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# Love in the Kitchen

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From the time I was five, I loved the aromas of baking in my mother's kitchen. There was the smell of yeasty bread rising, of molasses cookies baking, and sometimes there were fruit pies hot out of the oven or warm gingerbread waiting to be cut. The days leading up to both Thanksgiving and Christmas were filled with all my siblings sitting around the kitchen table, dipping our fingers into cookie batter, rolling dough and cutting out cookies, or slicing apples and filling piecrusts.

These were lovely days spent learning from my mother. We sat around our kitchen table, my sisters, brothers and I with rolling pins, cookie cutters and decorations, sometimes covering ourselves in flour from head to toe. We used Redhots for buttons on the gingerbread men. And when they came out of the oven we clamored to be the first to taste one. I remember my mother as patient and calm while we happily made a huge mess.

It was in this kitchen that I learned the impact that love has on food. This awareness was strengthened during my time spent in other kitchens through the years. Some kitchens were large, feeding more than a hundred and many were small and intimate. But in each, when thankfulness, respect and caring were

expressed, both the ingredients and those doing the cooking glowed with the outward manifestations of this love.

I believe that food prepared with love has a different flavor. The simplest of meals turns into a nutritious feast when a loving mind and hand prepares it and brings it to the table. Our health begins with the intimate, considerate preparing of our food. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich made with thankfulness and kindness, or a five-course meal caringly created for friends and family, expresses love in the kitchen and spreads like a flame from our own hands and heart outward to our bodies and to others.

Love in the kitchen creates an energetic atmosphere that is palpable when a friend enters our home to share tea or a meal. It changes the songs of the pots and pans as they simmer on the stove. It allows our utensils and dishes to become old favorite friends that share our lives. It changes the breath of the apple pie as we remove it from the oven. Love in the kitchen changes the energy in which we knead, bake, make soup and share with those around us. It changes our lives.

This year as the holiday season approaches I look



forward to hauling out my apron and rolling pin, to accepting invitations, taking treats to share and to filling the kitchen with love.

The gingerbread men recipe from my childhood is below. I still have the recipe my mother typed on an index card using a manual typewriter that you had to push hard on the keys to make them strike properly.

### Gingerbread Men

#### Sift together

- 2 cup flour
- 1 tsp. double-acting baking pdr.
- ¼ tsp. soda
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ginger

**Heat** – ½ c. butter and ½ c. molasses in large saucepan over low heat just until butter melts

**Add** – the dry ingredients plus 2 Tbls. hot tap water  
Stir until blended. Chill thoroughly, at least 1 hour

**Knead** – or “work” chilled dough into a ball on lightly floured board. Roll out to about 1/8” thickness. Cut as desired.

**Add if desired** – Redhots for eyes and buttons

**Bake** in moderately hot oven (400°) 8 to 10 min.  
– maybe less time and lower temperature in your locality.

(Yields 1 dozen 6” gingerbread men or 3 ½ dozen 2” cookies.) €

