

Heritage Recipes

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German Soft Pretzels

This German soft pretzel recipe comes from my husband's mother, Lois Wonn Krapf. Many years ago in Tamaqua, Schuylkill Co., PA [not sure of the time frame but about the late 30s-early 40s], the family had a pretzel factory and this is the recipe that they used to make the pretzels. This is an old German recipe, I believe, that was handed down in the family. My husband asked his father for it but he said that it was a secret recipe with secret ingredients. My husband's mother said that there was nothing secret about it and wrote the recipe down for us. The pretzels sold very well here in town but my father-in-law was forced out of the business. He thought that he would get the pretzel recipe along with the business but he did not and the factory soon went out of business.

So this recipe was the star of the operation. Here in PA soft pretzels are a big business and you can find small business selling them in malls and watch them being made. This area of PA had many early German immigrants who came to work in the coal mines. At one time more people spoke German here than English. They loved their Pretzels, so if they sold well here then this is a very good recipe.

German Soft Pretzels

Heat Oven to 475 degrees

Ingredients:

1/8 cup hot water
1 package active dry yeast
1 1/3 cup warm water
1/3 cup brown sugar
5 cups flour plus some extra flour
Coarse Kosher salt

In a large bowl mix the hot water and yeast until the yeast dissolves. Stir in the warm water and the brown sugar. Slowly add 5 cups of flour to the mixture, stirring constantly. Continue stirring until the mixture is smooth and does not stick to the side of the bowl. Put the dough on a lightly floured board.

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Dip your hands in the extra flour. Knead the dough until it is stretchy and smooth. Push it down and away from you with the palms of your hands. Turn the dough as you work. Grease two cookie sheets very well. Sprinkle each with coarse kosher salt. Set the sheets aside. Pinch off a piece of pretzel dough about the size of a golf ball. Roll the dough into a rope 14 inches long and as thick as your thumb. Bend the rope into a u shape, cross one end of the rope over the other end. The ropes should cross about 3 inches from the tips. Twist the cross ends making a full turn. Fold the ends back, toward the middle of the U. Open the ends slightly to form a pretzel shape, press the ends into the dough firmly. Fill a frying pan with water. For each cup of water in the pan add 1 tablespoon of baking soda. Bring water to a gentle boil. Not too many bubbles. Use a spatula to lower each pretzel into frying pan. Count very slowly to 30. Then lift the pretzel onto the greased and salted cookie sheet. Repeat until all the dough is used. Sprinkle some kosher salt on top of the pretzels and put them in the oven.

Bake for 8 minutes or until the pretzels are golden brown. Makes 30 average size pretzels.

Tip: Twisting the dough into the pretzel shape may take some practice before you get it correct. If you can't get the knack, you can always make pretzel sticks.

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