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(54) Titre : METHODE ET CONSTRUCTIONS DE MAISON EN PAIN D'EPICE

(54) Title: GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONSTRUCTIONS AND METHOD

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

An edible house construction such as a gingerbread house, includes an edible base, walls and roof, each made from a sheet of gingerbread or other rigid cake or cookie material. The walls and base are held together in the correct position by a tab and slot arrangement, which may consist of a rectangular array of slots within the base, with the walls each having a downwardly-projecting tab which snugly fits within a corresponding slot. The slots and tab are arranged such that the wall panels when inserted are suitably vertical and meet at the appropriate right angles, with little or no adjustment required by the user. The respective panels are optionally held together by edible cement such as cake icing.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An edible house construction such as a gingerbread house, includes an edible base, walls and roof, each made from a sheet of gingerbread or other rigid cake or cookie material. The walls and base are held together in the correct position by a tab and slot arrangement, which may consist of a rectangular array of slots within the base, with the walls each having a downwardly-projecting tab which snugly fits within a corresponding slot. The slots and tab are arranged such that the wall panels when inserted are suitably vertical and meet at the appropriate right angles, with little or no adjustment required by the user. The respective panels are optionally held together by edible cement such as cake icing.

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GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONSTRUCTIONS AND METHOD

Field of the Invention

The invention relates to confectionary foods products, and specifically gingerbread houses consisting of pre-formed housing panels for assembly by a user.

Background

Gingerbread house kits are typically provided to consumers in the form of building panels, which when assembled form the walls and roof of a house structure. The panels are typically held together by an edible cement, such as cake icing, which hardens to form suitably rigid joint material. The assembled structure may then be decorated if desired. Typically, the house is assembled on a flat base, which may either be supplied by the user or provided as a component of the kit. Typically, the base consists of a flat sheet of cardboard or other non-edible rigid or semi-rigid panel.

The assembly of a gingerbread house construction can be a frustrating process for youngsters and their parents, especially for a child working by him or herself. It can be difficult to properly align the panels such that the walls meet at right angles and are more or less vertical. As well, the need to hold all assembly panels in their proper position can require a relatively large amount of icing, in order to properly hold all of the building panels in their correct position. This can be undesirable for parents wishing to reduce their children's sugar consumption. Accordingly it is desirable to provide a gingerbread house kit in which the component building panels are more easily assembled into a rectangular house. It is also desirable to provide an edible base which can be decorated and then consumed.

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Objects and Summary

It is an object of the present invention to provide a gingerbread house construction kit and method of assembly, which includes an edible base plate. It is a further object to provide a kit which permits a simplified method of assembly, in which the vertical walls are held in an upright position at their correct locations even in the absence of any cement, in order to make assembly easier for young children and also to reduce the amount of icing needed to completely assemble the structure. It is a further object to provide a gingerbread house structure which has an increased resistance to collapse, in particular before the icing has hardened.

The invention provides in one aspect a kit for assembling a gingerbread house, consisting of a base panel, substantially flat opposing side and end panels, and roof panels, wherein all of the respective panels including the base panel are edible and formed, for example, from gingerbread. It is important to note that the term "gingerbread" used herein refers to any edible substance which has sufficient rigidity to provide a house construction. "Gingerbread" is not limited to gingerbread cake made from the traditional gingerbread cake recipe, and may indeed comprise any convenient and suitable cake or cookie-like substance. It is contemplated that the gingerbread comprises a relatively dense and rigid substance which is suitably resistant to crumbling and fracturing.

According to another aspect, at least some of the side and end panels fit onto the base by means of a tab and slot arrangement, wherein at least some of the wall panels include a projecting tab which fits into a slot within the base. The slot may extend all or part-way through the base. The slots are arranged in a suitable configuration to permit easy assembly of the wall panels in their appropriate final position. For example, the base may include four slots arranged in a rectangle, such that the respective side and end panels (two of each) when fitted within the slots meet at right angles in a rectangular arrangement consisting of four walls with opposing end and side walls. Any

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suitable arrangement of slots and tabs may be provided, such that the final gingerbread house construction may take on any desired configuration.

In another aspect, the invention includes a method of assembling a gingerbread house, commencing with a kit as generally described above. The side and end wall panels are inserted within the slots to form the upright wall portion of the gingerbread house. Optionally and preferably, prior to assembly of the walls onto the base, icing or other edible cement is placed on the base to hold the walls in position. The slots within the base may extend only part-way through the base, and the icing may be deposited into the slots such that they partly or entirely fill the slots prior to insertion of the tabs into the slots. Alternatively, the edible base plate may include a backing sheet, such as paper or foil, fastened to the underside of the base. This sheet serves as a floor for the slots, to permit the slots to be wholly or partly filled with icing. Preferably, beads of cake icing are also placed along or near the vertical edges of the wall panels prior to assembly. After assembly of the wall panels, the roof panels may be assembled in the conventional manner, wherein a bead of icing is placed on the upper edges of the wall panels and optionally also on the underside of the roof panels, followed by the assembly of the roof panels.

Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an assembled gingerbread house according to the invention.

Figures 2 and 3 are plan views of opposing side panels of the gingerbread house.

Figure 4 is a plan view of the base panel.

Figure 4a is a plan view of the underside of the base.

Figures 5 and 6 are plan views of opposing end panels.

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Figure 7 is a plan view of a roof panel.

Figure 8 is a perspective view showing preparation of the base prior to assembly.

Figure 9 shows preparation of the side and end panels.

5 Figure 10 shows assembly of a side and end panel, onto the base.

Figure 11 shows continued assembly of the four wall panels.

Figure 12 shows continued assembly of the structure.

Figure 13 shows the final assembly of the gingerbread house.

Detailed Description

10 Figure 1 illustrates a completed gingerbread house 10. The house includes a base panel 12, opposing side walls 14a and 14b; opposing gable end walls 16a and 16b; and opposing sloping roof panels 18a and 18b. The house construction illustrated in Figure 1 consists of a generally rectangular shape, with a roof having a traditional 1:1 (45°) slope. Obviously, essentially any
15 house construction may be provided in which the respective panels take on any suitable configuration. Preferably, the panels are substantially flat although, some degree of curvature may be permitted. However, substantially flat panels are preferred as this provides the easiest construction, as well as transport, display and storage. All of the panels including the base 12 comprise a
20 gingerbread or similar cake or cookie-like substance which has a sufficient rigidity to permit construction of a house, while being relatively resistant to breakage and crumbling. The substance may be sweet or savory.

The respective panels are shown in plan in Figures 2 through 7. Side wall panels 14a and 14b are substantially rectangular, each with a downwardly

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pending tab 20. It is preferable that the tabs 20 have a length which is approximately $1/3 - 3/4$ of the length of the corresponding side wall panel and preferably $1/3$ to $1/2$. Figure 4 illustrates the base 12, which is of a generally rectangular shape. Obviously, any convenient and desired shape may be used.

5 The base includes four slots 22a – 22d, which are arranged in a rectangle and snugly receive the tabs depending from the wall panels.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the opposing gable end wall panels 16a and 16b. These wall panels include similar downwardly-projecting tabs 24. Figure 7 shows a roof panel 18a, which consists of a flat rectangular panel, with no
10 projecting tabs. The opposing roof panel 18b is essentially identical and is thus not illustrated.

The slots 22a through 22d form a reasonably tight fit with corresponding tabs 20 and 24. This permits the four wall panels to be held in their appropriate upright positions, when inserted into the base 12. The slots 22a – 22d may
15 extend either fully through the base panel 12 or alternatively may extend only part-way through. Alternatively, a backing sheet 26 of paper, foil, a thin cardboard or the like, may be attached to the underside of the base, as seen in Figure 4a. The backing sheet is releasably attached, for example by baking the sheet 12 on the sheet 26 such that they lightly adhere together. With this
20 arrangement, the slots 22 extend fully through the cake portion of the base 12 with the backing material effectively forming a floor to each slot 22. The backing sheet 26 also serves to prevent direct contact between the base 12 and an underlying surface, to prevent grease stains, crumbs, etc. Preferably, the backing sheet 26 readily peels away from the base to permit the base to be
25 eaten.

As an alternative to the backing sheet described above, the same effect may be achieved by providing a base 12 which comprises solely of an edible sheet without an attached backing sheet 26. The base 12 may then be placed on a flat surface such as a baking tray, cutting board or the like, which serves
30 essentially the same function as the backing sheet, namely to prevent direct

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contact between the base and a surface such as a table top, and also to provide an effective floor to the slots within the base. For this purpose, the underlying tray, etc., should be sufficiently flat that when the edible base 12 is placed thereon, there is little or no gap between the slot and the tray. The user then
5 fills the slot with icing or other edible cement, which is prevented from leaking by the more or less direct contact between the base 12 and the underlying surface.

Assembly of the structure commences by filling the slots 22 either partly or fully with icing 28, as shown in Figure 8. The icing selected for this purpose
10 may be a conventional cake icing suitable for gingerbread house assembly, which hardens into a reasonably rigid form suitable for cementing house panels together. Optionally, a bead of icing may be placed along the base, outside of the slots. However, this additional bead is usually not necessary in light of the structural advantage gained by these tab and slot combination.

15 As seen in Figure 9, construction continues by placing beads of icing 28 along what will become the vertical side edges of the side and gable end wall panels 14 and 16. The bead may be placed immediately adjacent or somewhat inboard of the edges of the walls and extend partly or fully along the vertical edge regions. As seen in Figures 10 and 11, construction continues by inserting
20 tabs 20 and 24 of the respective wall panels within the corresponding slots 22 in the base. The slots 20, 24 are positioned such that when the wall panels are inserted therein, a conventional rectangular house wall assembly is thereby formed. Slightly squeezing together all of the respective panels ensures that they will be firmly cemented together.

25 Figure 12 illustrates placement of a bead of icing along the upper rim of the respective wall panels, which will then support the roof panels 18. As seen in Figure 13, the roof panels 18 are then assembled, by initially placing a bead of icing along one long edge along a first roofing panel 18a, approximately where it will meet the opposing roof panel 18b. The roof panels 18a and 18b

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are then placed on to the walls, to form the completed gingerbread house structure.

The finished structured may then be decorated in a conventional manner.

It will be seen that the detailed description presents that the above
5 illustrates a very simple rectangular house. Obviously, the house construction according to this invention may take on any desired configuration, it may include for example doors, windows and other structural elements resembling a real house. As well, it is not limited to four sides and a rectangular structure, but rather may take on any number of sides, angles, etc. However, the
10 preferred and simplest structure is a simple rectangular structure having gable ends, as shown.

Although the present invention has been described in part by way of a detailed description, it will be seen that a person skilled in the relevant art would not consider this invention to be limited by this detailed description.
15 Rather, the invention also includes variations, equivalents, departures from and modifications of the described embodiment. The full scope of the invention is more fully described by the claims of this application, including any equivalents thereto, as well as the present patent specification in its entirety.

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CLAIMS:

1. A toy house construction kit, comprising a plurality of edible panels, said panels comprising a base panel, a plurality of wall panels and at least one roof panel, said base and at least some of said wall panels including a tab and slot engagement means, wherein said slots are positioned to support said wall panels in a position to form said house structure without the use of cement.
2. A kit as defined in claim 1, wherein said wall panels when assembled form a rectangle, said base including four slots arranged in a rectangle, corresponding with tabs extending from the bottom edge of said walls panels.
3. A kit as defined in claim 1, wherein at least some of said wall panels include a downwardly projecting tab, said tab comprising an elongate generally rectangular member having a length which is between about 1/3 to 3/4 of the full length of said lower edge.
4. A kit as defined in claim 1, wherein said base includes a removable backing sheet, and said slots extend within said base such that said slots extend fully said base panel with said backing sheet effectively forming a floor to said slots to retain cement within said slots prior to assembly of said wall panels.
5. A method assembling an edible house, comprising the steps of providing wall, base and roof panels as defined in claim 1; optionally applying a layer of edible cement on at least some of said panels in a position where said panels contact adjacent panels; assembling said walls on said base by inserting said tabs into said slots, such that said walls are maintained in a substantially vertical position; and assembling said roof onto said walls.

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6. A method as defined in claim 5, wherein said walls comprise four walls each having a downwardly projecting tab, said base includes four corresponding slots arranged substantially in a rectangle, and said assembly comprises inserting said wall tabs into said slots, such that said walls are arranged in a rectangle with said walls being generally upright.

7. A method as defined in claim 5, wherein said cement is applied by at least partly filling said slots with said cement prior to insertion of said tabs into said slots.

Application number/numéro de demande: Q2548209

Figures: Fig. 1 to 4 & 5 to 13 inclusive

Pages: _____

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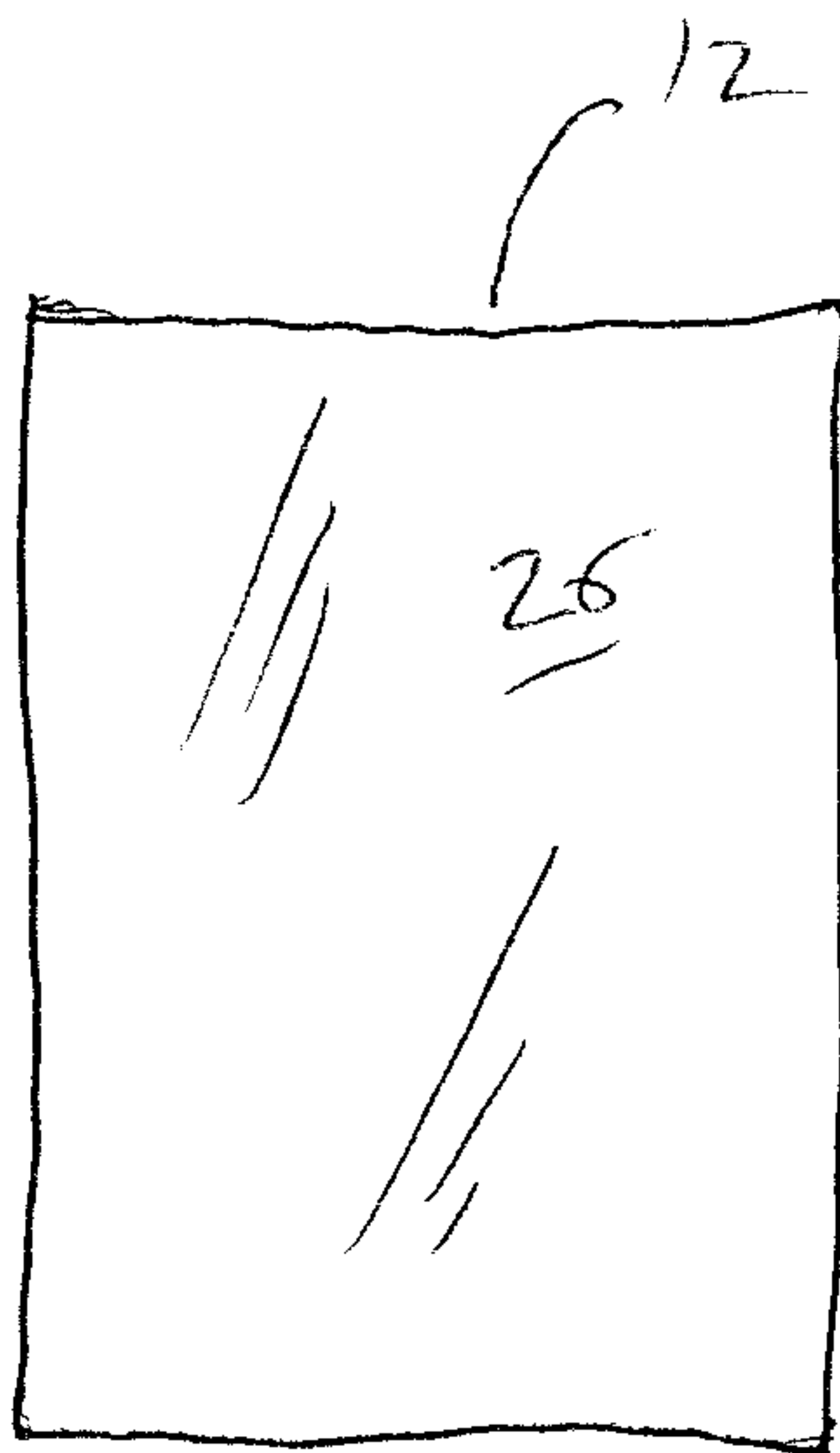


Fig. 4a