

Moulded Gingerbreads – Ryedale Folk Museum

450g (1lb) flour

225g (8oz) treacle

50g (2oz) brown sugar

50g (2oz) lard

1 tsp each of ground coriander, caraway, cinnamon, and allspice

3 tsp of ground ginger.

1. Line a 12cm (5 inch) square tin with greased greaseproof paper, and tie a few layers of paper around the base and sides of the tin to provide extra insulation.
2. Mix the dry ingredients, rub in the lard, and stir in the warmed treacle, then knead it to form a very short, crumbly mix.
3. Press the mixture very hard down into the tin (the old bakers used to put a board on top and stand on it) and either smooth the top, or decorate it. Some families used to decorate the top by impressing it with overlapping prints from the rim of an egg cup.
4. Bake at 130C, 250F, gas mark 1-2 for 1 – 1 ½ hours. Store for a few weeks in a cold, damp room before using.

To mould the gingerbread, the mixture was traditionally packed in a wooden box or frame reinforced with a sheet iron base or corners. A mould carved either in wood or in stone was then placed on top and the whole lifted down onto the floor, so that it could be firmly stamped underfoot to produce a really clear print. The mould was then removed, leaving the gingerbread inside its wooden frame, which now served as an insulated baking tin while it cooked in the oven. The most popular designs featured crude versions of the royal arms, but others bore geometric patterns, owls, or sprays of holly, mistletoe and the Christmas goose appropriate to the season.