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Twist It Up for Super Bowl

By Susie Iventosch



Homemade pretzels Photos Susie Iventosch

There is still more than a week before Super Bowl kickoff and I thought it might be fun to try another finger food to serve up during the big game. I was recently in Austria and Germany, and they have pretzels for everything ... pretzel sandwiches, pretzels with nuts, pretzels with cheese toppings, pretzels drizzled with chocolate, both white and dark, and pretzels with cream cheese and chives. There are pretzels to suit anyone's fancy over there. So many pretzels made me realize this could be a fun thing to make for Super Bowl Sunday, whether you plan to go to a party, have guests over yourself, or just stay home and watch the game with the family.

This set me on the project of making my very first (and second) batch of pretzels ever. I had to make them twice, because even though the first batch tasted fantastic, they really didn't look all that much like pretzels, but more like big rolls. The

trick is making the tubes of dough long and skinny enough to make a pretzel twist that will hold its shape in the baking.

The key to making pretzels taste like pretzels is putting them in a boiling baking soda bath for just a few seconds before baking. This gives them that distinct flavor that pretzels have. The way the professional pretzel makers do it is to use an edible lye bath, but the more common way for truly home-baked pretzels is to use baking soda, which is normally stocked in every household pantry.

You can decide what you want to top them with, or what to dip them in. Cheese sauce would be yummy, and so would mustard. In fact, I tried to make homemade Dijon mustard to go with these, but unfortunately, that result was disastrous, and Dijon shall have to wait for another issue. If you have a small group, these pretzels would make fantastic sandwiches, too. Just slice them in half horizontally, and fill them up with your favorite cold cuts and cheese.



(Makes 6 large or 8 medium)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups warm water, at about 110-115 degrees
- 1 packet active dry yeast (2 1/4 teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon salt (I use about 12 grinds from my Himalayan pink salt grinder)
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3-4 cups all-purpose flour (use any excess for kneading dough)
- For Water Bath
- 6 cups of water
- 1/2 cup baking soda (that's right ... 1/2 CUP!)
- For topping
- Coarse crystal sea salt

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1 beaten egg or 1/4 cup Egg Beaters (for brushing on top of the bagels before baking)

DIRECTIONS

Pour warm water into a large mixing bowl and sprinkle yeast over the top. Whisk together and allow to sit for a few minutes. Add sugar and salt and stir well. Add flour, one cup at a time, mixing with wooden spoon until mixture becomes a thick dough. Dough will still be sticky, so continue to add just enough flour until the dough is no longer sticky.

Turn dough onto a cutting board, or cloth, and knead for about 5 minutes. Place dough into a greased or oiled bowl, turn once to coat both top and bottom with the oil. Cover with a damp towel, and allow to sit until doubled in volume.

Meanwhile, mix the 6 cups of water and baking soda in a large pot and bring to a boil, so that the baking soda dissolves. Remove from heat until ready to use.

Preheat oven to 425 F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. I also spray the parchment paper to ensure the pretzels will easily come off paper after baking.

Divide dough into the number of pretzels you wish to make. Form a little ball out of each section of dough. Roll the dough ball between your palms until it forms a long, skinny tube - about 20-25 inches long. This can take a little while. Place the doughy pretzels on a flat surface that is dusted with flour until all of them are shaped.

Now, bring the baking soda bath back to a boil, and taking one pretzel at a time, drop them into the bath for about 20 seconds. Flip and repeat on the other side. Remove from bath with a slotted spatula and shake slightly to drip off excess water. Place pretzels onto the prepared baking sheet.

Brush each pretzel top with the egg and sprinkle tops with coarse salt.

Bake for approximately 10 minutes. Remove from oven, and turn the oven up to broil. When ready, place pretzels back under broiler for just 10-20 seconds, or until tops are golden brown.

Can prepare a day or two ahead of time and reheat before serving.

Bon appetite and may your favorite team win!

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[back](#)

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