

[potluck]

A valid & delicious art form

Gingerbread isn't just for houses anymore. Battleships, farm scenes, churches, carousels, the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, even an entire city with airstrip and biplane: Any structure is game for gingerbread creations in Fairfield, where each year kids, families, and professionals pull out all the stops to compete in the annual Gingerbread Extravaganza. Now in its sixth year, the event

attracts 60–80 entrants, two-thirds of whom are kids.

Fairfield's gingerbread queen, Holly Moore, is the instigator of the Extravaganza, and she exudes passion for the art form and the artists. "Fairfield has hundreds of visual and performing artists, so why not culinary art?" she asks. "Gingerbread creations are a valid and delicious art form. Anything that gets families and others having creative fun together is great."

Gingerbread artists are eager to get started, but Moore advises waiting until the weather cools and humidity drops. "Gingerbread walls are compromised by humidity," she explains. "If you do it in August, it's doomed to failure."

Additional tips from Moore include

- **Use support structures inside the buildings:** corrugated boxes, tissue boxes, paper towel tubes, or foam core.
- **Use royal icing:** It hardens like cement.
- **Go crazy with candy:** "Candy is the paint on your palette," says Moore, who collects hers right after Halloween, often from gas stations and variety stores. "Candy inspires design. I did a 2-foot-tall carousel one year using lollipops shaped like animals."

Moore's own first gingerbread effort was ambitious: a scale model of the Eiffel Tower for which she downloaded scale drawings from the Internet. "I wasn't sure it would stand otherwise." Moore makes several gingerbread creations every year just to get things rolling. And she's always learning. "I learn from the kids," she says. "There's something innocent about how they place candy on the houses."

The creations may look amazingly delicious, but they're not to eat. The entries go into store windows the day after Thanksgiving and stay until January. Entries are judged on the first Friday of December. — C.B.



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Learn more and explore gingerbread and royal icing recipes online at www.fairfieldartwalk.org.