

Sourdough Soft Pretzels

For The Dough:

- 500 g bread flour (4 cups)
- 10 g salt (1 ½ tsp)
- 275 g water (1 cup)
- 50-150 g active starter (¼ to ¾ cup) * **[see note]**
- 3 tbsp softened butter (43 g) - add one at a time after the dough comes together

For The Baking Soda Bath:

- 6 cups water (1 ½ qts; 1500 g)
- ⅔ cup baking soda (180 g)
- 3 tbsp honey (60 g)

For Sprinkling:

- Course, flaky, or pretzel salt

Directions:

- 1) **Mix** the bread flour, salt, water, and starter together in the bowl of a stand mixer.
- 2) **Knead** in the stand mixer, fitted with a dough hook, on a low speed (*speed 2 on a KitchenAid*) until the dough comes completely together. Alternatively, knead by hand.
- 3) After the dough has come together, add the butter one tablespoon at a time, allowing each tablespoon to be fully incorporated before adding the next.
- 4) Continue kneading 8-10 minutes more, until the dough is smooth, soft, and pliable.
NOTE: The dough should NOT stick to your fingers or the bowl. If it is too sticky at this stage, problems will occur later on. Add more flour if necessary.
- 5) **Bulk ferment the dough.** Shape the dough into a ball, cover, and let it rest until it has increased in volume by at least 50%, or up to 100%.
- 6) **Pre-shape.** Divide the dough into six equal portions and pre-shape each into a 24-27 inch long rope. Let the dough rest for 15-20 minutes to allow the gluten to relax.
- 7) **Shape** each rope into a pretzel. Make a “U” shape with each rope. Twist the ends to form what looks like a fish. Twist the ends 1-2 more times to complete the middle pretzel twist. Last, bring the top down to the bottom to complete the pretzel shape.
- 8) **Final proof.** Rest on the counter for 30-60 minutes (*this will add fluff to your pretzel*), then in the fridge for another 30-60 minutes (*this will make them easy to handle and give them a beautiful oven spring*).

- 9) **Prepare the baking soda bath.** Bring 6 cups of water to a boil in a 4 qt pot, then reduce to a simmer. Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 450 F.
- 10) Add the baking soda to your hot, simmering water in small portions, whisking continuously, so as not to let the mixture boil over.
- 11) Once the baking soda has dissolved, add the honey to the pot and whisk to dissolve.
- 12) Remove the pretzels from the fridge and prepare a work area with your baking soda bath, cold pretzels, a cooling rack, and a skimmer.
- 13) Simmer each pretzel in the baking soda bath for 30 seconds (*no more than 40 seconds or your pretzels will develop a metallic taste*), then remove using a skimmer and let them fully drip dry on a cooling rack.
- 14) Transfer pretzels from the cooling rack to a baking sheet and sprinkle with coarse salt.
- 15) **Bake** the pretzels at 450 F for 10 minutes, then at 425 F for 8-10 more minutes.
- 16) Immediately remove the pretzels from the baking sheet onto a cooling rack, in order to prevent the bottom from overcooking.
- 17) **Enjoy!**
- 18) **How to store:** Enjoy these fresh out of the oven. If you absolutely cannot, let them cool as much as possible, then place on a sheet pan and flash-freeze.

To reheat: Remove the pretzels from the freezer and bake at 350 F for 5-10 minutes until warmed through.

Notes:

- **Active Starter:** Use less starter if your environment is warm or if you are wanting a longer fermentation (*such as overnight*). Use more starter if your environment is cool or if you are wanting a shorter fermentation.
- Do NOT butter the pretzels after simmering in the baking soda bath! This will ruin the beautifully dark color the baking soda bath will give. Instead, butter after baking, if desired.
- You could skip the fridge during the second proof and just let these rest on the counter for 60-90 minutes. They will be super fluffy, but a little more difficult to handle and may not have as beautiful of an oven spring.