

Semi-Sourdough Bagels

Growing up in Vermont as the child of relocated New Yorkers, “Zabars” was a magic word. Friends and relatives would come north from “The City” for a weekend of skiing or to admire the foliage and guest-gifts would appear from the land of lox and schmear. By the time of my Bar Mitzvah, though my Hebrew was memorized I was fluent in Zabars and had a passable acquaintance with H&H, Murrays, and even the Kossar Bialy. To this day, bagels remain one of my favorite carbs, and in The City my favorite way to have one is fresh from the oven and straight into my hand, in everything or pumpernickel. As a baker, however, it took me a long time to take the plunge. Bagels seemed fussy and labor-intensive, both of which turn out to be true. My “New Haven” style bagels are pretty close to the New York standard, but have a bit of Vermont flavor, using maple syrup instead of malt and with sourdough starter instead of leaning on the yeast. If you’re baking without sourdough (don’t worry, you’ll come around soon), just use 1 T dry yeast and add an extra cup of warm water to the sponge.



Ingredients:

Sponge:

2 C Sourdough Starter
1 C Warm Water
3 C Flour (1/3 up to whole wheat,
rye, etc)

Main Dough:

1 C water
1 t Yeast
3-4 C Flour
3 T Wheat Gluten
1 T Salt
2 T Maple Syrup

Garnish:

Poppy seeds, Sesame seeds,
“everything,” and a little salt.

Directions:

To make the sponge, mix starter, water, and flour and stir to form a craggy mass. Cover and let rise 2-4 hours. Turn the sponge out onto a floured countertop and make the main dough in the same bowl, starting with the water, yeast, and maple syrup, then adding the salt after the first cup of water. Combine sponge with main dough after salt and first cup flour and then work in the remaining flour with the goal of a smooth, almost dry dough. Rise until doubled (1-2 hours). Divide into twelve balls of equal size and shape your bagels. Place on a greased baking sheet and cover to rise for 30 minutes. During this time, bring your largest pot of water to boil, along with a quarter cup of baking soda for the classic alkali taste. Preheat your oven as hot as that baby will go (500 degrees or more will be needed for a 10-minute bake) and get ready to dunk your bagels. Working quickly with a slotted spoon, boil your bagels for one minute on each side and return to the baking sheet. Quickly dust bagels with desired toppings and bake until golden brown.