

Did You Know?

Ginger's earthy, spicy flavor has made it a common ingredient worldwide for cooking. Ginger not only adds delicious flavor to food – it's also full of nutrients. People have been using the root for cooking and healing for thousands of years.

Ginger is a tropical flowering plant. The leafy plant grows to about three feet tall and produces clusters of greenish-purple flowers. The underground stem, called the rhizome, is used as a spice. Depending on the variety, the inside of the root can be yellow, red, or white. It's harvested by pulling the entire plant out of the soil, removing the leaves and cleaning the root.

Ginger can be eaten fresh or dried and stored as a spice.



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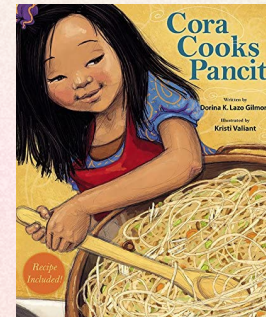
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YOUTH: Submit your creative food-related stories and memories in the **Share Your Story** writing program for youth in grades 4-12. Visit epls.org/share to learn how to enter.

ADULTS: Share your favorite recipes and food memories to our online **Cooking Up Community Cookbook**. Learn more at epls.org/onebook.



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epls.org/spice-club
December Spice
Ground Ginger

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Thick and Chewy Gingerbread Cookies

SERVES Thirty 3-inch cookies

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Because we wanted a thick and chewy gingerbread cookie recipe, we added more butter for moisture. A ratio of anything less than 4 tablespoons of fat to 1 cup of flour produced a very dry cookie—which may be desirable when building a gingerbread house but not when making a cookie meant for eating. More sugar and molasses came next, adding flavor and a pleasant sweetness. A little bit of milk gave the cookies just the right extra measure of softness and lift.

GATHER YOUR INGREDIENTS

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

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INSTRUCTIONS

1. In food processor work bowl fitted with steel blade, process flour, sugar, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, salt, and baking soda until combined, about 10 seconds.

Scatter butter pieces over flour mixture and process until mixture is sandy and resembles very fine meal, about 15 seconds.

With machine running, gradually add molasses and milk; process until dough is evenly moistened and forms soft mass, about 10 seconds.

Alternatively, in bowl of standing mixer fitted with paddle attachment, stir together flour, sugar, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, salt, and baking soda at low speed until combined, about 30 seconds.

Stop mixer and add butter pieces; mix at medium-low speed until mixture is sandy and resembles fine meal, about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Reduce speed to low and, with mixer running, gradually add molasses and milk; mix until dough is evenly moistened, about 20 seconds. Increase speed to medium and mix until thoroughly combined, about 10 seconds.

2. Scrape dough onto work surface; divide in half. Working with one portion of dough at a time, roll $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick between two large sheets of parchment paper. Leaving dough sandwiched between parchment layers, stack on cookie sheet and freeze until firm, 15 to 20 minutes. (Alternatively, refrigerate dough 2 hours or overnight.)

3. Adjust oven racks to upper- and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper.

4. Remove one dough sheet from freezer; place on work surface. Peel off top parchment sheet and gently lay it back in place. Flip dough over; peel off and discard second parchment layer. Cut dough into 5-inch gingerbread people or 3-inch gingerbread cookies, transferring shapes to parchment-lined cookie sheets with wide metal spatula, spacing them $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart; set scraps aside. Repeat with remaining dough until cookie sheets are full. Bake cookies until set in centers and dough barely retains imprint when touched very gently with fingertip, 8 to 11 minutes, rotating cookie sheets front to back and switching positions top to bottom halfway through baking time. Do not overbake. Cool cookies on sheets 2 minutes, then remove with wide metal spatula to wire rack; cool to room temperature.

5. Gather scraps; repeat rolling, cutting, and baking in steps 2 and four

6. Repeat with remaining dough until all dough is used.