

Try This At Home Series

May 12, 2020



Not Schleppling for Bagels

Mitch Stamm and Kristen Lopez

Mitch: It's Saturday afternoon. I need bagels for Sunday. Do I go to the supermarket bakery to get glossy, soft round rolls with an indentation in the center? The puffy ones inflated to 32 psi? Do I take the ones in the freezer section? Do I go to the shop that steams them while under/over baking them? Do I go to the shop that uses higher hydration because handling and shaping are easier? What about the shop advertising 'New York Water'? Will they have anything other than lemon-poppy or chocolate chip – don't get me started -- bagels when I arrive? I'm not schlepping for bagels. Not if I can invest a little more than one hour cumulative time to mix, shape, boil, and bake bagels that could pacify the most contentious Hadassah meeting.

The world's sturdiest and most versatile trencher, the bagel is not just a barrier between toppings and your fingers, it's the cornerstone of a sandwich. And, many a meal.

Unfortunately, soome peeople think of and reach for a sandwich's fillings first, blindly and thoughtlessly reaching for the bread. But a bagel sandwich begins with a bagel. A sturdy bagel with a dominant, but not cheeky, chew. A bagel with a glimmering, lustrous sheen. A bagel with an initial burst of malty sweetness followed by a lasting, clean finish of toasted cereal. A bagel with texture and flavor so transportive that you feel the midnight baker's soul. A bagel that requires torsion between the biceps and sternocleidomastoid muscles for biting and chewing. A bagel that needs nothing to accentuate or embellish it. A bagel with attitude. A bagel that bites back.

When asked about the symbolism of the bagel shape, do you reach for Bartlett's? 'No beginning, no end' or 'Circle of life.' What about the legend of the Ouroboros? Unlike anyone I've ever met, I'm inclined, if not compelled, to ponder the hole. Without the hole, it's a meaningless lump, Without the hole, the bagel would not boil and bake with great attributes.. Without the hole we forgo the debate, 'Is it ring shaped, or circular?' What then, does the annulus represent? A hole in the universe? Emptiness? Loneliness? Isolation? Desperation? Or, if you're positive and productive like I am, do you see Hope? Opportunity? Possibility? A big smiley face that says, 'Want a cookie'?

A few things:

- Blueberry bagels? Please. Don't.
- I enjoyed reading "The Bagel" by Maria Balinska
- Annulus: Now you know why we chose bagels this week. I waited years to use the word annulus.
- I looked up the neck muscle.



Kristen: I have opinions about bagels, strong New Jersey born, dedicated myself to bread, opinions.

Bagels are one of the few foods I feel are a part of my upbringing and therefore my identity. I did not grow up with much of any cultural food heritage.

But bagels have always been the one decent piece of bread around us in my very rural New Jersey hometown. Everyone has their favorite shop and it is almost always in a strip mall, next to a nail salon. They are the only thing we went to a dedicated bakery for. Otherwise, baked goods were homemade, bought at a grocery store or from a hybrid type shop (farmstand and/or diner with some baked goods for sale).

My opinions about bagels are as follows:

- A very basic lean dough should be used, with the exception of egg bagels.
- Everything is EVERYTHING, but don't you dare put caraway in my everything bagel. This is where Mitch groans out loud.
- Bonus points for toppings on the bottom of the bagel too.
- Bagels should put your jaw through a workout. If it doesn't hurt a little, it's not a good bagel.
- There must be a pronounced hole.
- A good bagel shop will package your onion/garlic flavors separately but close enough that it still all kind of smells like it anyway.
- They absolutely must be boiled (but yes, I've had my moments of panic and self-doubt when considering high level production with just steam. Thanks for the guilt trip, Mitch).
- A bad bagel is a very sad thing.

Every trip back to New Jersey since I moved away for college is full of bagels. Bagels for breakfast daily and as many as I can fit in my luggage for the return trip. That was even true when I went to Johnson & Wales, you know, a baking school where bagels are taught as part of the curriculum. I've had more than one bookbag smell like an everything bagel for weeks on end.

There was one brief year, where my now husband lived in Brooklyn and I was in bagel heaven especially when I lived with him over the summer during an internship. Some days the only thing worth leaving the air conditioning for was a good bagel and a crappy iced coffee.

For this home bake, I played it tried and true. All high protein flour, a straight dough, shaped and retarded overnight. Plain and everything flavor. Taking a cue from our mutual friend and owner of Toasted (Napa, CA), Ariella Wolkowicz, I used ramps for the first time and made a simple cream cheese flavor.

Now that we live in California, a bagel desert, several family members have mailed us bagel care packages, despite it being within my skill set to reproduce. However, the Bay Area is starting to see a bit of a bagel revolution. There are a few more really good bagel shops, several owned by Guild members. And their success further validates my opinion, there just aren't enough quality bagel shops here. And no, it doesn't have anything to do with the water.

Bagels

Ingredient	Weight	Percentage
High gluten flour	2268g	100
Water	1202g	53
Instant active yeast	12g	0.6
Salt	45g	1.98
Diastatic malt	34g	1.5
Total	3553g	

Method:

- Desired dough temperature: 75*
- Mix on low speed to incorporate.
- Mix intensively on high speed to full development per the windowpane test
- Cover for 10 – 15 minutes.
- Divide: 100g units
- Preshape: logs
- Shape: Ring. Placed on parchment lined tray.
- Cover. Refrigerate overnight
- Boil bagels in a 5% malt or honey/water solution
- Place on drip screen long enough for the surface to get tacky.
- If covering the bagels, dip the tacky bagels in seeds or other toppings.
- Place on prepared sheet trays
- Bake: 380* convection oven