

The Gingerbread Swan King

I found a pattern in a woman's magazine about 30 years ago. I made it once and then lost it! So I recreated the pattern this year but wanted to acknowledge that this is based on that old pattern I found. Read all the instructions first to familiarize yourself with the process. Feel free to make this your own!

Supplies

- **Revere Ware metal mixing bowl.** I've had my bowl for years but I looked out on the internet and found that Revere still makes these but sells them in a set. The dimensions are: 5-7/8" wide across the opening and about 3" tall and 17-1/2" measured around the top of the bowl. So if you have a metal bowl that is close to these dimensions it should work for you.
- **A "Zester" or rasp file.** I found a "zester" at a home goods store but in the past I've also used a metal file, or rasp. You can use this to shape your gingerbread after baking and cooling---this is why I bake my gingerbread until it is really hard. I used it to smooth out the edges of the swan head and neck, taper down the wings and tail---it's great for shaping and smoothing gingerbread pieces when necessary!
- **#1 and #2 decorating tips** and icing bags
- **Silver dragees** – for the crown decoration
- **A funnel** – this is what you pipe the crown on to. I used a small funnel—the dimensions of my funnel are: 3 inches tall; 1-7/8 inches opening at the top; 6 inches around at the top. (see the photo).
- **2" to 3" wide brush** – I used this to "paint" on the thinned Royal Icing over the entire swan, head, wings and tail. **Small detailing brushes**—I use these to paint in the fine details around the eyes.
- **12" round covered cake board** (though you can use anything you'd like to set your swan on)
- **Paste colors:** orange for the beak and black for detailing.
- **Royal Icing:** I use meringue powder to make mine but you can use any Royal Icing whether you use egg whites or meringue powder. One 2 lb. bag of Powdered sugar made enough to finish one Swan.



Make Your Gingerbread: Use your own Gingerbread recipe—I overcook mine so it is nice and hard, but any recipe should work well as long as you use one that bakes up fairly strong and hard. Do a Google search for gingerbread recipes if you need one.

Make the Swan Body: The body of the swan is baked over a 1-quart Revere Ware mixing bowl (pictured). Roll out the gingerbread about 1/4" thick. Place the bowl upside down on a baking sheet and drape the gingerbread over the bowl (you can spray it with a non-stick spray). Cut off the excess at the bottom and around the rings (you can cut the rings off if you like). Once it has cooled you should be able to pop it off the bowl. If some pieces break off around the rings you can fill them in with Royal Icing later and no one will know they were there! (See Diag. 1)



Make the Head, Neck and Bills:

Roll out your Gingerbread a good one inch thick for the head and neck. Cut out one head and neck piece, then cut the next one out in the opposite direction. Once they are dry you will sandwich them together using Royal icing. (See *Diag. 1* on previous page)



For the Bill (or beak) roll a small piece of dough out very thin. I form a couple pieces of tin foil to give a rounded form to the upper and lower bill pieces. You then glue those together with Royal Icing. (See *Diag. 1*)

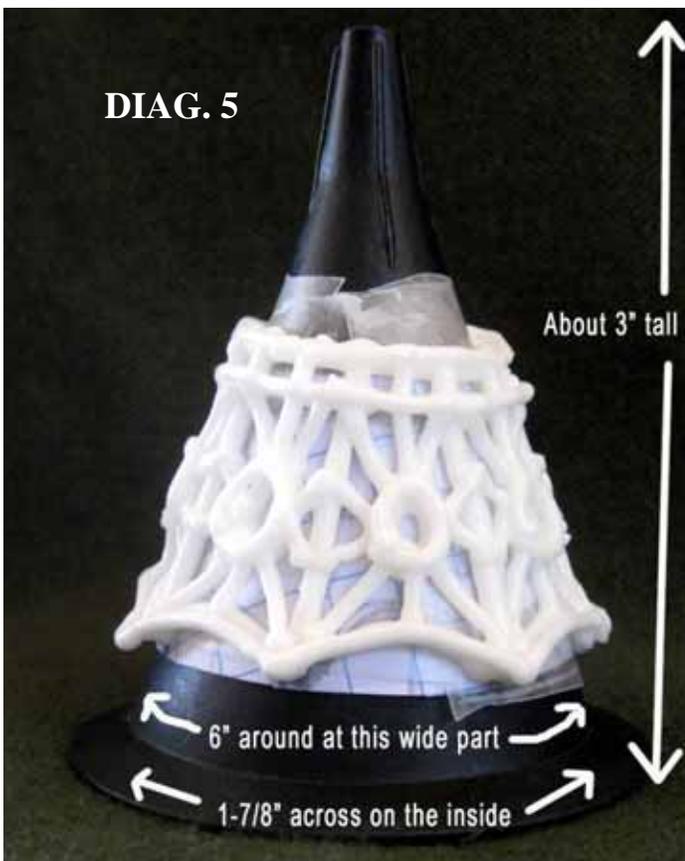
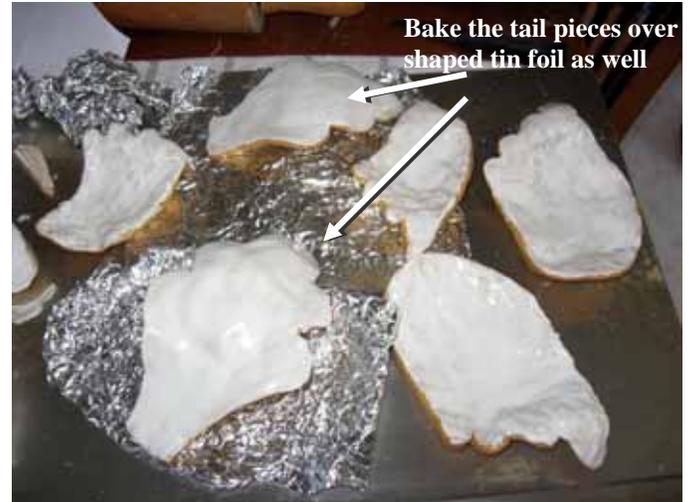
In the photo in *Diag. 2* you'll see a "zester" file I used to round off the corners the head and neck so it wasn't so square looking. Just like filing your nails! Just be sure to do this after your icing glue has completely hardened. I also shaped the glued-together swan Bills to flatten them out a bit on the top bill as a swan's bill is slightly concaved on the top.

Making the Wings: I folded a large piece of heavy grade tin foil in half for each wing, and then wrapped it around the side of the metal bowl to approximate the shape of each wing and then laid the tin foil shapes on a cookie baking sheet. I then cut out each wing pattern in gingerbread (roll dough about 1/4") and remember to cut one large and small wing in the opposite direction. Carefully place each wing over it's corresponding tin foil shapes (see *Diag. 3*). You can see that I flipped the foil at the wing ends to give it some motion. When they are cool, just carefully peel off the tin foil. The next picture shows them after baking (*Diag. 4*).



Making the Tail Pieces: I did the same tin foil shapes for the two tail pieces—you want them to curve slightly so they will fit up against the gingerbread bowl (see the photo below right). You can also see a picture of them later in these instructions.

Painting the Pieces: I wanted my swan all white so I painted all the pieces with thinned-down Royal icing with the wide paint brush (just add water, a tablespoon at a time, to the icing so it's at a painting consistency---not too runny). Paint all pieces (head & neck, wings, tail and bow) – do one side and let dry, then paint the other side and let dry. Don't worry if they don't look perfect—you can cover any mistake later when you pipe on the feather design (or whatever kind of detail you prefer)—such as you could do all Cornelli lace—if you don't know what Cornelli lace is you can search for “making Cornelli lace” on Google or [click here](#) for instructions.



Making the Crown:

Tape the Crown pattern to the funnel (*Diag. 5*). Then cover the pattern with a piece of wax paper cut slightly larger than the crown pattern. Use a #2 round tip and pipe over the pattern with Royal Icing. Let it dry completely and then slip off the funnel and carefully peel off the wax paper. I added silver dragees to finish it off after it had dried completely. Set it aside as it's one of the last things you'll do to finish up your swan.

Attach the Swan Head & Neck to the Gingerbread Bowl: First, take your cake board, or whatever you are going to use to put your Swan on, and lay down some Royal Icing and then place the Gingerbread Bowl to the cake board to “glue” it down. Pipe lots of Royal Icing on the flat back part of the neck and attach it to the Bowl—prop up a heavy can against the neck to hold it to the Bowl---**let it dry completely.** (*Diag. 6*)



DIAG. 6

Attach the Swan Bill: I used the rasp/“zester” to shape the Bill so it would fit nicely on the face (just file like you would your nails). In order to make sure the bill would stay attached while drying I broke a wooden toothpick in half and slowly pushed it into where the two Bill pieces were glued together so that about ¾ of an inch of the toothpick sticks out. I took another toothpick and pressed a hole on the swan’s face where I wanted the bill to attach and then removed that toothpick. Now, taking the Bill with the toothpick piece stick out, I piped some Royal Icing on the back of the Bill and pushed the toothpick into the hole I’d made in the face—it stuck quite nicely and I let it dry completely.

Note: I painted on another coat of thinned Royal Icing on the head, neck and bill to smooth them out a little more.

Pipe on Feather Decorations: Before I attached anything else, I piped a feather pattern on the Bowl, Wings and Tail pieces using non-thinned Royal Icing and a #2 tip (you can also use a #1 if you prefer). I pipe the pattern on both the front and back of the Wings and Tails—so do one side, let them dry and then do the other side. Make sure all pieces are completely dry before attaching in the next steps.

Attaching the Wings and Tail Pieces: Pipe a lot of Royal Icing on the inside of the Large Wings and push them into place. Prop up heavy cans (or you can see I used Karo Syrup and Molasses bottles) to hold them in place until they dry. You might also need to wad up some pieces of tin foil to put under the bottom part of the wings so they curve up a bit at the back. **Let them dry completely.** Now pipe Royal icing on the insides of the smaller wings and place them over the larger wings—prop those up with heavy cans and wads of tin foil until they **dry completely.**

Take the Large Tail piece and pipe a lot of Royal icing on the bottom-front part of the tail and place against the out of the Bowl. Prop with cans or bottle and **let dry completely** (*Diag. 7*). For the smaller tail I piped Royal Icing on the lower-back of the small tail and attached it **inside** the Bowl as shown in *Diag. 8*.



DIAG. 7



DIAG. 8

After the wings and tail are completely dry you can touch up any feather decorations and begin to pipe a feather pattern on the neck and face---I actually used a scallop pattern on the neck and face but you can let your creativity decide what you want to do here---please do make it your own!



Finishing the Swan's Face: I found a wonderful picture of "Mute" Swan, the common swan found in parks and estates. Mutes can be distinguished from other white swans by the black area in front of the eyes and the fleshy black knob above the deep orange bill (more prominent on the males). To create the "knob" I piped a mound of white royal icing above the bill (*Diag. 9*) and then used a small paint brush moistened with vodka (alcohol dries faster than plain water) to smooth it into shape. I piped a small line of royal icing around the eyes to add a little definition and smoothed that out with a brush moistened with vodka. Let this **dry completely**. I then took some orange paste food coloring and painted the Bill and let that dry. Then, taking black paste food coloring, I painted on the black color following the picture (*Diag. 10*), included a hint of his nostrils and the little black oval at the tip of the Bill.



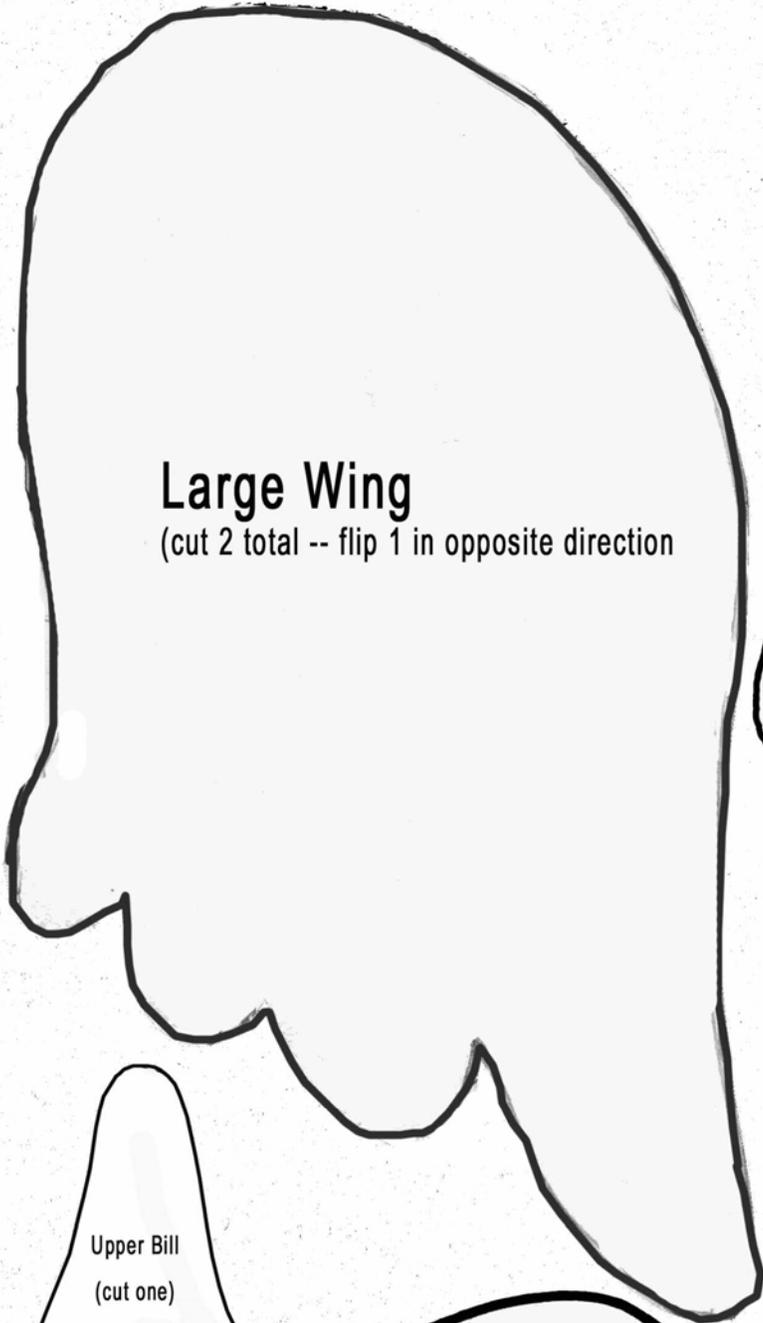
Now "Crown" your Swan King: Pipe some Royal Icing around the bottom of the crown and place it on the head. I piped small icing dots around the bottom of the crown to finish it off.

You can fill the Bowl/Body of your Swan with little presents, or icing flowers or cookie and treats. If you use fresh flowers just make sure you don't get any water on the Gingerbread or it will go soft and mushy.

Next time I try this I'm thinking of making individual feathers out of fondant and covering his entire body!

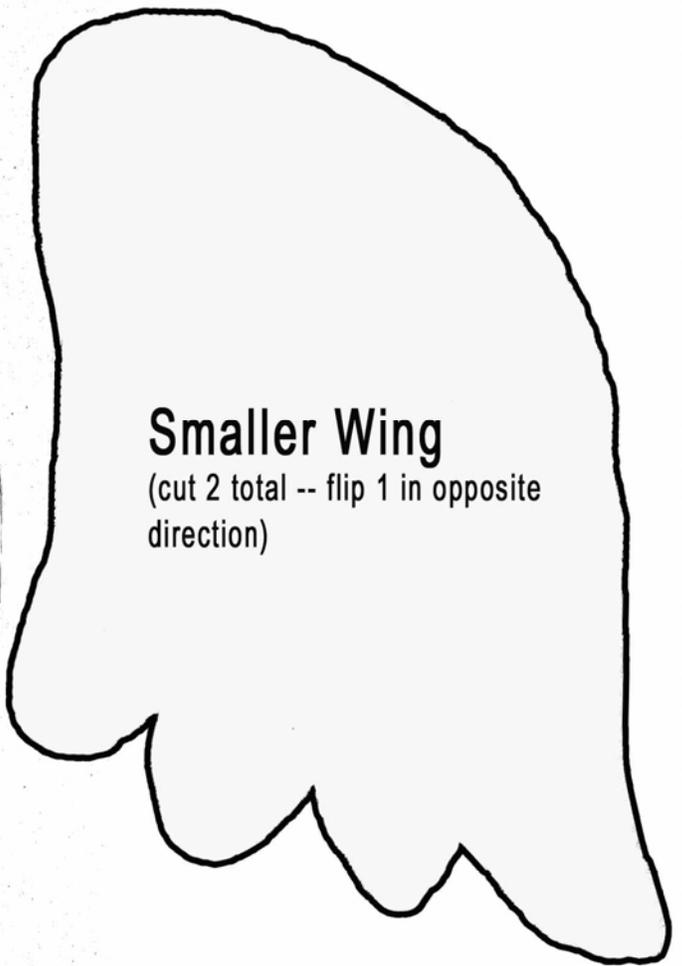
If you have any questions you can email me at jkeeler415@costumepastimes.com and if you make the Swan please send me a photo---I'd love to include it on my site!





Large Wing

(cut 2 total -- flip 1 in opposite direction)



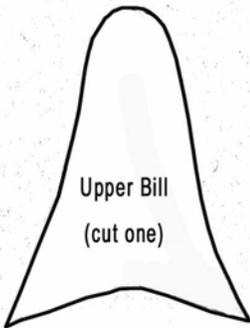
Smaller Wing

(cut 2 total -- flip 1 in opposite direction)

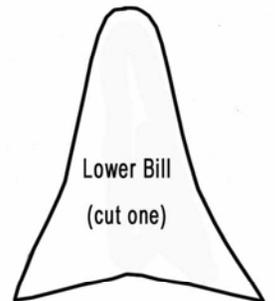
Gingerbread Swan King

Jana Keeler

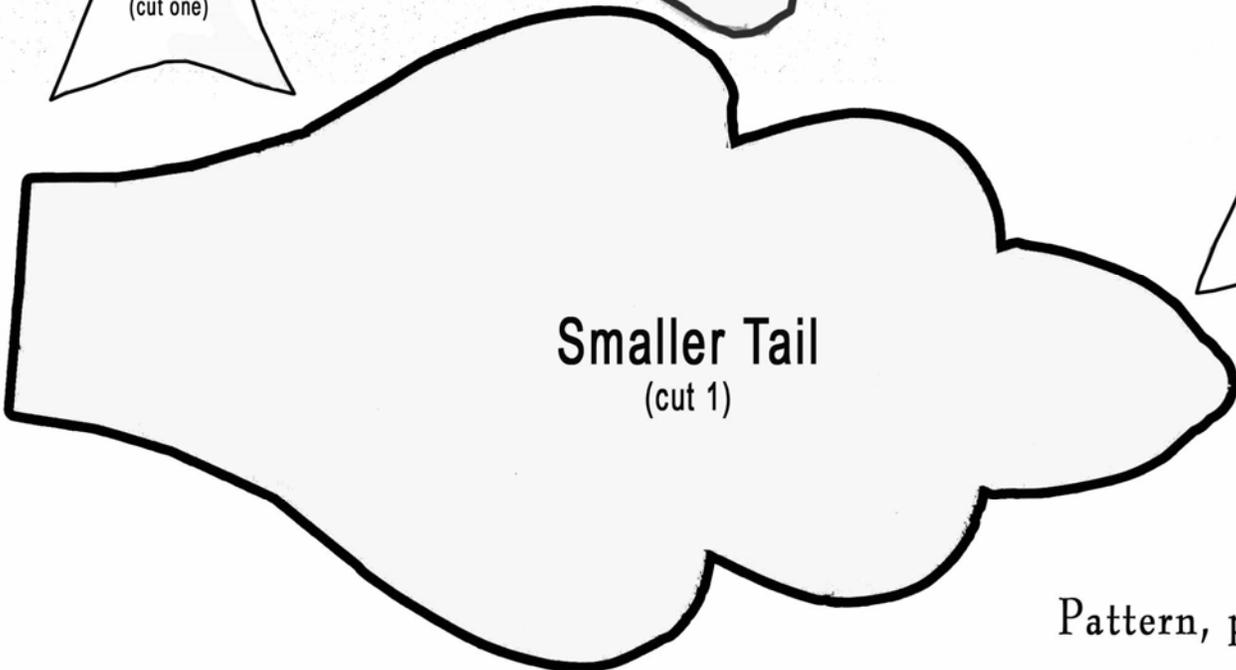
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Upper Bill
(cut one)



Lower Bill
(cut one)



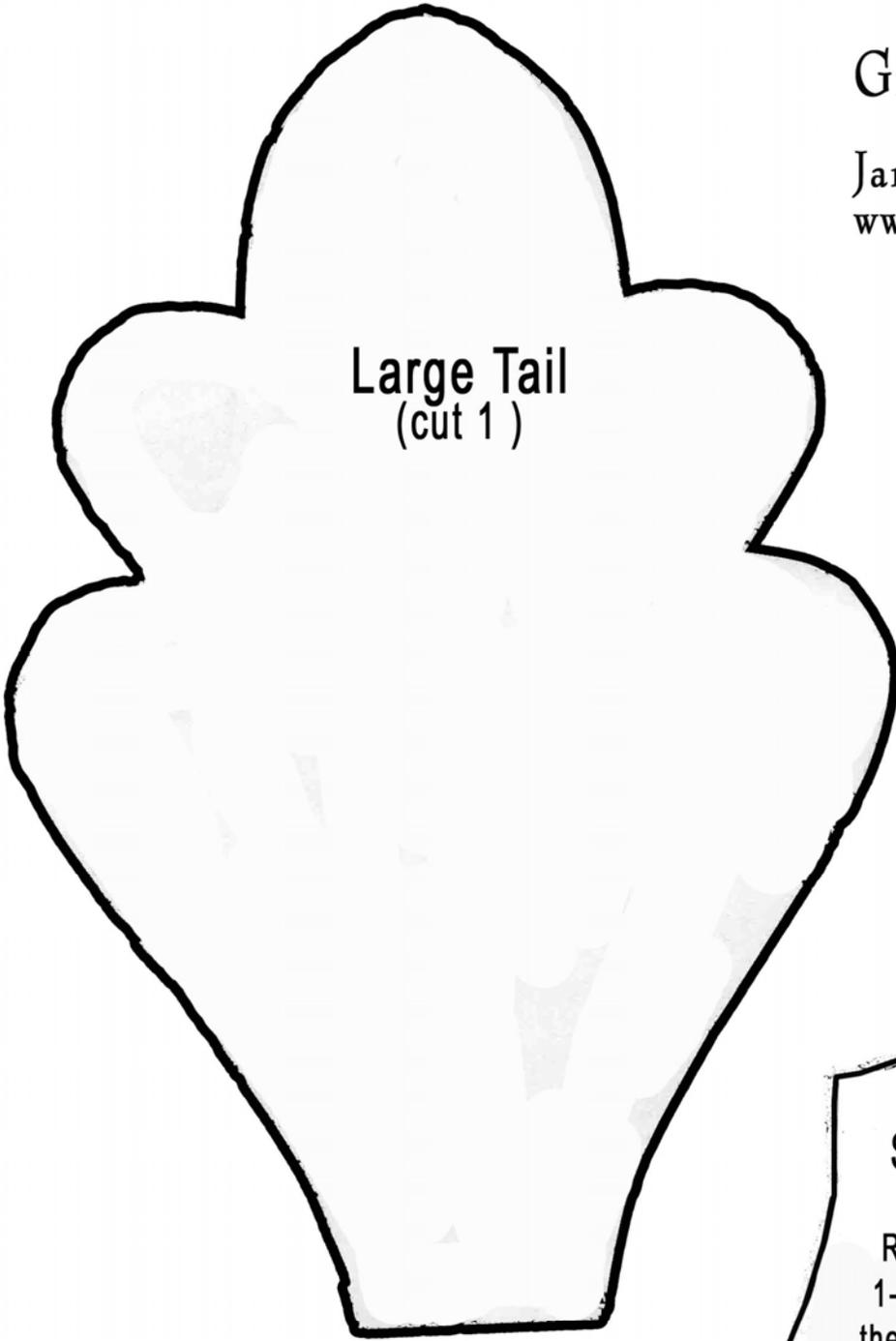
Smaller Tail

(cut 1)

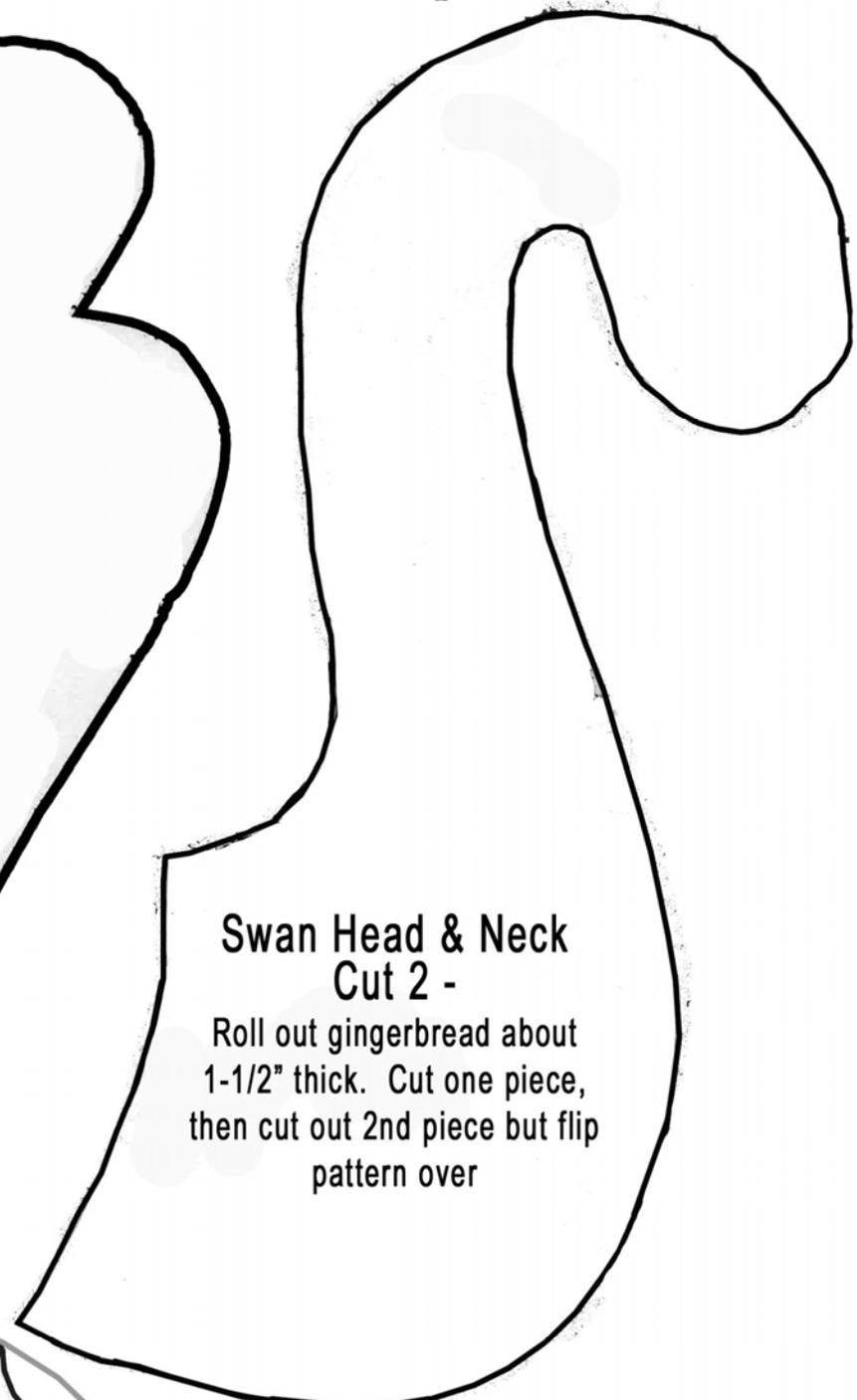
Gingerbread Swan King

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Large Tail
(cut 1)



Swan Head & Neck
Cut 2 -

Roll out gingerbread about
1-1/2" thick. Cut one piece,
then cut out 2nd piece but flip
pattern over



Icing Crown -

tape pattern to bottom of a
funnel - cover pattern w/wax
paper, pipe out royal icing