THE CURLY CHEF · SIGNATURE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

Eggless Christmas Gingerbread Cookies

Deeply spiced, buttery gingerbread with caramel notes, crisp edges and a tender centre — finished with delicate eggless royal icing.

YIELD	THICKNESS	OVEN	BAKE TIME
25–30 medium	5–6 mm	170°C conventional	10–13 minutes

Recipe character

This formula is designed for rolled, cut-out gingerbread cookies. Dark molasses or dark treacle gives the cookies their characteristic deep colour and bittersweet caramel flavour. Ginger leads the spice profile, supported by cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, cardamom and a trace of black pepper.

Ingredient note: Use unsulphured dark molasses for the most traditional flavour. Dark treacle is the preferred substitute if molasses is unavailable. Honey or golden syrup will produce a different flavour and dough behaviour.

1. Ingredients — gingerbread dough

Ingredient	Weight	Notes
Refined flour (maida)	250 g	Sift before use.
Unsalted butter	100 g	Softened, not melted.
Dark brown sugar	100 g	Break up hard lumps.
Dark molasses / treacle	75 g	Room temperature.
Milk	25 g	Add gradually; stop when dough comes together.
Cornflour	15 g	Contributes to a tender bite.
Baking soda	3 g	Weigh accurately.
Fine salt	2 g	Balances sweetness.
Vanilla extract	4 g	Pure extract preferred.
Ground ginger	5 g	Main spice note.
Ground cinnamon	3 g	Warm sweetness.
Ground nutmeg	0.5 g	Use sparingly.
Ground cloves	0.5 g	Potent; do not increase casually.
Ground cardamom	0.5 g	Adds aromatic lift.
Finely ground black pepper	0.2 g	Subtle background warmth.

2. Method — making the dough

Step 1 · Prepare the dry mix

Sift the flour, cornflour, baking soda and salt into a bowl. Add the ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom and black pepper. Whisk thoroughly so the raising agent and spices are evenly distributed. Set aside.

Step 2 · Cream butter and sugar by hand

Place the softened butter and dark brown sugar in a separate bowl. Using a sturdy silicone spatula or wooden spoon, press and smear the mixture against the side of the bowl for 2–3 minutes, scraping as needed. Aim for a smooth, cohesive and creamy mixture. Do not whip until very pale or excessively fluffy; excess incorporated air can encourage spreading.

Step 3 · Add molasses and vanilla

Add the molasses and vanilla. Mix until the colour is even and the mixture looks glossy. Scrape the base and sides of the bowl to remove any streaks.

Step 4 · Bring the dough together

Add the dry ingredients in two additions, folding with a silicone spatula after each. Add the milk gradually, mixing only until the flour is absorbed and a cohesive dough forms. The dough should be soft and pliable, not wet or pourable. Stop as soon as no dry pockets remain. If it comes together before all the milk is added, do not force in the remainder.

Step 5 · Divide, roll and chill

Divide the dough into two portions. Place each between two sheets of baking parchment and roll evenly to 5–6 mm. Slide the sheets onto a flat tray and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, until firm. Chilling the rolled dough makes shapes easier to cut cleanly and helps limit spreading.

Step 6 · Cut the shapes

Preheat a conventional oven to 170°C. Remove the top parchment sheet. Cut gingerbread men, Christmas trees, stars, snowflakes or other shapes, placing cutters close together to minimise scraps. Lift away excess dough carefully. Re-roll scraps once if needed, chilling again if they soften. Transfer cut-outs to a parchment-lined tray with about 3 cm between cookies. Chill the cut-outs on the tray for a further 15 minutes.

Step 7 · Bake

Bake medium cookies for approximately 10–12 minutes at 170°C. Smaller cookies may need 9–10 minutes; larger shapes may need 12–13 minutes. The edges should look set while the centres may still feel slightly soft. Avoid waiting for the centres to become hard in the oven; the cookies firm as they cool.

Step 8 · Cool completely

Leave cookies on the tray for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack. Cool completely before decorating. Warm cookies can soften the royal icing and cause loss of definition.

3. Eggless royal icing

This icing uses aquafaba (the liquid from a tin of chickpeas) instead of egg white. It can be adjusted for outlining and fine decorative piping.

Ingredient	Weight
Icing sugar, sifted	150 g
Aquafaba	25 g
Lemon juice	2 g
Vanilla extract	1 g

Royal icing method

Use a clean, grease-free bowl. Whisk the aquafaba by hand until lightly foamy. Add the sifted icing sugar in 2–3 additions, mixing slowly. Add lemon juice and vanilla. Continue whisking until smooth, glossy and thick enough to hold a soft peak. Scrape the bowl thoroughly.

Outlining: Keep the icing thick enough to hold a defined line. **Flooding:** Transfer a portion to a separate small bowl and add water a few drops at a time until it flows smoothly and settles back into itself. Keep the main batch thicker if you also need firm piping consistency.

Piping and drying: Fill a piping bag fitted with a fine round tip. Pipe outlines, buttons, facial details, tree garlands or snowflake patterns onto completely cooled cookies. Allow the icing to dry uncovered until the surface is firm. Drying time depends on humidity and decoration thickness. Do not stack or package until fully dry.

4. Professional checkpoints & troubleshooting

Issue	Likely cause	Correction
Cookies spread	Dough too warm; butter too soft; excessive creaming.	Chill rolled dough and cut-outs thoroughly. Cream only until smooth.
Dough cracks while rolling	Dough is very cold or firm.	Let it stand briefly at room temperature, then roll between parchment.
Dough is sticky	Too warm or too much liquid added.	Chill before handling. Add milk gradually; do not add flour automatically.
Cookies are too hard	Overbaking or dough rolled too thin.	Use 5–6 mm thickness and remove when edges are set.
Icing lines spread	Icing too thin or cookies not fully cool.	Thicken with sifted icing sugar; decorate only fully cooled cookies.
Icing is difficult to pipe	Icing too stiff.	Adjust with a few drops of water and test on parchment.

5. Finishing, storage & service

Finishing ideas

For a refined Christmas collection, keep the decoration restrained: fine white royal-icing outlines, small buttons, delicate tree garlands and symmetrical snowflake details. An optional variation is to add about 2 g finely grated orange zest to the dough; it pairs well with ginger and molasses but is not part of the base formula.

Storage

Item	Storage guidance
Undecorated, cooled cookies	Store airtight in a cool, dry place. Best quality is generally maintained for around 3–4 weeks.
Decorated cookies	Once icing is completely dry, store in a rigid airtight container with parchment between layers. Aim to use within 2–3 weeks for best quality.
Unbaked dough	Wrap airtight and refrigerate for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 2 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before rolling.

Service note: Keep cookies away from humidity, heat and direct sunlight. Package only after the icing has dried completely. Do not seal cookies while warm.

6. Production checklist

Before baking: weigh ingredients accurately; prepare the spice blend; soften butter without melting it; line trays; preheat the oven; and allow sufficient chilling time.

Before decorating: confirm cookies are completely cool; use a clean, grease-free bowl for icing; prepare separate piping and flooding consistencies if needed; test piping on parchment; and allow decorated cookies to dry fully before packing.

THE CURLY CHEF

Handcrafted pastry. Thoughtful technique. Beautiful flavour.

Recipe note: Baking times vary with cookie size, tray material and individual oven performance. Use visual cues and a test cookie when baking a new batch. This recipe is eggless; the royal icing uses aquafaba rather than egg white.