**GINGERBREAD COOKIES**

*Adapted from Simply Recipes*

**Cookie Ingredients**

3 ¼ cups sifted all-purpose flour

¾ teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup unsalted butter, room temperature

½ cup dark brown sugar, packed

2 teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon fresh (finely) grated ginger

1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoons ground cloves

½ teaspoons ground nutmeg

¼ teaspoons finely ground black pepper

½ teaspoons salt

1 large egg

½ cup unsulfured molasses

Optional: raisins, currants, chocolate chips, candy pieces, frosting

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, salt, and spices.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer (or hand mixer), cream the butter. Add sugar and beat until fluffy. Mix in eggs and molasses. Gradually add the flour mixture. Divide dough into thirds, and wrap in plastic. Chill for at least one hour or overnight. Before rolling out, let sit at room temperature for 5-10 minutes.
3. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Place dough on a large piece of lightly floured wax paper or parchment and roll to 1/8 inch thickness. Use cookie cutters to cut into desired shapes. Press raisins, chocolate chips, currants or candy pieces in the center of each cookie.
4. Transfer to ungreased baking sheets. Bake until crisp but not dark, 8-10 minutes. Remove from oven and let sit a few minutes to cool. Add icing, if desired. Makes about 16 (5-inch long) cookies.