

# PRETZELS

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Also, to help the pretzels later brown in the oven, the boiling water is made alkaline. Traditionally, this was achieved with lye, a substance you probably won't have on hand unless you live in a Grimms' fairy tale. Instead, we'll use baking soda, about a 16-to-1 ratio. That means for four cups of water you'll add a quarter cup of baking soda.

## Put on the finishing touches

Once the pretzels are boiled, they can be brushed with or dipped fully in an egg wash (beaten raw egg mixed with a splash of water). This is not necessary, but it gives the pretzels a nice sheen. Also, if you're dusting the pretzels with salt, the egg wash helps it stick.

A word about salt: Big crystals, like those found in coarse sea salt or most kosher salt, give a lovely crunch while bringing out the flavor of the pretzel itself.

## A sweet variation

If you prefer sweet pretzels to savory, my advice is to go with the egg wash but ixnay on the alt-say. Bake them as per usual, but when they come out of the oven, brush them with melted butter and sprinkle liberally with cinnamon sugar (I know you know this, but, that's just four parts granulated sugar to one part ground cinnamon).

## Finally, bake — and eat — the pretzels

Regardless of your sweet versus savory predilections, bake your pretzels on the parchment-covered sheet tray in a hot oven (425F) until they're very brown, about 10 to 15 minutes. Let them cool and then devour them



Abel Uribe/Chicago Tribune-TNS

After the pieces are cut and cover with plastic wrap, one by one is stretched to about 18-20 inches for each soft pretzel.

like a peckish marmoset.

## SOFT PRETZELS

Prep time: 15 minutes plus 60 minutes fermentation  
Baking time: 12 to 14 minutes  
Makes 10 (3-ounce) pretzels

- 3 3/4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 2 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast (1 package)
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons salted butter, melted
- 1 1/2 cups warm water (115- to 120F)
- 1/4 cup baking soda (adjust if you have more or less than 4 cups water)
- 1 egg, whisked with 1 tablespoon water
- Coarse salt as needed (optional)

Step 1: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook combine 3 3/4 cups flour, 2 1/4 teaspoons yeast, 1 tablespoon brown sugar, 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, 2 tablespoons melted butter and 1 1/2 cups warm water.

Step 2: Mix on medium speed for 4 to 5 minutes, until dough is fairly smooth and pulls away from the sides of the bowl. If it sticks to the bottom, add more flour, a tablespoon at a time, until it pulls away.

Step 3: Lightly dust a clean surface with flour. Transfer dough from bowl to floured surface and knead briefly to form a smooth ball; if it's too sticky add a tiny bit more flour, but you don't want it too dry. Place inside a clean bowl that's been coated

lightly with nonstick spray. Cover bowl with plastic and leave in a warm place until dough roughly doubles in size, about an hour.

Step 4: When the dough has doubled, punch it down to remove carbon dioxide gas. Divide dough into 10 pieces — roughly 3 ounces each — and cover with plastic until shaping.

Step 5: Using both hands, roll out one dough piece into a thin rope roughly 18- to 24-inches long. Drag rope into a circle with the two ends crossed about an inch or two from the ends. Fold crossed ends back onto the opposite side of the circle, pressing down lightly to make sure they stick. Place onto a parchment-covered baking sheet and repeat with

remaining pieces. (If, upon shaping, your pretzels continue to proof, don't panic. A fat pretzel is still a yummy pretzel. Or, if they've proofed so much that they look more like knotted Kaiser rolls, remember that pretzel buns are all the rage these days.)

Step 6: Preheat oven to 425F. In a heavy bottomed saucepan, pour in enough cold water so that it is about 3- to 4-inches deep, keeping track of the total number of cups. Bring to a boil over high heat. For every cup of water, add 1 tablespoon baking soda, sprinkling it in carefully, as soda will cause water to foam up. Boil pretzels — as many at a time as will fit comfortably in your pan without touching — for

30 seconds, then carefully transfer back to the parchment-lined baking sheet. If pretzels sink, you can keep them afloat with a spatula if need be so they don't stick to the pan.

Step 7: Coat boiled pretzels in egg wash by brushing or dunking both sides, then sprinkle with coarse salt.

Step 8: Bake until golden brown, about 12 to 14 minutes. Cool on a wire rack, then gobble ravenously.

## VARIATION

For sweet pretzels, omit coarse salt. After baking and cooling, brush pretzels with melted butter and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar.

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## CROSSWORD PUZZLER

**ACROSS**

- 1 "— Lisa"
- 5 Pick pears
- 9 "Yo!"
- 12 Found a roost
- 13 Nudge forward
- 14 When Paris sizzles
- 15 Pulled apart
- 16 Police station
- 18 Forces
- 20 Quick — a bunny
- 21 Breeze through
- 22 Undamaged in any way
- 26 Handbag brand
- 29 Neon, e.g.
- 30 Ewe's plaint
- 31 Not include
- 32 Meditation practice
- 33 Lunar valley
- 34 Choose
- 35 Six games, in tennis

**DOWN**

- 1 Antony or Chagall
- 2 Refrigerator stick
- 3 Number of Muses
- 4 Draw
- 5 Madras money
- 6 Makes a faux pas
- 7 Long time
- 8 Nut trees
- 9 Domestic bird
- 10 List shortener
- 11 Still
- 17 Einstein's "is"
- 19 201, to Claudius
- 22 John, in Glasgow
- 23 Not much (2 wds.)
- 24 Summon
- 25 Fish story
- 26 Gunk
- 27 Ballpark figures
- 28 Radio — Music Hall
- 29 Come down with
- 32 Final letter
- 33 Doubles
- 35 Displayed
- 36 Winery cask
- 38 Cooper's channel
- 39 Rice field
- 41 Took a straw
- 42 Café au —
- 43 To be, to Brutus
- 44 Judge
- 45 Holiday mo.
- 46 Mouths, in zoology
- 47 Rainy
- 48 Response on deck

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

A	B	A	S	E		A	V	G		T	O	W
R	O	M	A	N		F	I	E		A	P	E
C	A	P	R	I		A	M	I		B	A	N
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O	C	T		S	E	E		S	P	A	D	E

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