

STAMP SCOOP



GINGERBREAD HOUSES

The origins of gingerbread are murky, but historians generally agree it became popular in Europe following the crusades. Soldiers brought back the ginger root – native to Asia – and bakers prepared it with honey and breadcrumbs. The spicy, snappy treat became popular at fairs and feasts and, since it was easy to mold, was fashioned to represent flowers, hearts, and greetings. Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was the first to introduce the gingerbread man when she had recreations of her courtiers baked into gingerbread!

In Germany, gingerbread was known as *lebkuchen*, and was made famous in the Brothers Grimm's story of Hansel & Gretel. Inspired by the witch's tempting gingerbread cottage, the fairy tale's fans began making their own sweet little abodes. And throughout the 19th century, German immigrants brought this charming custom to the States.

Gingerbread houses are fun to build and yummy to tear down! – made from gingerbread slats, frosting, and an assortment of decorative candies. The gingerbread houses that grace USPS' 2013 holiday stamps were constructed by baker Teresa Layman.

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