

# December's Try-Day Friday Food is

## GINGER

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**What is it?** Ginger root is a hot, fragrant kitchen spice with numerous well-researched health benefits. It can improve the taste and nutrition of your diet and cooking. Ginger improves circulation and helps to lower blood pressure. Ginger is anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory, making it a good dietary addition, especially during cold and flu season and for those with arthritis, fever, cough, mouth pain and headaches. Ginger is most commonly used to treat nausea, especially from motion sickness.



**Where do I find it?** Ginger is most often purchased as a ground spice, but most grocery stores carry whole ginger root in the produce section as well.

**How do I choose it?** Look for firm, heavy “hands”. It is acceptable to break off a small portion as ginger roots are not prone to spoil quickly. Avoid any pieces with visible mold. Ginger will keep for weeks on the counter or in the refrigerator, and if molding does occur, cut away any mold. The remaining “hand” will still be okay to serve.

**How do I use it?** As a spice, or as a whole root herb, ginger is very versatile, which will add heat and fragrance to any dish or recipe. Ginger is a typical ingredient in curries and sauces of Indian and Asian cuisines. Holiday and winter recipes may incorporate ginger for its benefits of warming the body. Ginger tea and Ginger Ale are popular medicinal hot and cold drinks. Several types of cookies gain flavor in part from ginger, including gingerbread and gingersnaps. Slices of ginger can be candied as described in one of the recipes below.

To peel ginger root, use a vegetable peeler, or scrape a spoon along the skin lightly.

## Holiday Ginger Recipes

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Try these tasty recipes this holiday season to make healthy treats your whole family can enjoy in a variety of ways.

## Healthier Gingerbread People

Gingerbread is a holiday staple and can be made as chewy cookies or a light, fluffy bread. Molasses, cloves, cinnamon and ginger provide anti-oxidants and other health punch.

These sweet treats are not just empty calories.

### Ingredients

- ½ C softened butter (unsalted)
- ¼ C brown sugar
- ½ C dark molasses
- 1 ¾ C all purpose flour, 1 ¼ C whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ginger
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ C water

### Instructions

1. Blend butter and brown sugar, and molasses with a large spoon in a mixing bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, mix the dry ingredients and slowly add in the wet mix from Step 1. Add water sparingly until the dough becomes firm.
3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
4. Roll out dough on a floured surface and cut out shapes using cookie cutters.
5. Bake for 8-12 minutes on a cookie sheet, either lightly greased, or lined with parchment paper.
6. Consider decorating your cookies as a family using healthier toppings and a healthier frosting, such as a Greek Yogurt Frosting. Look for healthy frosting ideas on Pinterest or the Internet.

### How to include the kids?

Let your children help with any tasks they are developmentally ready to try. They may enjoy measuring ingredients, pounding dough, using cookie cutters, and decorating after. Decorating cookies with sprinkles, candies, and frosting can be fun, but adds sugar, so consider using a healthier frosting and including some toppings such as mixed nuts, and chopped berries and fruit pieces to add even more health benefits and plenty of color.

## Homemade Ginger Ale, Syrup, and Candied Ginger

This recipe is a three in one. Slice ginger to make a simple syrup, which can then be used to make Ginger Ale. Ginger syrup also makes a spicy pancake and waffle topping. The sliced ginger can be candied for an additional treat.

Warning: Most will not enjoy chewing the candied ginger due to its spiciness! Try holding it in the mouth until all flavor is gone.

### Ingredients:

- 8 oz peeled ginger slices
- 2 C water
- 1.5 C sugar
- 1 L chilled seltzer water or club soda
- 2 Tsp. lime juice

### Instructions:

1. First, you must make a ginger simple syrup. Cook your ginger slices in 3 C water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer about 20 minutes.
2. Remove your ginger slices using a sieve or tongs, add 1 C sugar. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until the liquid reduces to a thick syrup and the ginger is soft. This should be about 20 more minutes.
3. Move the syrup into a jar and chill.
4. Spread your ginger slices out in a single layer. Leave them to cool and dry 1 hour, then toss and coat the pieces in the remaining ½ C of sugar. Allow to air dry 1 more hour.
5. Once your ginger slices are cooled, they can be enjoyed, or transferred to an air-tight container and stored at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.
6. Once your ginger simple syrup has cooled, you may mix it with your seltzer water or club soda and lime juice to create Ginger Ale. Start with ¼ C syrup and 2 Tsp. lime juice per Liter. Add more if a stronger Ginger Ale is desired.

### How to Include the kids?

The children can “supervise” while you cut slices of ginger, to make sure you are practicing good knife safety.