**ROBIN FOSTER’S PRETZEL RECIPE**

Edited by Trygve & Lyla, revised most recently 9.9.20

(*Robin said: The whole pretzel process works way better with 2-3 people. I was doing it alone but when I enlisted another it was much smoother*.)

**Some general information:**

Dough needs to rise for 90 minutes

Pretzels cook in oven for 8 minutes, or 9 if they are fat

Grease the baking sheets well (instead T & L use Costco’s parchment paper)

Baking soda bath *(Dipping pretzels in a Baking Soda bath is what gives them that special pretzel taste.*

*You do this****after****they have been rolled and twisted into pretzel shapes.)*

From start to finish the process takes roughly two and a half hours to make a double batch. A single batch two hours.

**Notes from T & L:**

The ingredients listed below are for a single batch. The process takes so much set-up time for just a dozen pretzels, an insufficient number, we find it more useful and just as easy to make a double recipe simply by doubling the ingredients.

T & L use a commercial KitchenAid mixer with a 6 quart bowl so that bowl is the only place where this entire mixing process happens. No multiple containers.

An oven thermometer is helpful. We found that our 37 year old oven dial exceeds the set temperature by 60+ degrees.

**Select the Yeast you will use:**

**Active Dry Yeast**

4 Teaspoons active dry yeast

1 tsp sugar (killer white, unless you want the flavor of molasses which also darkens it, or honey, etc.)

1 1/2 cup of **warm** water (100 to 110 degrees best, higher kills the yeast)

Mix together in 2 cup measuring cup and let stand for about 10 minutes until frothy (froth is often near the 2 cup mark, as long as you see froth you are good)

**Instant Yeast** Alternatively, if you use Instant yeast skip the above step and instead simply mix 3 teaspoons of instant yeast and 1 ½ cups of warm water directly into the dry ingredients listed below. T & L have not tried this method. T always uses the active dry yeast method when he makes bread, although not with this set of the ingredients.

**Dry Ingredients + Oil**

5 Cups Flour

1/2 Cup Sugar (killer white, unless you want the flavor of honey, molasses which also darkens it, etc.)

1 1/2 tsp. Salt

1 Tablespoon + 1 teaspoon of oil (T & L use olive oil but could use vegetable, etc.)

**Mixing:**

Mix all dry ingredients + oil in a large bowl and then

**Add** t**he "Active Dry" Yeast water/yeast/sugar mixture you made already.**

**If instead you are using the instant yeast method, now add 3 Teaspoons "Instant" yeast and 1 1/2 cups of warm water.**

Mix ingredients until it is a dough ball; remove dough from bowl and knead for about 7 minutes. (We use the KitchenAid at setting #2 for all this.) Sometimes you need to add a sprinkle of flour—but don’t add too much!

Very lightly oil a bowl and put the dough into it. (IF YOU ARE MAKING A DOUBLE BATCH, THIS IS WHEN YOU SPLIT IT)

Roll the dough around until it is all a little oily.

Cover each bowl with a warm, damp towel and allow to rise for 90 minutes.

A trick Robin uses to get a good rise out of the dough is to boil water in a teakettle and then set the teakettle in a cold oven with the covered dough bowl. ***Don’t*** turn the oven on! Be sure to take out the teakettle before you later preheat for baking! Some people put it in a warm car. Or use an inverted cardboard box over the slightly preheated cook-top range. Sometimes we very slightly preheat the oven to 90 to 100, then after turning it off we insert the dough, still in the 6 quart mixing bowl. This method has the advantage of already slightly starting the oven toward the temperature needed for baking the pretzels later.)

**Prepare Baking Soda bath while the dough is rising so it will be ready when needed later**

Dipping pretzels in a Baking Soda bath is what gives them that special pretzel taste. Like making bagels **:)**

You dip them after they have been rolled and twisted into pretzel shapes.

Add 1/2 cup baking soda to 4 cups boiling water in a **Steel** pan. The liquid must be deep enough to cover the pretzel, and wide enough to get a spatula under it easily.

Once it starts boiling turn the heat down to medium or perhaps lower.

When dough is finished rising (about 90 minutes), dump it onto a **lightly** floured surface. We use a heavyweight baking cloth because it stays in place when rolling the dough and provides traction so it doesn’t just slide. Use kitchen scissors to cut into 12-16 egg-sized sections, depending on preferred size of pretzels. (6 or 9 fit on a cookie sheet).

Preheat oven to 435 degrees **(check for teakettle!)**

Grease 2 baking sheets or cut parchment paper. If making a double batch the first pan will be out of the oven before you need it again.

**Forming the pretzels**

The dough is remarkably elastic. Roll each dough section into a long rope (best to not add flour at this point or they won’t stick together; but if any flour needed, only lightly!). We use a clean cloth to provide more traction. As you roll them, continuously move your hands away from each other to stretch them. You may need to focus on the fat ends to thin them, too. You’ll soon learn how thick those rolls optimally should be. First try for the diameter of your ring finger, then adjust.

Twist into pretzel shape by first making a loop, then twisting the ends into half of a complete revolution, then bring them back over and then onto the loop, pressing ends down slightly, looking like arms folded across a chest. Adjust into proper pretzel shape.

**Dipping the pretzels**

Use 2 spatulas, slotted so the liquid doesn’t transfer along with the pretzels.

Place pretzel on slotted spatula and dip into the baking soda bath. Let pretzel slide off into the water. Sometimes you have to help it. They want to float so don’t let them. Deep liquid helps them stay covered.

After about 10 seconds, take out of the bath. Keeping pretzel on the spatula, set the spatula on a plate that has a paper towel on it. This lets the pretzel drain a bit.

Use the other spatula (thus one wet spatula, one dry spatula) to drop the next pretzel in the baking soda bath.

Then move the drying one on the well greased baking sheet. (Or onto parchment paper instead of greasing.) Then repeat the process by pulling out the second one and setting it on the plate to dry.

Sometimes you re-form the pretzel a bit when setting it on the baking sheet.

You can choose to sprinkle pretzels with coarse salt or whatever before baking. Press the sprinkles into place or they’ll fall off. (If you egg brush them—see variations—salt after egg brush)

Bake in 435 degree oven for approximately 8 (thin ones) to 10 minutes (fat ones) or until brown on top.

Cook 1 sheet at a time OR put the second one in 4 minutes after the first to keep the flow going. In that case when you take the first one out, move the second one up to the top rack.

**Variations**

Using sugar to feed yeast doesn’t make the dough sticky enough to pick up any additions. Molasses best. Honey may be too sticky.

Add cinnamon and raisins.—Pretzels for breakfast!

Beat an egg and brush the top of the pretzels with it—then salt.—Shiny pretzels! *(Use just the white or just the yolk.)*

Make pretzel ropes, or pretzel for sandwiches!

Melted Butter instead of vegetable oil.

Accents we have tried or will try: Big sea salt crystals, caraway seeds, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, dill, fennel, chopped arugula, candied ginger pieces, raisins, dried cranberries, curry, cinnamon, cardamom, parmesan cheese powder, pepper from grinder.

**NOTES of 9.9.20**

* We make a double batch from the start. Partway through the kneading we separate it into two single batches to add different ingredients, then process each batch separately from that point, changing the hot soda bath between so flavor doesn’t transfer unless the first batch is bland.
* When we added anise seed, curry powder, etc., instead of just tossing it in the mixing bowl where it didn’t get picked up, we made an impression in the dough for it, then wrapped the dough around the ingredient. Using molasses or honey to feed yeast makes it much stickier.
* We increased water by 1 tbsp per batch, resulting in softer less tough dough.
* Reduced sugar by 1/16 cup in second step, no difference in result.
* Measures per batch we liked: ½ cup dried cranberries, 2 tbs cup crushed anise seed, 1 ½ tsp curry, 1 ½ tsp crushed fennel seed, ¼ cup dill weed, ¼ cup cinnamon, 1 cup parmesan. (Crushing seeds releases more flavor.)