

# Super Bowl Soft Pretzels!

By Laura Kurella

With the biggest football game of the season about to be played, I thought it most appropriate to feature what historians consider to be the oldest snack food known to man – pretzels!

With humble beginnings around 610 A.D., in the region between the south of France and northern Italy, monks first created pretzels, and likewise, shaped to resemble the way Christians of the day prayed, with their arms folded across their chests.

According to historical reports, the loops in the pretzel were taught to represent the Christian Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and were used as treats to reward children for reciting their prayers. Likewise, pretzels were originally called pretiolas, which is Latin for little reward!

These treats became so popular that they spread, causing the name to be translated into the Italian word, brachiola, or little arms, and then it made its way over the Alps, into Austria, and Germany, where they became known as a bretzel or pretzel, a name that stuck!

Its arrival in America appears to be a mix of fact and lore. Some say pretzels were brought over to America on the Mayflower in 1620. However, others say it was during the 19th century, when southern German and Swiss German immigrants introduced the pretzel to North America, where it flourished in areas populated by the Pennsylvania Dutch.

The way soft pretzels gave birth to hard ones is rumored to be the result of a baker’s apprentice dozing off while baking soft pretzels. Baking them twice as long as necessary, it was discovered that it made them crisp, crunchy and delicious, and also retained their freshness



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much longer!

Another popular legend surrounds the first American commercial hard pretzel bakery, the Sturgis Bakery, which gave a free meal to a drifter passing through town. In return, the drifter gave the baker a recipe for pretzels that eventually became the recipe of the baker’s apprentice - Julius Sturgis. The immigrants became known as the Pennsylvania Dutch, and this style of pretzel became known as the Pennsylvania Dutch Hard Pretzel, the hard kind we eat today. What’s even more interesting is that Pennsylvania remains the center of American pretzel production, both

hard and soft, and produces roughly 80% of our nation’s pretzels to this day!

Here now are some simple ways for you to twist up some of your own for your Super Bowl snack tray. Enjoy!

## Super Bowl Sweet ‘n’ Cheesy Soft Pretzels

PREP TIME: 20 minutes; COOK TIME: 20-30 minutes; TOTAL TIME: 40-50 minutes; Yield: 12 servings.

### DOUGH

1 cup warm water  
2 teaspoons yeast  
1 cup mashed potatoes, unseasoned  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 cups all-purpose flour

1/4 cup cornmeal  
1 egg  
Pretzel salt  
WATER BATH  
6 cups water  
2 tablespoons baking soda

### DIP

8 ounces cream cheese, softened  
8 ounces caramel ice cream topping

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, mix 1 cup warm water and yeast until yeast dis-

solves. Add mashed potatoes, sugar, and salt. Add flour 1 cup at a time, until dough is tacky but no longer sticky. Roll out dough onto a floured surface, then divide into 5 or 6 pieces. Roll dough into ropes about 1/2-inch thick. To create traditional-shaped soft pretzels, cut ropes into roughly 10-inch segments, or to create a football shaped pretzel (as pictured), cut ropes into smaller pieces, and shape accordingly. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray then sprinkle a light layer of cornmeal across the top of it. In a wide, deep skillet, Bring 6 cups of water to a boil, then stir in 2 tablespoons of baking soda. Drop several pretzels carefully into boiling water bath, allowing them to cook until they float to the top, about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove pretzels then place directly on prepared baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough. In a small bowl, beat egg then, using a pastry brush, coat tops of all pretzels, then sprinkle with pretzel

salt. Place pan in oven, and bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, blend softened cream cheese with caramel ice cream topping for to create the dip.

## Super Bowl Beer Cheese Pretzels

PREP TIME:10 minutes; COOK TIME: 35 minutes; TOTAL TIME: 45 minutes; Yield: 8 servings.

2 cups water  
2 teaspoon baking soda  
1 can jumbo biscuits  
1 egg, beaten  
Pretzel salt  
1 1/2 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese  
1/2 cup shredded mozzarella  
1/4 cup beer  
8 ounces Neufchatel cheese  
2 teaspoon minced garlic  
1 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
Garnish: Shredded Cheddar (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place 2 cups of water and baking soda in a medium saucepan, then bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer. Re-

move biscuits from can and cut each one in half. Roll each biscuit into a ball then use a knife to cut an “x” on top. Placing two at a time into boiling water, boil biscuit pieces for 1-1.5 minutes then, using a slotted spoon, remove from water and place in the outer circle of a round pan or a heat-proof skillet to create a ring of biscuits. Continue until all dough is boiled then, using a pastry brush, generously baste the tops of the dough with beaten egg, then sprinkle with pretzel salt. In a large mixing bowl, combine cheddar cheese, mozzarella, beer, cream cheese, garlic, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, and pepper. Once well-combined, transfer cheese mixture into the middle of the ring of biscuits, and smooth out. Garnish the top of the dip with a bit of shredded cheddar, if desired, then place in oven and bake for 33-35 minutes, or until pretzels are golden and cheese is bubbly. Remove from oven and serve.



Offering up a crispy, salty crust, and a warm and chew-soft center, a piping hot plate of freshly-made soft pretzels are certain to put the “super” in your Super Bowl snack spread! Photo by Laura Kurella