

PRETZELS

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Another ingredient that makes these pretzels different is the milk that is used to activate the yeast, rather than the more usual water. Butter and powdered sugar are added to the milk-yeast mixture, and of course each pretzel is brushed with butter after it is baked.

Basically, it is a pastry. But it is a pretzel pastry, so it counts.

GERMAN SOFT PRETZELS

Yield: About 20 servings

2 (¼-ounce) packages (1 ½ tablespoons) active dry yeast
1½ cups warm (110 degree) water
About 5 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons food-grade lye (if it doesn't say "food-grade," don't use it, see note)
2 cups water
Coarse sea, kosher or pretzel salt
Note: We have only been able to find food-grade lye online.

1. In the bowl of an electric mixer or another large bowl, sprinkle the yeast over the warm water and set aside to proof until foamy, about 5 minutes. With the paddle attachment or wooden spoon, beat in enough of the flour, 1 cup at a time, until you have a stiff dough.

2. Switch to the dough hook and knead the dough for 5 to 8 minutes, until smooth and elastic, adding more flour if necessary. Or turn out the dough onto a floured surface and knead by hand. Place the dough in a large oiled bowl and turn to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, 1 to 1½ hours.

3. Line 2 baking sheets with aluminum foil (not parchment paper), grease the foil and set aside. Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a floured surface. With a serrated knife

or bench scraper, cut the dough in half. Roll one half of the dough into a 1-inch-thick rectangle. With the serrated knife or a pizza wheel, cut the dough the short way across into 1-inch-wide strips. Form each strip into a pretzel shape and place on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

4. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. In a small enameled or other noncorrosive saucepan (do not use aluminum), mix the lye and water together. Bring to a boil, then immediately remove from the heat. Using tongs, dip each pretzel into the lye solution momentarily, but so that it is completely coated, then return to the baking sheet.

5. Sprinkle the pretzels with coarse salt and bake for 15 to 18 minutes, or until browned. Transfer to wire racks to cool.

Per serving: 116 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; no protein; 24 g carbohydrate; no sugar; 1 g fiber; 58 mg sodium; 6 mg calcium

— Lightly adapted from "Prairie Home Breads," by Judith M. Fertig

HOMEMADE SOFT PRETZELS

Yield: 8 servings

1½ cups warm water (110 to 115 degrees)
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 package (2 ¼ teaspoons) active dry yeast
4½ cups (22 ounces) all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
Vegetable oil, for pan
10 cups water
2/3 cup baking soda
1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water
Pretzel salt or other coarse salt

1. Combine the water, sugar and kosher salt in the

bowl of a stand mixer and sprinkle the yeast on top. Allow to sit for 5 minutes or until the mixture begins to foam. Add the flour and butter and, using the dough hook attachment, mix on low speed until well-combined. Change to medium speed and knead until the dough is smooth and pulls away from the side of the bowl, approximately 4 to 5 minutes.

2. Remove the dough from the bowl, clean the bowl and oil it well with vegetable oil. Return the dough to the bowl, cover with plastic wrap and sit in a warm place for approximately 50 to 55 minutes or until the dough has doubled in size.

3. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and lightly brush with the vegetable oil. Set aside.

4. Bring the 10 cups of water and the baking soda to a rolling boil in a nonreactive 8-quart saucepan or roasting pan.

5. In the meantime, turn the dough out onto a slightly oiled work surface and divide into 8 equal pieces. Roll out each piece of dough into a 24-inch rope. Make a U-shape with the rope, holding the ends of the rope, cross them over each other and press onto the bottom of the U in order to form the shape of a pretzel. Place onto the prepared baking sheets.

6. Place the pretzels into the boiling water one by one, for about 25 seconds. Remove them from the water using a large, flat spatula. Return to the half-sheet pan, brush the top of each pretzel with the beaten egg yolk and water mixture and sprinkle with the pretzel salt. Bake until dark golden brown in color, approximately 12 to 14 minutes. Transfer to a cooling rack for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Per serving: 331 calories; 8 g fat; 5 g saturated fat; 39 mg cholesterol; 8g protein; 56 g carbohydrate; 2 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 1,160 mg sodium; 26 mg calcium

— Recipe by Alton Brown, via Food Network

KNOCK-OFF AUNTIE ANNE'S PRETZELS

Yield: 12 servings

1½ cups milk
1 package (2¼ teaspoons) active dry yeast
2 tablespoons plus a pinch or two of powdered sugar, divided
6 tablespoons (¾ stick) melted butter, divided
1¼ teaspoons salt
1½ cups bread flour
2 cups all-purpose flour
4 cups very hot water
6 tablespoons baking soda
Coarse salt

- In a large, nonreactive bowl, heat the milk in a microwave until warm, about 110 degrees. Add the yeast, stir and let it activate, about 3 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons of the powdered sugar and 4 tablespoons of the butter, and stir to combine.
- Sift together the salt, bread flour and all-purpose flour. Add to the yeast mixture and knead for 8 to 10 minutes, using either the dough hook attachment on a stand mixer or your hands. Add the dough to a greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap; let rise in a warm environment until it doubles in size, about 1 hour. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 425 degrees.
- After the dough has doubled, divide it into 12 equal portions. Use your hands to roll each portion into a long, thin rope, starting in the middle and working your way to the ends; each rope should be about 36 inches long and ½ inch high.
- To form the pretzel, hold the dough at each end so it forms a U. Keeping your left hand still, cross your right hand in front of your left with enough speed to swing the dough around twice; you can use

the counter to stop its momentum, if necessary. Alternatively, form a pretzel shape out of the rope on the counter. Seal the ends into the bottom to complete the pretzel.

- Dissolve the baking soda into the very hot water and oil 2 baking sheets. Take each pretzel and dip it into the baking soda-water bath and then place, seam side down, onto the oiled baking sheets — about 6 to each sheet. Sprinkle each pretzel with coarse salt and bake in the oven until golden brown and puffy, about
- 8 to 10 minutes. Rotate the pans 180 degrees halfway through cooking.
- While the pretzels are baking, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter. Add a pinch or two of the powdered sugar, and stir. Brush each pretzel with butter, and serve.

Per serving: 209 calories; 7 g fat; 4 g saturated fat; 17 mg cholesterol; 5 g protein; 31 g carbohydrate; 3 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 660 mg sodium; 33 mg calcium



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GARLIC

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Elephant garlic was an unfamiliar term until we moved to Oregon. When the variety would come up in conversation, it was always connected to Nichols Garden Nursery in Albany. At some point, curiosity won out, and I did some research.

Elephant garlic is *allium ampeloprasum* and is not a true garlic. The enormous bulb has a much milder and sweeter flavor than garlic and is more closely related to a leek.

When garlic was first being used in the early 1940s, it wasn't well accepted and was considered a lower-class food. Garlic slowly grew in popularity for use in cooking and for medicinal use. In 1950, Nichols became the first farm to commercially grow and distribute the large member of the leek family. They changed the name from giant garlic to elephant garlic. The rest is history.

I'm sorry to report that we have missed the 21st annual Elephant Garlic Festival in North Plains. The festival was advertised as Funstinks on its poster. North Plains is northwest of Portland. The festival was Aug. 10 through 12. Maybe

next year.

Time to plant

Garlic bulbs are frost tolerant and can be planted from October to November. Garlic thrives in rich, well-drained soil with a pH of 6 to 7, which is the normal range for most vegetables. Bulbs are planted with the tip of the clove pointing up at a depth of 2 to 3 inches and 12 inches apart.

When spring growth begins, water to keep the soil slightly moist. Fertilize with a complete fertilizer.

Garlic is ready to harvest when about two-thirds of the foliage begins to dry out or turn yellow. Tie the tips together in small bundles and hang to cure for several weeks. After curing, cut foliage and roots from bulbs and store in a mesh bag.

Types of garlic

There are two types of garlic: hardneck and softneck.

Hardneck cloves grow in a single circle around a central woody stem. These varieties produce, or attempt to produce, a flower-like stalk. The varieties are close to wild garlic with more complex flavors. The varieties have subtle flavor differences, much like wine grapes, that can

reflect regional soil and weather.

The top flowering stems are called scapes. The stalks grow straight for several inches and then curl once or twice before growing upward and blooming. Cutting off the scapes before bloom redirects energy to the developing bulbs. The recipes for using scapes include pesto, grilling, pickling, salad dressings and breads.

Spanish roja is a popular choice as garlic lovers find the flavor to be true garlic. It is a Northwest heirloom that was reported to have been brought to northwest Oregon before 1900.

Softneck garlic is the garlic you will find in most produce sections. Storage life for most varieties is 6 to 9 months after harvest. In addition to their longer storage capability, they are the varieties that are used for braiding, making them a great home-grown, decorative Christmas gift.

Inchelium red is a variety that grows well east of the Cascades. The variety was discovered on the Colville Indian Reservation in northern Washington.

If you are thinking of adding garlic bulbs this year, don't wait too long. Local sources and mail-order sources usually have limited supplies.

GARDEN

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CHORES

• Time to order spring bulbs. To simplify your life there are packages of bulbs in local stores if you are satisfied with the varieties that are offered. To my surprise, they often offer less common

varieties.

• Start fall yard work by continuing to deadhead spent blossoms from roses and other perennials. Clear away dead foliage from bulbs which have gone back to dormancy.

• Herbs such as parsley, rosemary, basil, chives, thyme, and marjoram can be dug from the garden and placed in pots now for growing indoors

this winter.

• Begin bringing houseplants indoors for winter. Prune back rampant growth and protruding roots. Check for pests and treat if necessary. Houseplants should be brought indoors one month before the heat is normally turned on.

• Spring blooming perennials can be divided now. Enrich

the soil with peat moss or compost before replanting.

• Divide peonies now. Replant in a sunny site and avoid planting deeply. Lift gladiolus when their leaves yellow and cure in an airy place until dry before husking.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com Thanks for reading!

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