

*Building  
Strong Family  
Relationships  
(and a Gingerbread House)*

Building healthy relationships is much like building a home. It requires a good foundation, adequate mixtures of sweet and spice, and plenty of creativity!

Inside this booklet, find a delicious recipe for homemade gingerbread as well as tips for strengthening your most important relationships this holiday season.



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**Build a delicious GINGERBREAD HOUSE and  
an appetizing MARRIAGE.  
Both recipes work and can enhance your  
holiday experience.**

### INGREDIENTS

#### **1 cup butter at room temperature**

(Emotional intelligence and coping with emotions in healthy ways): This ingredient of recognizing emotions experienced by you and your spouse and knowing how to calm yourself and each other helps **smooth out the bumps and lumps** that tend to go with baking, the holidays and with marriage.

#### **1-3/4 cups brown sugar**

(Sweetness also known as kindness): Kindness is one of the most important ingredients to create something **delicious and desirable**.

#### **1-1/4 cups white sugar**

(Sweetness and kindness in different forms): Feel free to enrich this mixture with various types of kindness. **Variety** can help create a **richer experience** and better meet your individual tastes.

#### **2 tablespoons molasses**

(Constructive communication): You may have heard the term "smooth as molasses." Quality communication creates a **sweet binding effect** that can hold the dough together and add a **rich taste and texture** to enhance any marriage.



#### ***Do You Know Your Spouse?***

While attending a marriage seminar on communication, David and his wife listened to the instructor declare, "It is essential that husbands and wives know the things that are important to each other." He addressed the man, "Can you describe your wife's favorite flower?" David leaned over, touched his wife's arm gently and whispered, "Pillsbury All-Purpose, isn't it?"

**Unknown**

**6 eggs**

(Identify and break bad habits): Over the course of time, identify and **break your own bad habits, hurtful actions patterns, and weaknesses**. It is hard and messy to try to break other people's habits for them, so **just focus on what's in your own hands**. With time you will find yourself creating better habits and additional strengths. Odds are, each of us has more than one bad habit to break, so keep at it!

**6 cups all-purpose flour**

(Friendship): This ingredient is often overlooked and neglected. However, it is a **foundational ingredient** which requires time and care to grow, nurture, process, and refine. Don't neglect this valuable ingredient or it might wither away over time.

**2 teaspoons baking soda**

(Giving/Sacrifice/Service): This is an interesting ingredient. During times of stress, emotional pain, and conflict it can be difficult to swallow this ingredient. However, in the context of relationships, this ingredient is valuable to allow all other ingredients to **rise to their potentials**.

**1 tablespoon ground ginger**

(Romance): Typically, this ingredient is often the first that comes to mind with this recipe. In fact, it is this spice that draws most individuals to this dessert. Therefore it is important, but this **flavor can be enjoyed most and longest** when combined with all the other ingredients.

**1 tablespoon ground cinnamon**

(Support each other's dreams): You may not even taste this spice after the cooking is done, but **without it, you will likely find that something is missing**, so don't leave it out.

**1 tablespoon allspice**

(Intimacy): You can't forget this one. However, there are a variety of spices in this ingredient. **A good blend that is pleasing to both of you** will bring the best results.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### **Preheat oven to 325°F degrees.**

(Preparation): As with all good recipes, **preparation** for important events helps.

### **Line cookie sheets with aluminum foil or parchment paper.** (Do not use wax paper.)

(Set boundaries with people and organizations outside your marriage): During the holiday season you may find that there are many people and things bidding for your time and attention. As you **balance out your time and resources**, remember that you are also trying to build a strong marriage. Set **appropriate boundaries or you might get burned**.

### **Butter and flour the foil (or do nothing to the parchment paper)** (Do not use cooking spray.)

(Keep the boundaries soft): These important boundaries can also be **flexible and shifting** because you never know what changes lie ahead in the holiday seasons.

### **Cut out paper patterns for the walls, roof and chimney, and set aside.**

(Intentionally use patterns and ideas from both of your families of origin as well as from other couples and families you admire): There is **no single cookie cutter plan** for all marriages. Learn what works from others and together create a marriage pattern that works well for the both of you.

Real giving is when we give to our spouses what's important to them, whether we understand it, like it, agree with it, or not.  
**Michele Weiner-Davis**  
*in her book, Divorce Busting*





**In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugars.**

(Mix emotional intelligence with kindness): In whatever environment and circumstances you find yourselves this holiday season, **mix your efforts** at emotional management with large quantities of kindness.

**Beat in the molasses and eggs.**

(Now mix in constructive communication and break your bad habits): Constructive communication can take effort and eventually become a good habit. However, a **little poured on thickly** can go a long way to **adding strength and flavor** to your relationship. As you work to eliminate bad habits (shells), you will find you are left with strengths and positive habits (whites and yolks). This will now provide a good mixture for fostering (mixing) in the remaining ingredients. One additional note: after the habits have been broken, please discard the broken shells. In other words, **forgive and forget**. If you keep the egg shells lying around the kitchen, you will find a **build-up of resentment** that creates a stink and mess to ruin the taste of the best recipes and marriages.

**In another large bowl, sift dry ingredients. Combine mixtures, and knead into a smooth ball.**

(Add additional ingredients): You are now ready for stronger Friendship, more willing Giving/Sacrifice/Service, naturally developing Romance, desires to Support each other's dreams, and rewarding Intimacy.



**Put all scraps into a bowl and cover. These can be used to make gingerbread men or for your children to play with.**

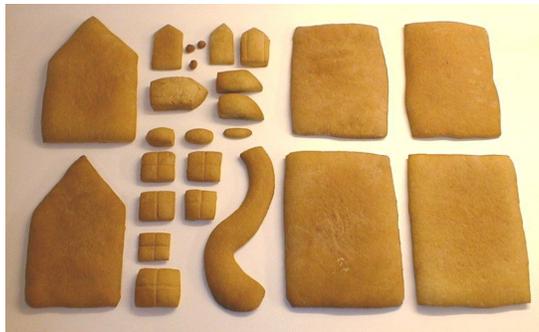
(Mistakes are not necessarily wasted): As we try to establish a marriage and home, there are always mistakes, misjudged efforts, and decisions that do not work out as well as intended. Use these mistakes to learn, add to your store of knowledge and create something useful in the end. This is a step that will be repeated over and over.

**Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until slightly firm.**

(More waiting): When the preparation and work is done, let your efforts proceed as planned. Sometimes the heat of an oven, although sometimes uncomfortable, can help couples blend together and meld into a stronger union.

**Let cool on racks until firm enough to handle. Peel the foil off the sections, and set the pieces aside to dry thoroughly overnight.**

(And more waiting): After the big events and after the holidays, give yourselves times to unwind, calm down and cool off. You deserve it and will be stronger because of it.



The temptation is to have it NOW. One man wrote to me and said:  
I have learned that everything in life is instant gratification. I just don't know the instant it will happen. So I just do what is in front of me to do, be patient, and wait for that instant.

**Steve Goodier's Life Support Blog**

## **THE GLUE**

Relationships take commitment to see through the most challenging times. This glue will help hold your family together when financial trials or other issues are threatening to break the family apart. Using the strongest bond possible, seal up any and all cracks as you put your house together. Do not skimp! Use plenty of glue or you may find your house is not strong enough to stand for very long.

### **Royal Icing**

Royal icing is not only used for decorating, but it is the mortar that holds the gingerbread pieces together to form the house. The following proportions should make enough icing for both the mortaring step and for decorating one gingerbread house.

3 egg whites  
1 tsp cream of tartar  
3½- 4 cups powdered sugar  
Optional: food coloring

Whisk together the egg whites and half of the powdered sugar until smooth. If you are planning to eat your gingerbread house, and are concerned about the safety of raw eggs, you can microwave the egg white-powdered sugar mixture for several seconds (30-40) until the mixture reaches a temperature of 160 degrees, but not higher than 175°F. You can also use pasteurized dried or liquid egg whites.

Add the remaining powdered sugar to the sugar egg mixture. Using an electric mixer, beat on high speed until the icing holds stiff peaks. If it doesn't form stiff peaks, add a little more powdered sugar.

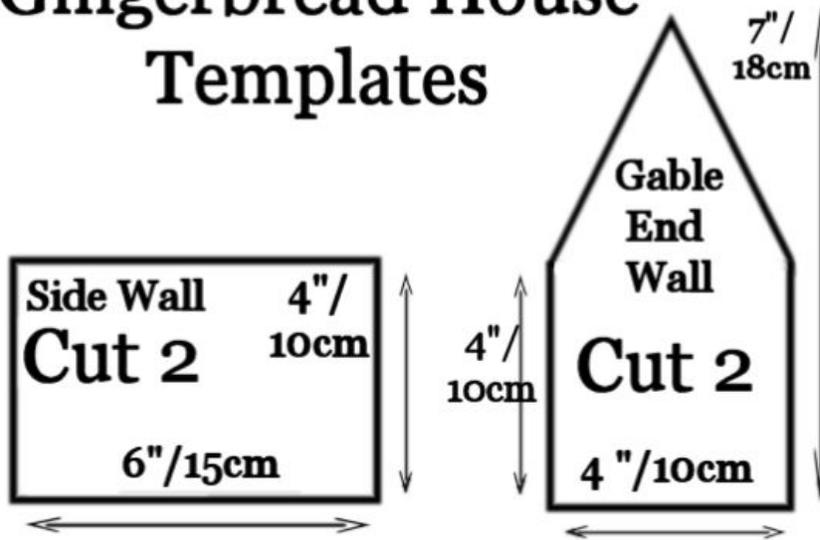
Place a dampened clean towel over the bowl of royal icing. Keep this towel over the icing to prevent it from drying out while you work with it.

When you are ready to mortar or decorate, fill a pastry bag with the icing. If you don't have a pastry bag, you can make your own with a re-sealable plastic freezer bag. Just cut off the tip (a small cut) of one of the corners of the bag. Plastic or metal piping tips are available in supermarkets which you can also use with a freezer bag, for more controlled piping.

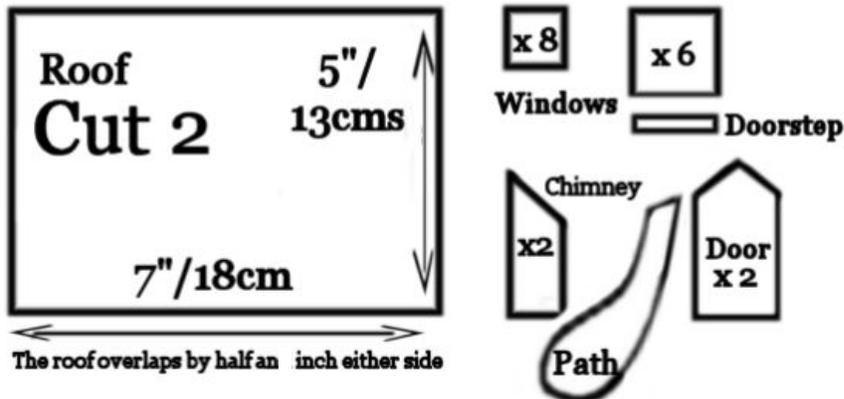
**Pattern**

Finding the right fit for your family can be challenging but also rewarding. It takes communicating and working together to determine which pieces from each partner's family you will use, but with careful selection, good communication, and time, you can end up with the best Gingerbread House (and strongest family relationships) possible!

# Gingerbread House Templates

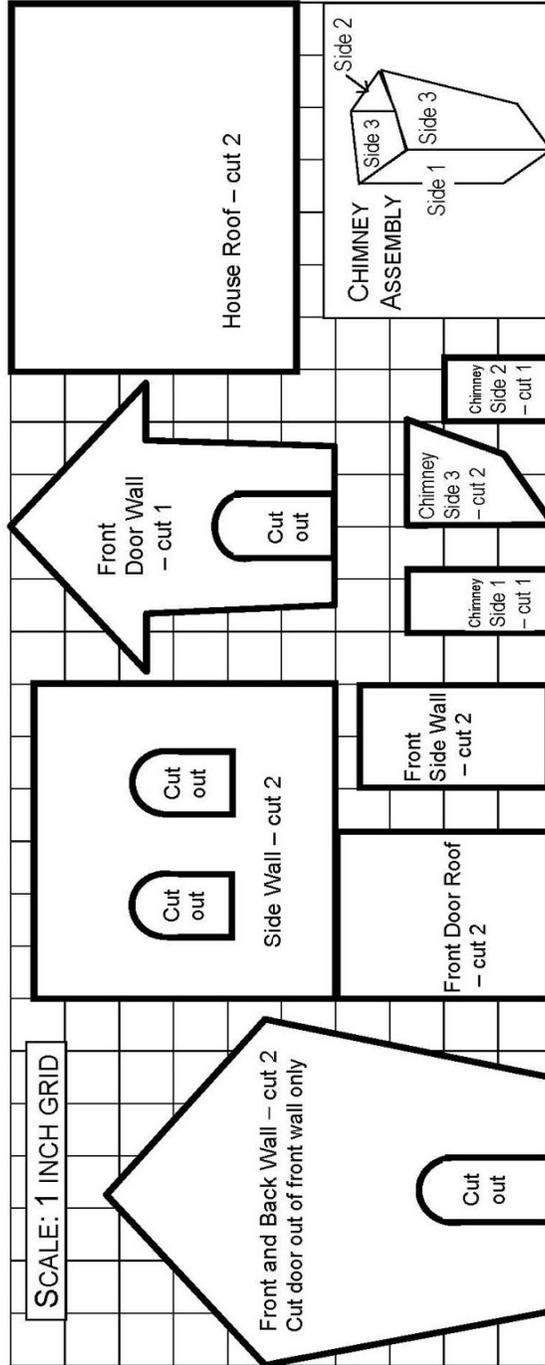


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The roof overlaps by half an inch either side

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## **Finding and Using Other Patterns**

Go to one of these websites for other pre-made patterns or be creative and create your own! When making your own Gingerbread House pattern, cut it out of cardboard first and use tape to put it together. Make sure all the edges meet as they should. If not, revise your pattern and trim it to fit. Then use these with your own gingerbread! This is the perfect opportunity to get the whole family involved! Your kids can help make and cut the pattern, mix dough, cut shapes, and decorate the gingerbread house! Enjoy this fun activity together!

Check out these websites for fun patterns:

- <http://slice-heaven.com/store/show/FREEGHPATTERNS>
- <http://www.ultimategingerbread.com/GingerbreadByDesign.html>
- <http://www.kungfoodie.com/gingerbread-house-pattern/>
- <http://www.kingarthurflour.com/stuff/contentmgr/files/7512947c75dd4ce76f3a611041c1fe40/miscdocs/gingerbread.pdf>
- <http://www.math.byu.edu/~klkuttle/adele.pdf>



### **Where can you buy these ingredients?**

For a *gingerbread house* go to your local grocery store for these easy-to-find and relatively inexpensive ingredients.

For your *marriage*, these ingredients are not available for purchase anywhere. However, the marital ingredients can be developed. Ideas, information and resources for all of these marriage ingredients are available and include research-based marriage enrichment sources such as:

Chapman, G. (1995). *The five love languages: How to express heartfelt Commitment to your mate*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing.

Fowers, B. J. (2000). *Beyond the myth of marital happiness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Markman, H. J., Stanley, S. M., Blumberg S. L., Jenkins, N. H., & Whitely, C. (2004). *Twelve hours to a great marriage*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Warren, N. C. (1995). *Learning to live with the love of your life... and loving it*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.



You did the best that you knew how.  
Now that you know better,  
you'll do better.  
**Maya Angelou**

  
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