

**Gingerbread Man Story**

The legend of the gingerbread man varies depending on where and by whom it’s being told. Here’s [our version of the classic tale](https://www.myrecipes.com/how-to/cooking-questions/what-is-stone-soup%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), which includes many of the most popular elements:

An old woman and her husband lived alone in a cabin buried deep in the woods, away from the hustle and bustle of the village.

The couple was lonely. With no children of their own, they were forced to live out their days and nights in solitude.

It was on one of these nights that an idea occurred to the woman: She would make a boy [out of gingerbread](http://myrecipes.com/recipe/quick-gingerbread). If she couldn’t have a son, this was the next best thing.

As she pulled her creation out of the oven, however, the boy (or “man,” as it is often called) jumped from the pan and fled the cabin.

The woman and her husband chased after the humanoid dessert to no avail. As he ran, the gingerbread man happily sang a song.

“Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me—I’m the gingerbread man!”

First, the man passed a cow.

“*Mmmmyouuuuu* look delicious,” said the cow.

“Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me—I’m the gingerbread man,” the man sang as he easily outran the cow.

Next, he came upon an owl.

“Who...who...who are you? I’m very hungry,” the owl said.

Again, the gingerbread man sang his song.

Finally, he met a fox.

The cookie was prepared to mock the cunning creature like he had his too-slow friends.

But, to the gingerbread man’s surprise, the fox wasn’t interested.

“I don’t know what the cow and the owl are talking about,” the fox said. “You don’t look like you taste good at all.”

The man stood in front of the animal in stunned silence.

Before he could formulate a reply, though, the fox gobbled him up in one swift motion.

**History and Variations**

This story originally appeared in print [in an 1875 issue of St. Nicholas Magazine](https://books.google.com/books?id=iqZNAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA448#v=onepage&q&f=false), a popular monthly American children's publication, under the title “The Gingerbread Boy.”

“Now you shall hear a story that somebody’s great, great grandmother told a little girl ever so many years ago,” begins the folk tale.

In the 1875 version, the cookie runs from an increasingly diverse cast of characters (including farm animals and human workers) while chanting, “I've run away from a little old woman, a little old man, and I can run away from you, I can!”

The original story also featured a slightly more grisly ending: As the fox ate the gingerbread man limb-by-limb, he cried, “"I'm quarter gone … I'm half gone … I'm three-quarters gone … I'm all gone!"

Similar tales of escaped food can be found in cultures all over the world: The mischievous character takes the form of bread dough in Russia, a pancake in Germany, and a dumpling in Hungary.

**What’s the Moral?**

The gingerbread man story’s moral is slightly dark for a fable meant for children: Be careful who you trust. The cookie believed the fox when he said he wasn’t tempted to eat him—this misguided trust led to the protagonist’s downfall.

**How Did the Gingerbread Man Become Associated With Christmas?**



The earliest account of [person-shaped gingerbread cookies](http://myrecipes.com/extracrispy/royal-family-gingerbread-cookies%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is from the 16th century. Elizabeth I of England surprised guests with “biscuits” that were designed in their likeness.

Its association with the holiday season, which didn’t come until later, is likely a practical one: Some people attribute the tradition to the weather, as ginger has a comforting way of warming the person who is eating it.

Others say that, since gingerbread was once considered a delicacy reserved for special occasions, its connection to Christmas is natural.

**Gingerbread men recipe**

Recipe:

350g plain flour

1 level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

2 level teaspoons ground ginger

100g butter

175g light muscovado sugar (cassonade)

4 tablespoons golden syrup or honey

1 large egg beaten

currants to decorate

1. Preheat the oven 190°/fan 170°/ gas 5

lightly grease baking trays

2. Measure the flour, bicarbonate of soda and ginger into a bowl. Rub in the butter with your fingertipsuntil the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs, then stir in the sugar. Add the golden syrup/honey and beaten egg and mix to form a smooth dough, kneading lihtly with the hands towards the end.

3. Divide the dough in half and roll out one half on to a lightly floured work surface to a thicknes of about 5mm. Cut out gingerbread men using a gingerbread man cutter and place them on the prepared baking trays.Use the currants for eyes and buttons.Repeat with the remaining dough.; Bake in the pre-heated oven for about 10-12 minutes until they become a slightly darker shade. Cool slightly then lift on to a wire rack and leave to cool completely.