I learned to make this Gingerbread House more than three decades ago in a class in Seattle, Washington. What I will show you here is a very simple house to make. I don’t use a lot of candy but that doesn’t mean that you can’t take this in any direction you choose and add as much decoration as you want—let your imagination run wild! Please read all the directions first before you begin.

**Decorating Supplies You’ll Need**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Where to Get</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meringue Powder</td>
<td>A mixture of dried egg whites used to make Royal Icing which is the “glue” used to put your house together, make the icicles, etc. (It is not recommended to use egg whites due to concerns of consuming raw eggs. Meringue powder is pasteurized)</td>
<td>You can readily buy Meringue Powder online from many different sites if you do a web search (like Google). Also, if you have a <strong>Michael’s</strong> craft store near you they carry <strong>Wilton</strong> cake decorating supplies and should have Meringue Powder. Some fabric stores carry Wilton supplies such as JoAnn Fabrics. You can also look in your phone directory to see if you have a cake decorating store in your area. <a href="http://www.wilton.com">www.wilton.com</a> <a href="http://www.michaels.com">www.michaels.com</a> <a href="http://www.joanns.com">www.joanns.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorating Bags or Parchment Paper Triangles</td>
<td>Decorating bags are used to hold your icing so you can “pipe” out the icing to decorate with. Parchment triangles are a grease-proof paper you can fold to make your own decorating bags.</td>
<td>Again, do your own web search for suppliers online; or find a store in your area that carries Wilton or cake decorating supplies. There are also plastic disposable decorating bags which are very convenient to use. Use whatever is easiest for you. Decorating bags can also use couplers which allow you to change decorating tips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorating Tips</td>
<td>Also known as pastry tips, they are metal cones which you squeeze icing through to form different shapes such as line, star or leaf shapes.</td>
<td>Yep, you guessed it, you’ll find these online or in stores that carry cake decorating supplies. You’ll need a #2, #4, #14 and #67 tips for this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piping Gel</td>
<td>Piping Gel is made with gelatin and corn syrup. You’ll use it to make a pond for this project.</td>
<td>You can buy where you get cake decorating supplies as above or do a web search for piping gel recipes such as one at the link below: <a href="http://www.baking911.com/recipes/cakes/decopipinggel.htm">http://www.baking911.com/recipes/cakes/decopipinggel.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Coloring</td>
<td>Non-toxic colors, I only use red, green and blue for this house.</td>
<td>You can use the kind you can get at your grocery store but the gel-type food colorings from cake decorating supply places gives more intense colors and also does not break down the icing as much. Use these if you can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cake Board</td>
<td>You need something to put your house on. You can use a round or square shape. I used a 14” round for my house.</td>
<td>You can also buy cake boards online or at any of the sources named above. You can also cut your own Masonite or plywood board and then cover with decorative foil, butcher paper, etc. It’s best to use something that stands up to grease and icing. Mine is covered with a water resistant paper.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Candy and Other Decorating Pieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chocolate covered Pretzels – used for the fence.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate covered raisins – used for the stone path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Cream Sugar Cones – used to make your trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Candy: these look like real little rocks. They are used on the roof.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can buy the first three at most local grocery store. I find my Rock Candy at a candy store or at my local cake decorating store. If you can’t find rock candy you can use the chocolate covered raisins or any other type of candy. Remember: if you want to cover your whole house in various types of candy please feel free to improvise!

Gingerbread and Royal Icing Recipes

Feel free to use your own Gingerbread or Royal Icing recipe. These are my favorites but there are lots of books with recipes and if you search the web you’ll find hundreds more!

Gingerbread Recipe (enough for 2 houses)

Oven Temp: 350°

1 ¼ cup Dark Molasses
5/8 cup Shortening (1/2 c + 2 Tbsp)
1 ¼ tsp. Baking Soda
2 tsp. Baking Powder
1 ½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. ginger
1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 ¾ cup + 1 Tbsp. Flour (regular)

- Heat the Molasses to boiling in a pan on the stove.
- Add shortening and soda and mix well.
- Slowly stir in the rest of the ingredients, turn the heat down and mix well with a wooden spoon. Turn off the heat.
- Chill the dough for a couple of hours before using.

Roll the dough out about 1/8” thick to cut your pieces. Bake 7-10 minutes—you want it to be pretty hard but not burned.

Royal Icing Recipe (Meringue)

Royal Icing dries very hard (which is why is makes a great glue to put your house together). Make sure everything you use to mix this is free from grease. Grease breaks Royal Icing down and may cause it not to harden properly.

3 level tsp. Meringue Powder
1 pound of Powdered Sugar (4 cups)
6 Tbsp. warm water
½ tsp. Cream of Tartar (carried at most grocery stores in the spice section. If you can’t find it don’t worry about it).

Combine all ingredients in mixer, begin slowly and then beat at high speed until fluffy, anywhere from 6-10 minutes. If it seems too stiff you can add a little bit more water, a teaspoon or two at a time.

Royal Icing dries quickly so you need to keep it covered at all times. You can cover the bowl with plastic wrap or put in Tupperware with a lid.

Note: you can also make Royal Icing with egg whites but in some circles there are concerns with Salmonella so I don’t personally recommend it.
Making a Parchment Bag

If you choose to use a parchment triangles to make an icing bag you can follow the directions below. You can also see another lesson to fold parchment bags on the web here. You'll also see other options for decorating bags below. Choose whatever you're most comfortable with. I sometimes use all three depending on what I'm doing.

Figure 1. Mark your parchment triangle with point A, B, and C. Lay your triangle flat with point A facing you. Hold corner C between your right thumb and forefinger.

Figure 2. Roll corner C up and over into the center of the triangle bringing it towards you until it meets point A.

Figure 3. Holding points A and C together, roll corner B up and wrap around to meet the backs of points A and C forming a cone shape.

Figure 4. Adjust position of outside seam where all three triangle points meet until tip of cone is needle sharp. Tape outside seam near the top to hold the bag together.

Figure 5. To make the opening for your decorating tube, cut ¾” off the tip of the bag. Drop your decorating tip in the bag, making sure the small end of the tube protrudes. Just about ½” of the tube should be exposed.

You can also order disposable decorating bags which are very convenient. These on the left are from The Baking Shop online store. The one on the right has a coupler inserted so you can change your decorating tips without having to use a new bag. The photo to the right is a professional grade decorating bag from Sugarcraft which can be used over and over again.
To Fill Your Parchment Bag With Icing: hold the bag near the bottom and use a spatula to push icing down into the bag. Pull the spatula out against the side of the bag to remove the icing from the spatula—repeat until the bag is about half full. Diaper fold the end of the bag shut and as you decorate, continue to fold the end of the bag down. When not using your bag put it in a zip lock bag or Tupperware with a lid so the icing doesn’t dry in the tip.

Let’s Get Started – Day 1

Cut Out Your Pattern Pieces

Use a good stiff paper like tag board. You can even use manila file folders. I still use my pattern pieces from 35 years ago. Trace the pattern pieces (see the last pages of this file for the pattern) onto the stiff paper and cut out. Be sure to label each piece as appropriate.

Make the Trees

You can purchase plastic trees from a hobby store but purists prefer to have everything they use for a gingerbread house to be edible. If you enter a gingerbread house contest the rules most always state everything but the board you put the house on must be edible. The trees are very easy to make and you can see from my close-up photo to the right that they don’t have to be perfect. The more trees you make the better you will get at it so don’t worry. Everyone has their own style and your trees will be unique to you.

I use sugar ice cream cones for my trees. Depending on the size of your board you can use 2-3 trees. I like to make them different sizes. I leave one the original size, and then take small scissors and carefully chip off the bottom of the other one or two cones to make a small and a medium height tree.

Make up a batch of Royal Icing. Put about 1 cup of your Royal Icing in a small bowl. Tint your icing green with food coloring (if using gel coloring use a toothpick to put a bit of green into your icing). Keep adding until you get the color strength you desire, a little goes a long way. Put your #67 tip (called a “leaf” tip) into whatever type of icing bag you will use. Add the green icing.

I put my hand up into the sugar cone and move it around as I pipe around the cone with the green icing, starting at the bottom of the cone and finishing near the top by leaving a little spot undone so I can set the cone down—then I pipe the last couple leaves on the finish. Leave to dry for several hours or overnight. Note: if you find the leaves are not sticking as you pipe them on you can take a small spatula and thinly spread some green icing over the entire cone and then start pipe the leaves on.
Make Your Icing Windows

Prepare a parchment bag and put in your #2 tip, then fill with out ½ cup of Royal Icing (leave it white). Place the window pattern on a flat surface and cover it with a piece of wax paper. You can hold the wax paper down by piping four small dots of icing under the wax paper and press down (see the illustration). Pipe over all the lines once.

Then pipe one more layer just around the outside of the window (see illustration). This helps strengthen the windows. You need 8 windows but make extras in case of breakage. Once your windows are dry you can use a spatula or butter knife to pop them off the wax paper.

Make Your Icing Wreaths

I put a wreath on the upper part of the Dutch door but you could also put a wreath on each of the shutters if you like—just make enough wreaths. These keep really well (don’t tell anyone but I’ve used wreaths that I made over a year ago. Just keep them in an airtight container.

Tint a small amount of Royal Icing green and another very small amount bright red. Make another parchment bag, put in tip #14 (called a star tip) and fill with your green icing. Make little circular wreaths as shown in the illustration. Now make another parchment bag for your red icing. You won’t need tip for this bag; just make sure the point when you fold it is really sharp. Fill the bag with your red Royal Icing and snip off just a tiny piece of the point with some scissors. Now pipe little red berries on your wreaths. Set the wreath aside to dry. Once your wreaths are dry you can use a spatula or butter knife to pop them off the wax paper.
Prepare Your Cake Board

Using your white Royal Icing and an icing spatula and cover your board, much like icing a cake. If you look at the photograph of my gingerbread house I left about ½ inch border from the outside of the cake board. Use the spatula to press up and down on the icing if you want to produce a stucco effect—it doesn’t have to be smooth.

Take your front and side pattern pieces to determine where you will eventually place your house and then use the end of the spatula to make a little pathway from the front door to the edge of the icing at the outside of the cake board. Be sure to leave the area where you will put your house fairly level. You can also use the end of the spatula to make an indentation in the icing of where your little pond will be.

Day Two

Bake Your Gingerbread

Preheat your oven to 350°. Some people like to roll their gingerbread dough right out onto the baking sheet and remover the dough around their cut outs. Since this is a very small house I cut my gingerbread out on a cutting board and transfer them to my baking sheet.

I cut out my larger pieces first (roofs, sides, front and back) and roll the dough out to about ¼” thickness. Lightly flour your board and rolling pin. Using a shape knife cut around your pattern pieces. For those pieces with windows cut those out and remove the little dough pieces. Using a very flat spatula or icing spatula transfer the cut out pieces to your baking sheet (spray your sheet with PAM). Do not place the pieces too close together since they will spread a little.

Bake until the pieces begin to brown just a little around the sides—you want them to be nice and hard. Once you take out of the oven place your pattern pieces on the cooked cookies and trim away any spread with a sharp knife (careful, they are hot). Once they have cooled carefully move off the cooking sheet and set aside.

Cut the smaller pieces (doors, chimney, shutters, and balcony) from dough you have rolled out to about 1/8” thickness. They will take less time to cook. You may also need to trim around these pieces (especially chimney and balcony so they fit together properly once you start building the house.
Start Putting the House Together

Assemble the Balcony
Prepare a parchment bag, put in tip #2 and fill ½ full with white Royal Icing. Take your cooled balcony pieces and move to a flat working surface. Pipe some icing onto the balcony supports, then attach to the front balcony pieces and let dry for at least three hours.

Attach Icing Windows to Front and Sides
Take the front and side pieces and move to a flat working surface. Carefully remove your dried icing windows from the wax paper. Pipe some icing around the window cut-outs and gently place the windows on top of the icing to secure to both front and side pieces.

Attach the Shutters
Pipe some icing on the back of the shutters and gently place over the part of each side of the windows. Tilt them up so it looks like the shutter is opening up. You can decorate with a wreath if you like.

Attach the Balcony to the Front Piece and the bottom door piece
Make sure your balcony has dried thoroughly. Pipe lots of icing on the balcony support piece where they will lay against the front piece. Position the balcony over the top two windows—you might have to scoot the shutter pieces in a bit to get it to fit.

Pipe some icing on the both sides of the back of the door piece and set over the bottom part of the door opening.

Assemble the Chimney
Assemble the chimney as shown in the illustration to the left using lots of icing to glue it together. Lay it on its top and let dry. If you like you can pipe a brick pattern on it after it has dried.
Prepare the Roof
Lay the two roof pieces flat as shown. Pipe a scalloped pattern with a #4 tip and white Royal Icing on both pieces—matching the scallops where the two pieces will join.

LET ALL THESE PIECES DRY FOR SEVERAL HOURS.

Now Let’s Put the House Together

Make another batch of Royal Icing so you make sure you don’t run out during assembly.

Prepare one parchment bag with #2 tip and white Royal Icing. Prepare another bag with a #4 tip and white Royal Icing.

Put your cake board on a flat working surface. Lay your Front piece and one side piece on your work surface. With your #4 tip bag lay a thick line of icing onto the lines you made with your pattern pieces when you iced the board. Now lay a thick line of icing on one edge of the Side piece. Carefully pick up your front wall and pipe lots of icing on the front right inside edge. Pick up your Side piece and place both pieces down into the lines of icing you piped on your cake board meeting the two edges together to form a 90 degree angle. Place your front piece on the cake board right into the icing you piped and support with a can so you can pipe a big line of icing on the front edge of one of the side pieces. Take this side piece and attach to the front piece so they meet at a 90 degree angle. Quickly pipe icing on the front edge and bottom of the next side piece and attach to the front piece. Pipe icing on the back piece on both the bottom of the piece as well as the inside edges where it will meet the two side pieces. Gently press all the pieces together for a nice snug fit.
Attach the Roof

Pipe generous Royal Icing on top of front, back and sides as shown to the right. Gently lay the roof on top of the house walls. Make sure to make the roof flush with the ball wall so it overhangs in the front.

Attach the Chimney

Take your dry, assembled chimney and pipe generous icing around the bottom edges and place on the roof.

Attach Upper Door

Pipe a little bit of icing in the center of the front of the top door and attach one of the little wreaths there. Now pipe generous icing on the left side of the door opening just above the lower door piece. Place it at an angle so it looks as if the door was left open slightly. It should stay open on its own—if not you can put a bit of crumpled paper under it to hold it open---let it dry.

Putting in Your Pond

Tint about ¼ cup of pipe gel a very light blue (take a toothpick and put just a tiny dab of blue coloring – a little goes a long way here). Stir to distribute the color. Spoon the piping gel onto the cake board where you made your indentation in the icing for your pond. Use the back of the spoon to smooth the gel around. Now take tip #4 and pipe around the pond’s edge to simulate a build-up of snow. You can push a couple of rock candy pieces into the built up snow.

Rock Candy on the Roof: in the Alps, heavy rocks are used to hold the roof on. Pipe some icing on the bottom of each rock candy piece and place on the roof (see the photo for placement ideas).
Add Your Icicles

They might look scary, but with a little practice you’ll get the hang of it. Practice on the edge of a counter first until you get the rhythm down.

Use a #2 tip and fill your bag with lots of icing. Give it a squeeze first to make sure you don’t have any trapped air.

You should start making your icicles on the windows and shutters and the balcony first—do the roof icicles last. Okay, let’s begin.

Pipe mounds of icing over the top of the shutters and windows, top of door, top of the chimney, then over the top of the balcony so you’ve got something to build the icicles on—do the roof icicles last.

To make an icicle first build up a little ball of icing where you want your first icicle (see illustration above). Keep squeezing as you move downward, release the pressure—when you decide your icicle is long enough stop all pressure and continue in a downward motion until it breaks loose from the decorating tip. You can make as many or as few icicles as you like.

Add Your Trees

Take your dry trees, pipe generous icing around the bottoms and place on the board as shown in the cover photo or where you like.

The Final Touch

Using a sifter or fine sieve strainer put ¼ cup of powdered sugar and gently shake over the house, pond and trees to simulate fresh fallen snow. Use chocolate covered pretzels to make a fence all the way around your board.

Other Ideas

You can take this basic design and make it your own. Make small gingerbread cookies for a fence around the house, add a snowman, make a stack of firewood out of regular pretzels. The possibilities are endless so have fun! ---Jana Keeler (jkeeler415@comcast.net)