

CINDY'S WICKED GOOD PRETZELS

INGREDIENTS

YEAST

- 8 teaspoons rapid dry yeast. (3 packets + 1 and 1/4 teaspoons)
- 2 3/4 cups water at 110°F. (43°C)
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar. (NO ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS)

DOUGH

- 10 cups bread flour (almost a 5 pound bag). **MUST BE BREAD FLOUR**
- 1 cup granulated sugar. **NO ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS**
- 3 teaspoons kosher salt plus more for sprinkling. **MUST BE KOSHER OR SEA SALT. NO IODIZED TABLE SALT**
- 4 tablespoons olive oil plus more for coating a bowl. Wait a bit to add this.

Plus 3/4 cup water. Wait to add this. It may not be necessary.

BAKING SODA BATH

- 10 cups water for the last step (baking soda bath)
- 3/4 cups baking soda

BUTTER

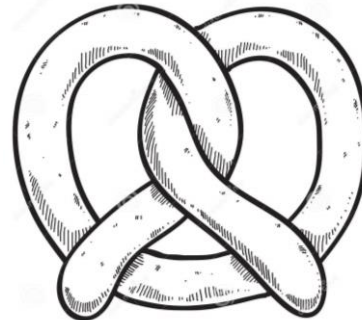
- 2-3 sticks butter – salted. Make sure you use good quality butter. Cheap stuff tastes more like oil. **NO MARGARINE OR IMITATION BUTTERS!**

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Two bowls. One smaller glass, ceramic or plastic bowl for the yeast mixture and one extra-large bowl for the dough. If you have a cover for the large bowl even better but not essential.
- Measuring cup and spoons
- 2 baking sheets
- Parchment paper (MUST HAVE)
- Strong mixing spoon or paddle. I use a short handled paddle for best grip.
- Tongs
- Medium saucepan
- Wire racks (at least one large rack)
- Paper towels or aluminum foil to place under the wire racks to catch dripping butter

STEP 1: YEAST

- A. Get your yeast packets ready (cut them open) and have measuring spoons nearby.
- B. Run your tap water to reach a very warm temperature. Our water attains approximately 110°F and I don't bother using a thermometer. If you are unsure, test your water temperature. Adjust if necessary.
- C. Once the water is AT or VERY NEAR the proper temp of 110°F -115°F, pour it into a medium bowl. Immediately add all the yeast. Add the 2 teaspoons sugar. Mix to merge.
- D. Let sit for 5-15 minutes while you prepare the flour. If all is well, your yeast mixture will look creamy. If it does not change to a creamy texture after 15 minutes, your water temperature is off or your yeast is too old. **Do not continue if nothing changed with the yeast water after 15 minutes.** Fix the yeast first before incorporating into the flour mixture.



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STEP 2: DOUGH

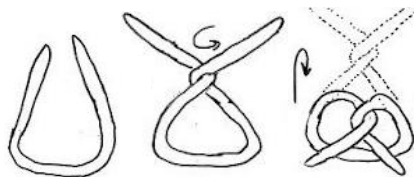
- A. Put all dry ingredients in a very big bowl. Mix well by hand with the implement of your choice. I use a short, strong wooden paddle. (Do not add more salt than directed because it could kill the yeast.)
- B. Make a well in the middle of the flour. Slowly pour the creamy yeast liquid in the well. Start mixing. It's ok if the dough is moist. That's better than too dry. **NOW ADD THE 4 TABLESPOONS OF OLIVE OIL TO THE PARTIALLY MIXED DOUGH.** Flour your hands lightly and mix everything together with the goal of a big ball. If after you have mixed the ingredients you think the dough is too dry, add the reserved water in small increments at a time. Form into a big ball and gently knead for 2-5 minutes. Do not worry if the dough is rough. DO NOT overwork the dough. It does not need to be perfectly smooth. Place the dough on a non-stick surface temporarily. Clean out the bowl and after coating it with oil, place the dough back in the bowl. Cover.
- C. Let the dough sit in a warm place for **at least an hour**. I use a seed starting mat when the air in the house is cool. In the summer, I put the bowl near a warm window or outside in a protected area near my kitchen. If outside, wrap the entire bowl in a large, lint-free tablecloth to keep bugs away.

STEP 3: BAKING SODA BATH - PREP

- A. In a big pot on high heat, add 10 cups of water. Add 3/4 cup baking soda to the water and mix. Just before it starts to boil turn down to the lowest setting.
- B. Line at least 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. I don't grease baking sheets because it makes the pretzel bottoms too hard and greasy. You must use good quality parchment. Do not use wax paper or cheap parchment from the Dollar Store!
- C. Have kosher salt ready for sprinkling. Do not use iodized table salt.
- D. Have a large metal spatula handy to lift the wet pretzels out of the baking soda water.

STEP 4: SHAPE

- A. Preheat the oven to 450°F (232°C). Make sure to have an oven rack in the middle. I do not bother putting the pretzel dough out on a floured surface. Doing this on a horizontal surface gives my daughter trouble because the extra flour interferes with the "snake-making process" and she tends to overwork the dough. Have kids stand up while shaping.
- B. Grab a portion (a handful) of dough from the bowl. The dough should be spongy. Rub the dough between your hands to make a log. Keep rolling and gently stretching until it gets longer. Let gravity help you out. Don't worry about the ends becoming thin; you can use those for pretzel bites. Once you get a 12-16 inch rope, hold both ends and twist it around a few times like a jump rope. Weeeee! This will extend it even further and help to hold its long shape. To make a pretzel that won't be one big blob, make sure your dough "snake" is about 1/2-3/4 of an inch thick and at least 15" long. 24" long makes a big pretzel. You'll get the hang of it after a few tries. Feel free to adjust to make the pretzels the shape and size you want. Get creative!
- C. To make the pretzel shape. First make a 'U', then come together at the top and twist down through the middle and press the ends onto the bottom of the "U".



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STEP 5: BAKING SODA BATH - DUNK

- A. Place each pretzel on the parchment until you can dip an entire batch in the hot baking soda bath, a few at a time. Dunk a pretzel in the water for a few seconds. Use a flat spatula to enter the bath and to remove the pretzel. Let the pretzel drain for a few seconds and place it back on the parchment until all are done and ready to cook.
IMPORTANT! BEFORE COOKING, sprinkle the tops with kosher salt. TIP: If you're making several types of shapes, cook the same shapes on the same baking sheet. Small bites will overcook if alongside large pretzels.

STEP 6: COOK

- A. Place your sheet of pretzels on the middle rack in the hot oven for approximately 8 minutes.
- B. Take the pretzels out when they are golden brown. These brown up very quickly. You'll peak and they'll be just starting to brown and a minute later – they're done. Watch and take out before you get petrified pretzels! If you take them out when they are not yet brown, they may seem too doughy.

STEP 7: BUTTER'EM UP!

- A. While your pretzels are cooking, melt at least 2 full sticks of butter in a sauce pan big enough to fit one pretzel.
- B. Get tongs handy and metal racks ready to hold the final pretzels. Place paper towels, a cloth or parchment paper under the racks to catch dripping butter.
- C. Place the melted butter near the wire racks on a turret to protect your counter if necessary. Get your tongs ready.
- D. Once the pretzels are out of the oven, pick up a pretzel with tongs and place in the butter. Quickly turn to coat both sides and place on the rack. Repeat. You might think that's too much butter. It's not. They will not end up greasy. Just don't let them sit in the pot of butter. (Optionally, you can take a brush and brush on more butter after 5-10 minutes.)