

## **GINGERBREAD COOKIES**

### ***The Cooks Next Door***

3 c. flour  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1 1/2 tsp. ground ginger  
1 tsp. ground allspice  
3/4 tsp. ground cloves  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/4 tsp. freshly milled black pepper  
2 sticks unsalted butter, softened  
1/4 c. vegetable shortening, at room temperature  
1/2 c. packed light brown sugar  
2/3 c. unsulfured molasses  
1 large egg

Position the racks in the top and bottom thirds of the oven and preheat to 350 degrees F.

Combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, allspice, cloves, salt and pepper into a medium bowl. Set aside.

In a large mixer, beat the butter and vegetable shortening until well-combined, about 1 minute. Add the brown sugar and beat until the mixture is light in texture and color, about 2 minutes. Beat in the molasses and egg. Gradually mix in the flour mixture to make a stiff dough. Divide the dough into two thick disks and wrap each disk in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until chilled - at least 3 hours. (The dough can be prepared up to 2 days ahead.)

To roll out the cookies, remove the dough from the refrigerator and let stand at room temperature until just warm enough to roll out without cracking, about 10 minutes. Place the dough on a lightly floured work surface and sprinkle the top of the dough with flour. Roll out the dough 1/8 inch thick, being sure that the dough isn't sticking to the work surface (run a long meal spatula or knife under the dough occasionally just to be sure, and dust the surface with more flour, if needed). For softer cookies, roll out slightly thicker (about 1/4 inch or a little less). Using cookie cutters cut out the cookies and transfer to nonstick cookie sheets, placing the cookies 1 inch apart. Gently knead the scraps together and form into another disk. Wrap and chill for 5 minutes before rolling if it is sticking and then cut out more cookies.

Bake until the edges of the cookies are set and crisp, 10 to 12 minutes. Cool on the sheets for 2 minutes, then transfer to wire cake racks to cool completely. Decorate as desired. (The cookies can be prepared up to 1 week ahead, stored in airtight containers at room temperature.) Makes about 3 dozen depending on size of the cookies.