

Fresh Pretzels Austrian-style

Makes 8-10 Large Pretzels (15-20 small)

INGREDIENTS:

2½ C. White flour
½ C. Rye Flour
2 t. salt
1 ½ t. Active dry yeast
1¼ C. Warm water
1-2 t. Caraway Seeds
1 T. Olive oil
2 T. Baking soda
3 C. Cold Water
2-3 T. Fine sea salt
Parchment paper, covering a baking sheet

METHOD:

1. Pre-heat oven 525°F (a baking or pizza stone is very helpful), and dissolve yeast in warm water, let sit for about 4 minutes. Prepare pretzel bath by mixing the baking soda in 3 cups of cold water. Set aside.
2. Mix white flour, rye and salt in a large mixing bowl, and gradually add water with yeast until fully incorporated. Knead dough until smooth and elastic, adding more flour as needed, and let sit for 10 minutes; then knead again. Transfer to an oiled bowl, covered, and allow dough to rise for at least 10 minutes or up to 60 (Note: pretzel dough needn't rise or ferment).
3. Remove dough ball from the bowl – blotting any excess oil – and place on the work area. Using a dough knife, cut into equal wedge-shaped pieces by first cutting the circle into half, and then quarters, then eighths, and so on up to sixteenths.
4. Gently remove one the slices and begin rolling it with your hands, shaping it into a rope, until it is about 18 inches long. Lift one end and, form a loop in the shape of a “U”, and lay the end across the middle of the rolled dough; repeat with the other end so that the classic pretzel shape is created. (NOTE: if you want smaller pretzels, then roll each slice out to 24” and cut each in half before shaping into pretzels)

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5. Lift the pretzel and slide it into the baking soda bath, and then begin making the next one. Remove the first pretzel from the bath when the second is ready to go in, and lay it on the parchment paper-covered baking sheet. Make the remaining pretzels the same way, leaving space between them on the baking sheet, where they will expand when baking.
6. After all pretzels are on the baking sheet, sprinkle salt on top to taste.
7. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until evenly browned, turning the baking sheet once during the process.
8. Remove and let cool – if only briefly – on a cooling rack. Serve immediately or within an hour or so; may be reheated.

Serve with a schmear of Liptauer spreadable cheese, and enjoy with your favorite beverage.

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