

### Soft Gingerbread (1891)

This recipe is one of several gingerbread variations in *The Club Cook Book*, published by the Young Ladies' McAll Club in Newton, Massachusetts in 1891. We reduced the quantity and adapted the recipe for modern cooks.

Makes 16 squares of gingerbread

2 cups flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1 heaping teaspoon powdered ginger  
2/3 cup molasses  
1/3 cup light cream  
1 egg, lightly beaten  
1/3 cup butter, melted and slightly cooled

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Butter an 8-inch-square baking pan.
2. In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking soda, and ginger.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the molasses, cream, egg, and butter until well blended.
4. Add the molasses mixture to the flour mixture and stir just to combine.
5. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 15-20 minutes, or until a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool before cutting into squares.

Original recipe:

Six cupfuls of flour, three of molasses, one of cream, one of lard or butter (if lard use salt), two eggs, one teaspoonful of saleratus and two of ginger. (*Note: There were no baking directions listed, a common practice in cookbooks from that time period.*)

### Gingerbread Cakes (1796)

This recipe from *American Cookery*, which many consider America's first cookbook, produces crisp cookies rather than soft gingerbread.

Makes about 32 cookies

3 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg

1 1/2 tablespoons ground ginger

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter

1 large egg

3/4 teaspoon baking powder dissolved in 2 tablespoons heavy cream

1. Preheat the oven to 350°.
2. Mix together the flour, nutmeg, and ginger (use a strong variety such as Frontier brand), and set aside.
3. Using a mixer, cream the butter and sugar; mix in the egg.
4. In a measuring cup, dissolve the baking powder in the cream.
5. Add the flour mixture to the creamed butter and sugar, then added in the cream/ baking powder and run the mixer just until the dough comes together. You can also mix the dough by hand; do not overmix. (It will be somewhat dry and crumbly).
6. Pinch off pieces of dough and roll into round cakes about 1 inch in diameter. Place them about 2 inches apart on greased or Silpat-lined baking sheets (16 cookies per sheet). Bake until slightly browned on the edges, about 15 minutes.
7. Remove from the oven and cool for about 10 minutes before serving. Or let them cool completely and serve plain or with tea.

Original recipe:

#### **Gingerbread Cakes, or Butter and Sugar Gingerbread**

Three pounds of flour, a grated nutmeg, two ounces ginger, one pound sugar, three small spoons pearl ash dissolved in cream, one pound butter, four eggs, knead it stiff, shape it to your fancy, bake 15 minutes.

Recipe from *American Cookery* (1796, Hartford, Conn.), by Amelia Simmons; adaptation from Keith Stavelly and Kathleen Fitzgerald, authors of *America's Founding Food* and *Northern Hospitality*