

# **The Wonderful World of Gingerbread**



**Including Sauces and Whipped Creams for  
Gingerbreads and Other Desserts**



***“Run, run as fast you can,  
“You can’t catch me,  
“I’m the gingerbread man.”***

I don’t remember the childhood book from which those lines came, but the lines—they’ve stayed with me. I can still see the gingerbread man, an animated cookie, running across the landscape.

That’s not who the gingerbread man really was. In Old England, spices were precious and most were beyond the reach of common people—but not ginger. Ginger was the spice available to everyone. Consequently, ginger played a prominent role in recipes, for cookies, cakes, and desserts. And the gingerbread man distributed them through neighborhoods with a cart filled with goodies much as the ice cream man does today. Now I can picture a kindly gentleman with a cart full of fresh cakes and cookies, some glazed and some in fancy shapes, distributing his wares to the children and their mothers. No wonder gingerbread was held in such fond esteem.

Much of the art of gingerbread has been lost, unfortunately. When most of us think of gingerbread, we think of a dark, moist cake—maybe with a dollop of whipped cream atop. As good as that is, gingerbread can be much more.

This guide is meant as an introduction to gingerbread, a catalyst for discovery and exploration. Gingerbread can come in many different recipes from light to dark and flavored. And gingerbread can be topped with all kinds of toppings, sauces, and frostings. We’ll suggest a few recipes and toppings here.

We hope that you enjoy your tour of gingerbread.

Dennis and Merri Ann Weaver

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## Discover the Wonderful World of Gingerbread!

Gingerbread is scrumptious. It's easy. (Think of sheet cakes without frosting.) And there are lots of interesting avenues to explore. You can make them as robust and spicy as you choose—dark with blackstrap molasses to light (“white”) with maple syrup.



Gingerbread is great topped simply with sweetened whipped cream but it is irresistible topped with a sauce. Lemon and caramel sauces are traditional but orange sauce, raspberry sauce, and rum sauce are worthy of consideration. Cream cheese spreads work fine.

Gingerbread can also be topped with fruit such as sliced bananas or strawberries. We think that gingerbread and fruit make a wonderful combination for breakfast.

In this guide we'll explore:

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## Tips and Techniques for Better Gingerbread

- Blackstrap molasses is dark, thick, and intensely flavored. Most of the molasses that you will find on store shelves is “unsulfured” and not as strong.
- For a milder-flavored gingerbread, try fresh ginger rather than commercially ground ginger. Two to three tablespoons of finely grated fresh ginger will equal one tablespoon of dry ginger.
- “White” or light gingerbread is usually made with maple syrup. It can also be made with brown sugar or corn syrup.
- The easiest way to peel ginger is to scrape the skin off with the edge of a spoon.
- For the best presentation, remove the cake from the pan, trim the edges, and use a ruler to make straight, uniform cuts.
- If you line the pan with parchment paper or foil, you can grab the edges of the paper and lift the cake from the pan.

## Traditional Gingerbread

Traditional gingerbread is made with spices—most notably, ginger—and molasses. It's the ginger and molasses that are the most pronounced. Cut back on the ginger and use a light molasses for a mildly flavored cake that even the kids will adore.

Top the gingerbread with sweetened whipped cream or a sauce of your choosing. (Check out recipes for sauces.)

This cake can be made in a rectangular pan or a round springform pan. The gingerbread shown was made in a ten-inch springform pan with a glass base. (Learn more about these springform pans.)



### Ingredients

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
2 teaspoons ground ginger  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/8 teaspoon ground mace  
1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup butter  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 large egg  
1/2 cup molasses

1 cup buttermilk

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Grease a 10-inch springform pan or a 9 x 9-inch square pan.
2. Mix the flour, soda, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, mace, and salt together in a medium bowl. Set aside.
3. Cream the butter with the brown sugar. Add the egg and beat until light and airy. Add the molasses.
4. Starting with the flour mixture, add the flour and buttermilk to the creamed mixture in three or four additions beating just until combined with the mixer on lowest speed. Do not over mix.
5. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top, and bake for 30 to 40 minutes or until done. The top should spring back when lightly touched and toothpick or skewer should come out clean when inserted in the center of the cake.

6. Let cool for 20 minutes in the pan on a rack. Serve with sweetened whipped cream or a sauce of your choosing.

## Light Gingerbread

Light or “white” ginger bread is milder in flavor and lighter—but not white—in color. The amount of ginger is reduced and instead of molasses, brown sugar or maple syrup is used for a sweetener. This recipe uses maple syrup.

### Ingredients

2 2/3 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
2 teaspoons ground ginger  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/2 teaspoon salt

1 cup butter  
3/4 cup granulated sugar  
1 large egg  
1/2 cup maple syrup

1 cup buttermilk

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Grease a 9 x 13-inch rectangular pan.
2. Mix the flour, soda, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and salt together in a medium bowl. Set aside.
3. Cream the butter with the sugar. Add the egg and beat until light and airy. Add the maple syrup.
4. Starting with the flour mixture, add the flour and buttermilk to the creamed mixture in three or four additions beating just until combined with the mixer on lowest speed. Do not over mix.
5. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top, and bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until done. The top should spring back when lightly touched and toothpick or skewer should come out clean when inserted in the center of the cake.
6. Let cool for 20 minutes in the pan on a rack. Serve with sweetened whipped cream or a sauce of your choosing.



## Pumpkin Gingerbread

Pumpkin is warm and earthy and mellow. So is gingerbread. The two together make a wonderful combination and the pumpkin makes the cake very moist. This is a mildly spicy cake with less ginger and molasses.

The cake in the picture is topped with homemade marshmallow cream.

Baker's note: For a treat kids all ages will enjoy, split the gingerbread and make a gingerbread-marshmallow cream sandwich.



### Ingredients

2 2/3 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
2 teaspoons ground ginger  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup butter  
3/4 cup granulated sugar  
2 large eggs  
1 16 ounce can of puréed pumpkin

1/3 cup molasses  
1/3 cup buttermilk

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Grease a 9 x 13-inch rectangular pan.
2. Mix the flour, soda, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and salt together in a medium bowl. Set aside.
3. Cream the butter with the sugar. Add the egg and beat until light and airy. Add the pumpkin.
4. Add one-third the flour mixture, then the molasses, then one-third the flour, then the buttermilk, and then the rest of the flour mixture, beating just until combined with the mixer on lowest speed. Do not over mix.
5. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top, and bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until done. The top should spring back when lightly touched and toothpick or skewer should come out clean when inserted in the center of the cake.
6. Let cool for 20 minutes in the pan on a rack.



## Skillet Gingerbread Upside-down Cake

We think you will love this version of the old favorite—pineapple upside down cake. Ginger complements the sweetness of pineapple very nicely.

This recipe is designed for a ten-inch skillet or frying pan but any ten-inch baking dish will do. It can also be made in a 9 x 9-inch square baking pan.

As for the spice level, this is a mid-range recipe—not as robust as Traditional Gingerbread or quite as mild as Light Gingerbread. We think it works perfectly with the pineapple.



### Ingredients

For the pineapple layer (which goes on the bottom of the pan)

1/2 cup brown sugar  
1/3 butter  
2/3 cup pecan halves or pieces (optional)  
1 20-ounce can of pineapple rings (you will use about half of the can)  
maraschino cherries

For the cake

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 tablespoons baking soda  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

1/3 cup butter  
1/3 cup brown sugar  
1 large egg  
1/4 cup molasses

3/4 cup buttermilk

## Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. You will need a deep 10-inch skillet or a 9 x 9-inch square pan.

1. If you are making this in a skillet, heat and stir the brown sugar and butter together over medium heat until the butter is melted, the sugar is dissolved, and a slurry is formed. Set aside. If you are going to bake the dessert in a baking pan, make the slurry in a small saucepan and transfer the slurry to a baking pan.
2. Sprinkle pecans in the slurry. Place six or seven pineapple rings in the slurry. Add maraschino cherries in the center of each ring.
3. Mix the flour, soda, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves together in a medium bowl. Set aside.
4. Cream the butter with the brown sugar. Add the egg and beat until light and airy. Add the molasses.
5. Starting with the flour mixture, add the flour and buttermilk to the creamed mixture in three or four additions beating just until combined with the mixer on lowest speed. Do not over mix.
6. Spoon the batter onto the slurry in the pan, smooth the top, and bake for 25 to 35 minutes or until done. The top should spring back when lightly touched and toothpick or skewer should come out clean when inserted in the center of the cake.
7. Immediately invert the pan onto a serving platter so that the pineapple rings are up. Serve warm.

## Gingerbread Pancakes

We've been intrigued by gingerbread pancakes for some time. We checked out several recipes, did a little experimenting, and this is the recipe that we ended up with. These pancakes work fine with maple syrup but our favorite is our blueberry syrup.



### Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
2 teaspoons ground ginger  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/3 cup molasses crystals  
2 large eggs  
1 cup sour cream  
1/4 cup melted butter  
1 cup milk (plus more as needed for the right consistency—about 1 1/2 cups)

Note: Instead of molasses crystals, you may use the same amount of liquid molasses. Do not use blackstrap or other strong-tasting molasses.

### Directions

1. In a medium bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and spices until well-dispersed.
2. In a large bowl, mix the molasses, eggs, sour cream, melted butter, and milk. Let the mixture sit for a minute to soften the molasses crystals and then stir until they are dissolved.
3. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir until the two are just combined, adding more milk if needed. Some lumps will remain.
4. Cook on a very hot griddle.

## Sauces and Creams—Not Just for Gingerbread

Sauces and Cream are wonderful complements for gingerbreads but they also work on other cakes and desserts. Since they are quicker and easier than frosting, you can make a scrumptious, even sophisticated, dessert on your busiest days.

### To make sauces from fruits:

1. Use fresh, frozen, or canned fruit. Puree the fruit in a blender or press it through a sieve. The sieve will remove most of the seeds from strawberries or raspberries.
2. Mix the fruit with sugar to taste. To thicken the fruit sauce, add a tablespoon of cornstarch and cook, stirring often, until the starch gelatinizes. Thin with water if necessary.

### To make sauces from jams or preserves:

1. Dilute the jam with a little water or syrup. Press it through a sieve.
2. Adjust the consistency with the methods described above.

Often, you can enhance your fruit sauce with spices or a little lemon juice.

Sauces need to be stir frequently, scraping the bottom of the pan, to keep from scorching. We think a bell-shaped whisk is essential for making sauces.

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### Lemon Sauce

1/3 cup lemon juice  
1/3 cup water  
2/3 cup granulated sugar  
zest from two lemons  
1 1/2 tablespoon cornstarch  
1/4 cup water  
4 tablespoons butter

1. Combine the 1/3 lemon juice, 1/3 cup water, and granulated sugar in a saucepan. Heat and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the zest.
2. Mix the cornstarch in a cup with the 1/4 cup water until it is dissolved. Add that the saucepan.
3. Cook until bubbling and thickened. Remove from the heat and add the butter.



## Orange Marmalade Sauce

This is a great orange sauce that is particularly good on gingerbread but works well on pancakes, waffles, and ice cream.

3/4 cup sugar  
1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1 1/4 cups orange juice  
3 tablespoons butter  
1/2 cup water  
1 tablespoon grated orange peel

Mix the sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan. Add the juice, butter, and water and bring to a boil, stirring as needed. Add the orange peel.

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## Easy Orange Sauce

3/4 cup sugar  
3 tablespoons cornstarch  
1 1/4 cups orange juice  
3/4 cup water  
1 tablespoon grated orange peel

Mix the sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan. Add the juice and water and bring to a boil, stirring as needed. Add the orange peel.

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## Caramel Sauce

1/2 cup butter  
1 3/4 cup brown sugar  
1 teaspoon cornstarch  
1 cup evaporated milk  
1 teaspoon rum or vanilla flavor

1. Melt the butter in a saucepan. Stir in the sugar, cornstarch and milk.
  2. Heat until bubbling and thickened. Remove from the heat and add the flavoring.
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## Cinnamon Peach Sauce

8 to 10 ounces of frozen peach slices  
1/4 cup water

1/4 cup granulated sugar  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
2 tablespoons cup water  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1. Combine the frozen peach slices and water in a saucepan. Add the sugar. Heat and stir until the sugar is dissolved.
2. Mix the cornstarch into a cup with the lemon juice and two tablespoons water until it is dissolved. Add that the saucepan.
3. Heat until bubbling and thickened. Remove from the heat and add the cinnamon.

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### Homemade Marshmallow Cream

For a treat kids all ages will enjoy, split the gingerbread and make a gingerbread-marshmallow cream sandwich.

3 large egg whites  
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar  
2 tablespoons granulated sugar

1/3 cup water  
3/4 cup light corn syrup  
2/3 cup granulated sugar  
1/2 tablespoon vanilla extract



1. In a very clean glass or metal bowl, beat the egg whites and cream of tartar until light and foamy. With the mixer still running, sprinkle in the two tablespoons of sugar. Continue beating until soft peaks form. Set aside.
2. In a small saucepan, mix the water, corn syrup, and granulated sugar together. Cook over medium heat until it boils and comes to the firm ball stage (246 degrees). Do not overcook.
3. Drizzle the hot syrup into the egg whites with the mixer running on low. Turn the mixer to high and beat for five or six minutes or until the sauce is very fluffy and the consistency of marshmallow cream. Beat in the extract.

Note: This cream is of the consistency that it can be piped as you would frosting.

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### Cherry or Strawberry Marshmallow Cream

For a treat kids all ages will enjoy, split the gingerbread and make a gingerbread-marshmallow cream sandwich.

3 large egg whites  
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

1/3 cup water

3/4 cup light corn syrup

2/3 cup granulated sugar

2 or 3 drops of red food coloring

1 teaspoon strawberry or cherry extract or liqueur

1. In a very clean glass or metal bowl, beat the egg whites and cream of tartar until light and foamy. With the mixer still running, sprinkle in the two tablespoons of sugar. Continue beating until soft peaks form. Set aside.

2. In a small saucepan, mix the water, corn syrup, and granulated sugar together. Cook over medium heat until it boils and comes to the firm ball stage (246 degrees). Do not overcook.

3. Drizzle the hot syrup into the egg whites with the mixer running on low. Turn the mixer to high and beat for five or six minutes or until the sauce is very fluffy and the consistency of marshmallow cream. Beat in the food coloring and extract.

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## **Raspberry Whipped Cream**

1 1/2 cups individually frozen raspberries

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 tablespoons sugar free raspberry jam (optional)

2 cups whipping cream

1/4 powdered sugar

1. Combine the frozen raspberries and sugar in a saucepan. Heat and stir until the sugar is dissolved, the berries are soft, the mixture begins to simmer. Strain the mixture to remove the seeds. Add the raspberry jam. Chill in the refrigerator.

2. In a chilled bowl, whip the berry mixture, whipping cream, and powdered sugar together until soft peaks form.

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