

## Gingerbread Man Sensory Recipe

*Sensory suggestions make this gingerbread cookie come alive*

In the classic fairy tale a baker makes a gingerbread man, who jumps out of the oven and runs right out the door. Well, this sensory recipe makes these cookies also come alive with all the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of baking this holiday treat. You can even talk about the gingerbread man's body parts as you decorate the cookies with frosting or candy.

With each step, we provide sensory suggestions for you to try with your child. You can follow one or all the suggestions – touch, taste, see, smell, hear.

“Run, run, as fast as you can...” and try this recipe! You’ll love it like the fox who gobbled up the gingerbread man in the story. “Snap...snap...snap...gulp!”



*Photo: Tastes Better from Scratch*

## Utensils

- Large mixing bowl
- Mixing spoon or spatula
- Pastry blender or fork
- Electric hand mixer or stand mixer
- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Rolling pin
- Gingerbread man cookie cutter
- Plastic wrap
- Baking sheets lined with parchment paper
- Wire rack







## Ingredients









### Cookies:







- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup dark brown sugar, packed
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- 12 tablespoons butter (1  $\frac{1}{2}$  sticks), room temperature, cut into 12 pieces
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup dark molasses
- 2 tablespoons milk









### Icing:





- 2 tablespoons butter, room temperature
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
1. Gather the ingredients and utensils.	<p> What do they feel like? Are their textures rough or smooth? Does the mixing bowl feel warm or cold?</p> <p> What happens when you bang the utensils together or against the bowl? It's a kitchen band!</p> <p> Cookie cutters come in many different shapes and colors. Gingerbread man cookie cutters are easy for small hands to work with.</p>
2. Measure 3 cups of flour and put it in the mixing bowl.	<p> As you measure the flour count the cups out loud, one at a time.</p> <p> Let your child touch the flour on your work surface with their hands or feet. Trace some shapes. What does the flour feel like? Is it soft and silky?</p> <p> The white flour contrasts with a dark-colored mixing bowl. A shiny, metal bowl is more reflective.</p>

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<p>3. Pack <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> cup of brown sugar into a measuring cup and add it to the flour.</p>	<p> As you put the brown sugar in the measuring cup, talk about how you're filling the cup. Use action words like "smoosh" and "press" as you pack the brown sugar.</p> <p> Touch the packed brown sugar and describe how hard it is in your measuring cup.</p> <p> Put a little brown sugar on your child's lips. If your child is more sensitive, introduce the flavor with a little sprinkle on their hands or feet. The sugar is sweet!</p> <p> How can you create visual contrast? The brown sugar is easy to see when you dump it into the bowl of white flour.</p>
<p>4. Add the baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and salt to the mixing bowl and stir the ingredients together with a spoon or spatula.</p>	<p> Let your child watch you add the ingredients.</p> <p> Describe out loud how you are measuring each spice and adding it to the bowl. Do you store your spices in the pantry or in a kitchen drawer? Verbal descriptions give meaning and context to your baking project.</p> <p> Take a deep breath. Now the flour has a very distinctive smell of spices!</p> <p> Using hand under hand, encourage your child to put their hands over yours as you stir the spices into the flour.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>5. Add the butter pieces to the mixing bowl and use the pastry blender to cut the butter in until the mixture resembles fine meal.</p>	<p> What does the butter feel like? Is it smooth? Soft?</p> <p> Count to 12 as you add the butter pieces to the flour mixture. Following a recipe builds early math skills.</p> <p> Invite your child to hop on your hands as you cut the butter into the flour mixture with the pastry blender or fork.</p> <p> Describe the motion you are using with your hands to create the fine meal with action words like “pounding,” “rocking,” and “pressing.” Does mixing the ingredients make a sound when you scrape the pastry blender or fork on the inside of the bowl?</p>
<p>6. Pour <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> cup molasses into a measuring cup. With the mixer running on low speed, gradually add the molasses and 2 tablespoons milk to the dough. The mixture will be crumbly.</p>	<p> Little hands can get hurt if they accidentally touch the mixer while it’s running so allow your child to hold the mixing paddle or beaters before you attach them to the appliance. Let your child observe how you add the ingredients to the bowl and mix the dough. If you’re using a stand mixer, your child can place their hands on top of the appliance and feel the vibration.</p> <p> Listen for the sounds the mixer makes and talk about what you are doing. What happens to the dough as you add the wet ingredients?</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>7. Work the dough together with your hands and form two balls. Wrap each ball in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours or overnight, or place in the freezer for about 20 minutes, until firm. If you're not baking the cookies right away, the dough will last in your refrigerator for 3-4 days or in your freezer in a freezer-safe bag for 2-3 months.</p>	<p> Touch the dough. Is it sticky? Soft? Can you roll the ball of dough?</p> <p> Smoosh the dough. Poke it. Smash it and listen to the sound it makes.</p> <p> What does the dough smell like? Ginger? Cinnamon? Cloves? Talk about the different scents that create gingerbread.</p>
<p>8. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Roll out one ball of dough on your counter or a cutting board with a rolling pin until it's about ½ inch thick.</p>	<p> Using hand under hand, encourage your child to put their hands over yours as you push the rolling pin back and forth over the dough.</p>
<p>9. Cut out the gingerbread men and place them on the prepared baking sheets.</p>	<p> Have fun making handprints or footprints in the dough. Feet are less tactilely sensitive than hands and new sensory experiences can be easily introduced through the feet.</p> <p> Talk about how the gingerbread cookies have heads, shoulders, arms, and legs just like humans do. Learning about body parts is an important orientation and mobility skill for children who are blind or visually impaired.</p> <p> Now cut out the gingerbread shapes using hand under hand. How many gingerbread men can you make? Is there one for every person in your family?</p> <p> Notice how easy it is to see the brown cookie dough on the white parchment paper.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>10. Bake the cookies until set in the center and the dough barely retains an imprint when touched very gently with fingertip, 8 to 11 minutes (depending on the size of your cookie cutter).</p>	<p> Listen for the beep when the oven is done preheating. Read the <u><a href="#">The Gingerbread Man</a></u> story out loud to your child while you're waiting for your cookies to bake. If you set a timer, listen for the beep when the cookies are done.</p> <p> How do you know when the cookies are done? Close your eyes and smell the just-baked gingerbread!</p> <p> Open the oven. It's hot! Don't let the gingerbread men escape!</p>
<p>11. Remove the cookies to a wire rack and let cool to room temperature before frosting them. Meanwhile cut out more gingerbread men with the remaining dough and bake them.</p>	<p> Now you can eat your gingerbread man! Can you bite off an arm or a leg? You could say, "Oh, no! You bit off the head just like the fox in the story we read!"</p>

## Icing

If you choose to decorate your gingerbread cookies, make the icing. Add butter, milk, and 1 cup of powdered sugar to a medium bowl. Mix until smooth. Add the additional cup of powdered sugar and mix until smooth.

Put frosting in a piping bag if desired. Make faces or clothing on the gingerbread men with the frosting. Or using the frosting as glue, stick on candy buttons or other details.

You can also just sprinkle the cookies with powdered sugar.

Store the cookies in an airtight container with parchment paper between the layers, or you can freeze them for up to 3 months.