool to the consistency of sour cream. Spread out a piece of baker's parchment. Dip one end of twisted pretzel into almond bark and place on parchment. Repeat process until you have enough pretzels to surround the house's yard. (Optional: For coyote fence, use pretzel sticks.)



STEP 4. Windows and ristas: With floured rolling pin, flatten at least 8 yellow sugared fruit candies. With small square cookie cutter or sharp knife, cut out squares for windows. Set aside. Pinch off little pieces of red, sugared fruit candy and roll into little chile pods. Cluster pods on a piece of pretzel about 1" long until you have a *ristra*. Repeat process and set both *ristas* aside.



STEP 5. Attach and decorate windows: Lay flat all four gingerbread walls. With pastry bag and white icing, squirt two equal dabs on the wall and flatten yellow candy squares on each. (On two walls, make sure windows are far enough apart to allow room for front and back doors). Outline each window with white icing to form frame and 4 smaller interior panes. Set walls aside.



STEP 6. Form structure: To begin forming the house, prop each wall against a can on your platform (serving tray, piece of plywood, etc.). Use pastry bag and white icing to fill in all 4 joints where walls meet, inside and outside. When icing dries, remove cans and use 3 KitKat sections each to form front and back steps. Squirt vertical line of icing on wall to adhere door, using steps as support for bottom of door. Repeat for back door. For doorknob, squirt icing droplet on door.



STEP 7. Attach roof and portal: Place roof atop walls and generously squirt white icing in joints, creating snow effect. Sprinkle crushed Cocoa Puffs on top. (Optional: Make chimney with four 1" squares of gingerbread and adhere with icing.) Cut 2 pretzel rods about 3" long and dip each end in almond bark. Squirt horizontal line of icing over door, attach portal, then place dipped ends of pretzel sticks under portal for support.



STEP 8. Fence, bushes, trees, yard: After portal dries, squirt dollop of icing near top of each pretzel rod and adhere candy *ristas*. To create fence, use spoon to line perimeter of platform with almond bark, then stick undipped sides of pretzels in the line of almond bark side by side (or use pretzel sticks to make coyote fence). Place trees and bushes around house. Sprinkle graham-cracker crumbs for dirt effect.



STEP 9. Attach wall vigas: Neatly cut Tootsie Rolls in half and dip one end of each in almond bark. Attach dipped ends to walls near roofline to create *vigas*. Finally, sprinkle powdered sugar over entire project for a snow-dusted effect.

Did you create your own jaw-dropping adobe gingerbread house, or even a multistoried pueblo? If so, show and tell on the message boards at www.nmmagazine.com.