

# Gingerbread Three Ways

Lady Ysabel de la Oya

I chose to make three gingerbreads with very different profiles (although they are all English)- one sugar & almond based, one honey based, and one wine based. One is fourteenth century and two are Elizabethan.

In medieval England the word gingerbread could mean any preserved ginger, eventually coming to mean ginger flavored cakes.

In the fourteenth century , gingerbread would usually fall into two categories: confection and cake like. The confection like gingerbreads were more usual

It would be found as a treat in fairs and festivals. In the home, it would be made to show off wealth- and would be given to the best guests. Gingerbread could often also be medicinal, and used to aide in digestion. It would also be pressed into impressive molds or loaves of gingerbread would be stamped with designs.

For the two recipes that called for breadcrumbs, I made my own. Several days in advance I made a basic lean bread- just flour, water, yeast and salt. The day before making the gingerbread, I tore the bread into chunks and dried the in the oven. Right before making the gingerbread I ground the bread into crumbs in the food processor. I ended up using one of half of the loaves.



## 14th Century English Gingerbread

This version is the earliest of the three and is found in Curye on Inglysch in section V: Goode Kokery. It is my favorite off the three, and is also the simplest to prepare.

Period recipe: To make gingerbrede. Take goode honye & clarefie it on þe fere, & take fayre paynemayn or wastel brede & grate it, & caste it into þe boylenge hony, & stere it well togyder faste with a sklyse þat it bren not to þe vessell. & þanne take it down and put þerin ginger, longe pepere & saundres, &

tempere it vp with þin handes; & than put hem to a flatt boyste & strawe þereon suger & pick þerin cloues rounde aboute by þe egge and in þe mydes yf it plece you

Modern Translation: Take good honey & clarify it on the fire, & take bread or leftover bread & add it to the boiling honey, & stir it well so it doesn't burn, & take it off the heat and add ginger, long pepper & sandalwood, & mix it well & then put it in a flat pan & sprinkle with sugar, & put cloves round about by the edge and in the middle if it please you

In my redaction I substituted long pepper for white pepper and sandalwood for cinnamon, mostly because of access to ingredients.

Redaction:

2 cups honey

3½ cups bread crumbs

5 tsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp white pepper

½ tsp cloves

Boil (and clarify if needed) honey and add ginger, cinnamon, white pepper, and cloves. (I used clean honey from the grocery store, so I didn't really need to clarify it.) Add bread crumbs slowly and stir until mixture is well incorporated. Once it is cool enough to handle roll out and cut into desired shapes.



## Elizabethan Red Ginger-Bread (Leach-lumbar)

In A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen two different versions- a red and a white. This is the red version. To me, it is the most fragrant version.

Period Recipe: Grate and dry two stale Manchets, either by the fire, or in an Ouen, sift them through a Sieue, and put to it Cinamon, Ginger, Sugar, Liquorice, Anis-seed; when you haue mingled bread, and stirre it, that it be as thicke as a Hastie-pudding; then take it out, and coole it, and mould it with Cinnamon, Ginger, Liquorice, and Anise-seede, and rowle it thinne, and print with your mould, and dry it in a warm Ouen.

Modern Translation: Grate and dry two stale Manchets, either by the fire, or in an oven, sift them through a sieve, and put to it cinnamon, ginger, sugar, liquorice, anise seed; when you have mingled bread, and stir it, that it be as thick as a Hastie-pudding; then take it out, and cool it, and mould it with Cinnamon, Ginger, Liquorice, and anise seed, and roll it thin, and print with your mould, and dry it in a warm oven.

In my redaction I chose to leave out the liquorice. I just don't like it.

Redaction:

3 cups red wine

3 cups bread crumbs

1 tbsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp ground anise seed

water

In bowl combine bread crumbs and spices.

Bring wine to a boil keep it there for at least 5 min, then keep at a simmer for 5 mins. Add enough hot water to the wine to bring the liquid volume back up to 3 cups. Stir in bread and spice mixture. Let stand long enough to cool roll out and cut out desired shapes. Dry in a warm oven until set and dry.

## Elizabethan White Ginger-Bread

This recipe was also found in [A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen.](#)

To me, this was the most complicated of the three, and the biggest challenge to me.

Period Recipes: Take halfe a pound of March-pane-Past made with Almonds, Rose-water and Sugar, and a spoonful of Aqua vita, season it very hot with Ginger, mould it vp stiffe, rowle it thin, and print it with your moulds.

To make march-pane Paste: Cearse the finest and whitest sugar, to every third spoonfull therof take a blanchcht Iordane Almond, stampe them in a smooth mortar, and now and then put in two or three drops of Rose-water. It must be extreemely much beaten before it wil be a perfect past, at the least an houre.

Modern translation: Period Recipes: Take halfe a pound of marchpane made with almonds, rosewater and sugar, and a spoonful of Aqua vita, season it very hot with Ginger, mould it stiff, roll it thin, and print it with your molds.

To make marchpane: Add the finest and whitest sugar, to every third spoonful thereof take a blanched Jordan Almond, stampe them in a smooth mortar, and now and then put in two or three drops of Rose-water. It must be extremely much beaten before it will be a perfect past, at the least an hour.

In my redaction I chose to use amaretto in place of Aqua vita- which as far as I can tell is some kind of whiskey. I chose amaretto to enhance the almond flavor in the dish.

#### Redaction

8oz blanched slivered almonds

8oz white sugar

2 tbsp ginger

1 tbsp amaretto

1 tbsp water

1½ tsp rose water

¼ tsp salt

Grind the almonds in a food processor then add the sugar, ginger, and salt. When very well mixed, blend in the amaretto, water, and rose water. Turn mixture out into a bowl and mix well- the best tool now being very clean hands. Once it is a paste (although mine was chunky) roll it out and cut into shapes.



## Sources

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