

Soft Pretzels - Philly Style

Philly style pretzels are NOT fluffy. They are dense, slightly sweet and salty and almost chewy. It's hard to describe, but based on what I know about those pretzels and the grains I have on hand - Durum is required for this one. If you make a lot of pasta, you probably have it. Khorasan (Kamut) or Emmer are interchangeable for Durum. This reminds me of what it was like as a kid watching them make Pennsylvania dutch style pretzels. The dough was thick, heavier and tougher than your usual fun to play with bread dough. I kneaded this in four smaller batches since I made these by hand, and I let the dough rest for better gluten development.

Ingredients

- 250 g wheat berries, hard
- 250 g wheat berries, Durum

DR. MEL'S QUICK NO-WAIT YUDANE:

- 25 g flour, any (take from the milled flour)
- 50 g water, boiling

REMAINING DOUGH INGREDIENTS

- 310 g water, cold
- 15 g sea salt
- 6 g yeast
- 6 g sugar, granulated
- 20 g butter

WATER BATH

- 896 g water, boiling (4 cups)
- 18 g baking soda (4 tsp baking soda)

EGG WASH

- 50 g egg, whole (1 egg)
- 12 g water (1 tbsp)

TOPPING:

Directions

1. Mill the flour.
2. Make the Yudane by mixing 25 grams of milled flour with 50 grams of boiling water. Mix it quickly into a paste.
3. Add water to your mixing bowl with Yudane and sugar. Give it a swirl, then add salt and yeast.
4. Add remaining flour to the bowl and begin mixing with a danish dough whisk (or by hand if you like). Add in butter, and continue mixing for several minutes by hand.
5. Rest the dough for 30 minutes and knead for a few more minutes until the dough is more pliable and workable.
6. Let the dough rise until doubled.
7. Punch down the dough (we did it the fun way this time).
8. Scale (divide) the dough into 4 parts, and take one section out at a time for shaping. Keep the remaining dough covered with a damp towel.
9. Divide the section into 4, and shape each one into a pretzel.
10. Simple Shaping:

11. Roll out a long log
12. Turn up the ends to make a “U” shape
13. Take the top right end, and turn it down to make the number “6”
14. Cross the other side over to complete the pretzel
15. Multiple Twist Pretzel Shaping:
16. Roll out a long log shape
17. Make a “U” shape by turning up the ends
18. Twist the two ends over each other two or three times. You choose which you like better.
19. Lift the ends up and press them down at the bottom of the loop to form the pretzel.
20. Proofing/Baking:
21. Proof the shaped pretzels for 30 minutes before freezing for 30 minutes.
22. Bring water bath ingredients to a boil, and immerse each pretzel for 1-2 minutes, then place on baking tray lined with parchment.
23. Mix egg wash ingredients together with a fork or a whisk.
24. Brush each pretzel with egg wash using a pastry brush, then sprinkle with coarse sea salt or kosher pretzel salt.
25. 425 degrees F 10-15 minutes until nicely browned.
26. Remove from oven and pan to cool on a wire rack.

Notes

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I lowered the hydration and used a very hard wheat (like durum) to get the dense, chewy texture known to Philly Pretzels. For fluffy pretzels, replace the durum with spelt.

Instead of a boiling water bath, you can do a lye bath instead (not heated).
2 cups of cold water and 18 grams of NaOH (sodium hydroxide, food grade).

Critical Safety Tips:

- **Always add lye to cold water**, never water to lye — this prevents dangerous exothermic reactions and splattering.
- Wear **gloves, eye protection**, and work in a **well-ventilated area**.
- Use **stainless steel or glass** containers — avoid aluminum, plastic, or wooden surfaces.
- The lye solution can be **reused** multiple times and stored in a sealed glass jar.
- **Never use drain cleaner or industrial lye** — only **food-grade sodium hydroxide** is safe for baking.

After dipping pretzels for **10–15 seconds**, sprinkle on salt, and bake immediately at **450°F (230°C)** for 12–15 minutes.