

Plain Bagels

The Cook's Illustrated Baking Book, pp 150-151

Because bagel dough is much drier and stiffer than bread dough, it takes longer for the ingredients to cohere during mixing. For this reason, we recommend that you neither double this recipe nor try to knead the dough by hand. Most natural foods stores carry barley malt syrup. High gluten flour might be more difficult to find. You can order both the syrup and the flour from The Baker's Catalogue at King Arthur Flour: KingArthurFlour.com

- 4 cups high -gluten bread flour (regular bread flour works)
 - 2 teaspoons salt
 - 1 tablespoon honey (this replaces the barley malt in original recipe)
 - 1 ½ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
 - 1 ¼ cups water (barely warm, not hot)
 - 3 tablespoons cornmeal
- May need extra dash of water. The dough should not be wet, but also not crumbly.



Photography Henri T. de Hahn

1. Using stand mixer fitted with dough hook, combine flour, salt, and honey. Add yeast and water; mix at lowest speed until dough looks scrappy, like shreds just beginning to come together, about 4 minutes. Increase speed to medium-low; continue mixing until dough is cohesive, smooth, and stiff, 8 to 10 minutes
2. Turn dough onto counter; divide into 8 portions, about 4 ounces each. Roll pieces into smooth balls and cover with plastic wrap to rest for 5 minutes. (You may also divide into 10 smaller segments for smaller bagels)
3. Form each dough ball into rope 11 inches long by rolling it under your out-stretched palms. Do not taper ends of rope. Shape rope into circle, overlapping ends of rope about 1 ½ inches. Pinch overlapped area firmly together, dampening it slightly with water if ends won't stick. Place ring of dough around your hand at base of your fingers and, with overlap under your palm, roll dough ring several times, applying firm pressure to seal seam. Dough ring should be roughly same thickness all around. Dust rimmed baking sheet with cornmeal, place dough rings on sheet, cover tightly with plastic, and refrigerate overnight (12 to 18 hours).
4. About 1 hour before baking, remove dough rings from refrigerator. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Pour water into large pot of depth of 3 inches and bring water to boil.
5. Working four at a time (basically so they fit comfortably in your pot), drop dough rings into boiling water, stirring and submerging them with metal skimmer or slotted spoon, until very slight puffed, 30 to 45 seconds. (We turn them and wait until they rise to the top of the water.) Remove dough rings from water and transfer them to wire rack, bottom side down, to drain.
6. Transfer rings, rough side down, to parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until deep golden brown and crisp, about 14 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Use tongs to transfer to wire rack to cool. Serve warm or at room temperature. (Bagels can be wrapped in double layer of plastic and stored at room temperature for up to 3 days. Wrapped with additional layer of aluminum foil, bagels can be frozen for up to 1 month. To re crisp, thaw bagels at room temperature, if frozen, and place unwrapped bagels in 450-degree oven for 6 to 8 minutes.)

Topped bagels

Dunk dough rings into one of the following: ½ cup raw sesame seeds, poppy or caraway seeds, dehydrated onion or garlic flakes, or sea or kosher salt while they are still wet and sticky (at the end of step 5, after draining).