

Faux-Gingerbread Nativity



Time-savvy parents have missed all the fun of gingerbread house decoration --until now! Have the fun without the frustration with our Faux Gingerbread Nativity!

- ~ Make a Beautifully decorated Nativity, complete with Mary and Joseph, baby Jesus and animal cracker animals.
- ~Construct it with faux-gingerbread. See below.

What you'll need:

1. Foil-covered base on which to display your Nativity
2. Sturdy cardboard, enough to cut out Nativity pieces
3. One box (14.4 oz.) Graham Crackers
4. Some gadget to "pipe" icing onto structure (cake decorating bag and tips, or cylindrical easy-push type)
5. Powdered sugar (buy 1 pound. You'll need at least 3 cups.)
6. Cream of tarter
7. Egg whites
8. Your choice of Candies:

Neccos make nice faces

Roofing materials: Round crackers, non-parils for shingles, or Shredded Wheat and carmel corn for "thatched roof" look
Rock candies work well--choose smaller ones as they are heavy.

Corn Candy, m&m's, sprinkles, raisins, nuts, craisins, gumdrops..let your imagination soar!

If you want to draw in a face, black "writing" icing tubes are handy.

9. A camera to preserve the memory.

How to make a Faux Gingerbread Nativity

1. Trace the Nativity pieces (page 58-59 in *Fun Family Christmas Devotions*, or at end of this article) onto your cardboard. Piece together your basic Nativity stall shape. You can even duct-tape it together! Before applying your tape, consider:

2. If you plan to eat the creation later, cover your structure with aluminum foil. If you plan to put a votive candle inside, cover the inside also with foil. Tape it sturdily together.



3. Set out graham crackers to fit under the Nativity Front pattern. Place the paper pattern over them and mark the edges with a felt-tip pen. With a saw-tooth knife, gently saw them into proper shape to be "siding."



4. Make your "icing glue." Spread or pipe some icing-glue on your structure and glue graham crackers to foil-covered base. "Glue" cracker seams, especially where you want to apply candy.

Icing Glue

3 egg whites

1 1/2 teaspoons cream of tartar

3 - 3 1/2 cups powdered sugar

In a large bowl, beat the egg whites until they begin to foam. Add the cream of tartar and beat until the whites are stiff but not dry. Gradually beat in the icing sugar, beating for about 5 minutes until it reaches spreading consistency. Keep it covered and refrigerated until needed.

This recipe was enough for the house pictured above. It dries very quickly and is like cement. If you are not actively using it, keep it well covered with plastic wrap. If you decorate the back or inside of house, you'll need a second batch of icing.

5. Place structure on its side to decorate the front first. Apply icing to structure and stick on the graham crackers you have pre-cut. Add a bead of icing to seams and edges. Now comes the fun!



6. Pipe icing wherever you want to plant candy-decorations. Push candies into icing-glue. Once it dries, they should stay put!

7. While this is drying, apply icing and graham crackers to the sides. Decorate and allow to dry for at least 1 hour. Cover remaining icing (plastic-touching icing) until ready to do the roof.

8. When you're convinced the decorations are "cemented" in place, set your structure right side up onto the foil-covered base (probably plywood.) Icing-glue it toward the back of the plywood so the family can be displayed in front of it. Apply decorations where the structure meets the base.



9. Apply "shingles" starting at the lowest end (like any good roofer) overlapping them as you proceed up the roof.

10. You're almost done! If you want to decorate the back, go for it.

11. Now you'll be making Mary and Joseph, the manger and baby Jesus figures.



Joseph: Glue 2 long graham crackers back-to-back for sturdiness. Reinforce a round cracker by spreading icing-glue on its back side. Glue it as pictured, for the hood of Joseph's cloak, and glue a smaller round Necco or similar candy for his face. Chocolate sprinkles will make a nice beard and hair.



Joseph, con't.

Pipe icing arms and hands to give him texture. Decorate his robe. To enable him to stand up, cut a graham cracker into quarters. Glue the pieces behind the base of his robe, making sure the bottom edge is even.



Mary is kneeling, so she needs a half-graham cracker for the main part of her body, and, like Joseph, a round cracker or candy headgear and smaller face.

To create her kneeling posture, gently saw a square cracker in half, diagonally with a serrated knife. Glue the cracker to the back side of the square, making a straight line at the base.



Glue a few more diagonally-sliced crackers behind this to allow her to kneel upright. Pipe on her arms and hands with icing.



Decorate her clothing.

The manger: Cut a graham cracker into quarters. Glue two of them, one on top of the other, for the manger base. Center a half-cracker square on top of these and glue it on. Glue "hay" (shredded wheat or pretzels for example) onto the manger.

Baby Jesus: Glue the two remaining quarters of graham cracker together to form the small body. Add a Necco face, and generously pipe on his icing "swaddling clothes." Allow it all to dry thoroughly.



Place the family in front of the creche.



Enlarge pattern.

Cut 2 along heavy lines for front and back of Nativity.

Width of
Graham Cracker

For front, cut out the arched entrance.
Star cut-out is optional.

Make sides and roof "1 graham cracker"
in width.

