



Gingerbread biscuits first appeared in England in the 1500s, when they were sold in monasteries, pharmacies and markets. Earlier recipes were much spicier than those we use today, often including mustard or pepper as well as ground ginger. The word 'gingerbread' stems from the old French word *gingebras*, itself an adaptation of the Latin *zingiber*, meaning preserved ginger. Try this old-fashioned gingerbread recipe and see if you can taste the difference!

### 17th Century Gingerbread Recipe

#### INGREDIENTS

8 oz fresh white breadcrumbs  
1 tsp ground ginger  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp aniseed  
1 tsp ground liquorice  
1 oz brown sugar  
¼ pint red wine

#### METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Dry the breadcrumbs in the oven, taking care not to brown them. Tip the breadcrumbs into a saucepan along with the other ingredients.

Over a gentle heat, work the mixture in the pan with a wooden spoon until it forms a stiff dough. Dust a wooden board with a little ground ginger and cinnamon, then turn the dough out and roll it to about ¼ inch thick.

Use your favourite festive cookie cutters to cut the dough into small biscuits. Bake the gingerbread in the oven for about 10-12 minutes, until nicely golden.

This recipe is adapted from an early 17th century recipe for gingerbread biscuits published in Sir Hugh Platt's *Delights for Ladies* in 1608.