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100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

The Gingerbread Nightmare

By Valerie Garner

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The Gingerbread Nightmare

Do you ever see those beautiful gingerbread houses during the holiday seasons that are so beautiful? They look so simple, and look like such a fun project to do with the kids making gifts for grandma and grandpa. I could just feel it....soft Christmas music in the background, the warm, spicy smell of gingerbread filling the air, the cozy warmth of the fire on a snowy day, and my children and I building these luscious goodies sure to bless our family and friends, and all inexpensively as well.

That was the fantasy. Where was my mind? How could I forget about the little thing we call REALITY? Ever notice how professionals make things look easy? That's the very mark of a professional.

The first reality check was the store. Money was very tight and these looked like a great way to give a quality gift to several loved ones. After we did the shopping for the candy and the ingredients for these gingerbread houses, the bill totaled nearly \$75. I almost fainted. (We could have bought some great gifts with that, or even bought beautiful gingerbread houses).

As for Christmas music, the children insisted upon the Chipmunk's Christmas carols. Have you ever listened to more than 1 chipmunk song at a time? Have you ever noticed what that does to a brain?

The fire was nice, but then we had the fights over whose turn it was to stoke the fire. Two boys can fight over anything, and anything involving work makes a worthy fight indeed.

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We started with the dough, and that part turned out! It was SO delicious.....in fact we had to make more because after all of us eating dough, there wasn't enough for the houses. So....back to making more dough.

This particular dough had to be chilled, then rolled, then you cut pieces of the house out from a paper mold with a knife. Ok, got that part. We put it in the oven for baking, and half of the pieces burnt terribly. The other half were perfect, but you can't build a house with half the parts. So.....we had to make MORE dough. By now, we're not having fun anymore. It's getting late and mom is beginning to want to get this mess cleaned up now.

We finished making new house pieces and it was like midnight, I had long

put the children to bed and was cranky now at this point. The only thing to do now was to let everything cool (including tempers), and attempt the decorating tomorrow.

Whew....new day, it's a wonder what a little sleep will do ya. Now we make the hard frosting that will act as glue to hold the pieces of the house together, time to build. Time for the fun to begin, boy are we ready!

We begin assembling the house, and half the roof piece breaks in two on one of the houses.

On the second house, we find the pieces to not match correctly. On a third house, we overcome all these first two obstacles, and now have great difficulty getting props to hold the house together while the "glue"

dries, and it's repeatedly falling apart and causing the oldest child to have a temper tantrum in frustration (mom too). Somehow through this fiasco, we end up with 1 viable house. (The others became, hard dog biscuit type things for the family pet). Oh well, she needs her Christmas goodies too, right?

We frosted the house and each child decorated half. The end result? A \$75. UGLY gingerbread house that only a grandma (with apologizes from mom), would take and not be too insulted by. But, we did accomplish one of our goals....it was a memory. A memory we fondly call "The Gingerbread Nightmare".

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Valerie Garner—an author who enjoys writing on a wide variety of topics, mostly pertaining to a home, sprinkled with humour.

Baking Christmas Memories: Rolled Gingerbread Cookies

By Sherri Allen

Baking Christmas Memories: Rolled Gingerbread Cookies by Sherri Allen

Some of my fondest childhood memories of Christmas are those of my brother, sister and me baking Christmas cookies with our mother. We'd all end up covered in flour and frosting, the kitchen would be a mess and the cookies never came close to resembling the perfectly-decorated confections featured on the pages of Mom's favorite magazines, but we had a great time creating our "masterpieces."

Here is a kid-pleasing Christmas cookie recipe that you can make with your own children, creating memories that will last for years to come.

Rolled Gingerbread Cookies

These cookies are mildly spiced, for kids. If you like your gingerbread men a little hotter, use 1 tablespoon each of ground cinnamon and ginger instead of 2 teaspoons. The dough can be cut into gingerbread people, of course, and decorated with raisins, red hots, and chocolate chips before being baked. Or cut the dough into any shape and decorate the cookies with icing.

Makes about 40 medium gingerbread people

3 cups unbleached all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ground ginger
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
3/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1 large egg
1/2 cup dark (not light or blackstrap) molasses
1 tablespoon water

Whisk together the flour, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves in a medium mixing bowl.

Cream the butter and brown sugar together in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium high speed until fluffy. Add the egg, molasses, and water and beat until incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. Add the flour mixture all at once and mix on low speed until the dough comes together in a ball.

Divide the dough into 3 equal balls. Wrap each ball in plastic and refrigerate it for at least 2 hours and for up to 2 days. (The dough can be frozen for up to 1 month; defrost it in the refrigerator before use.)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

With a lightly floured rolling pin, roll out a ball of dough 1/8-inch thick on a lightly floured work surface.

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Cut the dough into gingerbread people or any other desired shapes and place the cookies on the

prepared baking sheet. If making gingerbread people, make eyes, nose, mouth, and buttons with raisins, red hots, small gumdrops, and/or chocolate chips. Refrigerate the scraps.

Bake the cookies until they are firm, about 8 minutes. Slide the entire parchment sheet with the cookies onto a wire rack and let the cookies cool completely. Repeat with the remaining balls and then with the chilled scraps, using fresh parchment paper. Decorate with icing as desired.

Rolled Gingerbread Cookies will keep in an airtight container for several days.

Recipe reprinted from "Mom's Big Book of Baking" by Lauren Chattman Copyright © 2001, with permission from Harvard Common Press.

Sherri Allen is the editor of an award-winning website devoted to topics such as family, food, garden, house&home and money. For free articles, information, tips, recipes, reviews and coloring pages, visit <http://www.SherriAllen.com/>



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