

Homemade Soft Pretzel Bites

Who doesn't love those delicious soft pretzels that you get from places in the mall? The problem is, I never go to the mall. That's ok, though, because homemade ones are even better than Wetzel's or Auntie Anne's, and they're a snap to make!

Here's what you'll need for the dough:

- 2 ½ cups flour
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 packet instant yeast (1 scant Tablespoon)
- 1 cup warm water

And for later:

- 1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
- ½ cup hot water
- Pretzel Salt
- 2 Tablespoons melted butter

Into a mixing bowl go the flour, sugar, salt, and yeast. Stir those together and then pour in the water. You want the water to be bath water warm. I like to stir those together with a spoon just until it comes together into a shaggy mess. Then the stand mixer will take care of the rest. Give it a good 5 minutes with the dough hook. I like to use the third speed setting on my KitchenAid for that. If you don't have a stand mixer, you can always knead by hand. Just dump it onto the counter and go to town for probably 10 minutes, or until your arms give out. Whichever comes first. When it's ready, the dough should be soft and smooth, but not really sticky anymore.

Butter a medium sized bowl. Place your dough ball upside down in the bowl and turn it to coat the top side with butter. Then flip it over and turn it again so that the whole ball has a light coating of butter. This will keep it from drying out while it's rising. Cover the bowl with a damp towel and set it aside to do its thing.

While that's rising, you can make the alkaline mixture. This is the secret ingredient. It's what makes pretzels chewy on the outside. Measure about ½ cup hot water, then add 1 ½ teaspoons of baking soda. Stir until the baking soda is completely dissolved. If it won't completely dissolve, just add a little more hot water.

After about thirty minutes or so, the dough has probably risen enough for what we're making. Go ahead and preheat the oven to 400°. Punch the dough down and pat it out on an unfloured surface. Cut the dough into four pieces and roll each one into a rope. My favorite place for these is Wetzel's Pretzels, so I was trying to copy theirs for size. Mine were probably about an inch in diameter, which was good. Cut each rope into segments. Mine were probably about 1 ½ inches. Can you use this same recipe to make whole pretzels? Sure! Just roll the ropes thinner and shape them into a pretzel shape and then continue with the rest just the same.

Dip each segment into the soda water solution and place on a parchment lined baking sheet. Sprinkle salt over the top. If you want to make sweet ones or if you just don't like salt, you can also leave them bare at this point. Just make sure they all get a dip in the soda water.

Into the 400° oven for about 10 minutes. When they're done, they'll be nicely browned.

Melt a couple tablespoons of butter and brush it over each one. (If you do want to make sweet ones, you would just dip each one in butter and then roll them in a cinnamon and sugar mixture.)

Enjoy!