**Soft Pretzels**

**Makes 6 pretzels, one loaf, or 24 bites**

**Ingredients:**

1 cup lukewarm milk (microwave for 20-30 seconds as needed)

2 ¼ tsp. active dry yeast

3 tablespoons brown sugar

2 tablespoons butter, melted

2 1/4 cups flour

1 teaspoons fine salt

**Soak:**

¼ cup baking soda

2 cups water

**Topping:**

Coarse salt

2 tablespoons butter, melted

**Directions:**

Place all the ingredients in a large bowl and mix with a wooden spoon until combined.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead the dough for about 10 minutes and shape into a ball. *The dough should still be soft slightly sticky. You may need to add an extra ¼ cup flour while kneading if the dough is too sticky.*

Place in a large mixing bowl that has been lightly coated with nonstick spray and let rise for 2 hours, or overnight in the refrigerator, until doubled in size

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Preheat oven to 425°F (218°C). Line one large baking sheets with parchment paper or grease with nonstick spray. Combine the hot water and baking soda in a medium bowl.

With a sharp knife, cut ball of dough into 2 sections. Roll the dough into two ropes about ¾ inch in diameter. Cut each rope into bite-sized pieces to make a total of 20-30 bites. *DO NOT USE FLOUR when rolling the ropes.*

Combine the baking soda and hot water in an 8X8 casserole dish. Place all the bites in the baking soda solution and let sit for at least 30 seconds. Remove with a spatula and place onto the prepared baking sheet. Make sure the bites are not touching.

Sprinkle with coarse salt and bake for 12-15 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the oven, place in a large bowl, and toss with melted butter.

**Spicy Cheese Sauce**

**Ingredients:**

1 cup whole milk

1 Tbsp unsalted butter

1 Tbsp all-purpose flour

1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, grated

1 Tbsp. hot sauce

Cayenne pepper to taste (up to ½ tsp.)

salt to taste

**Directions:**

Melt the butter in a small saucepot over medium heat. Sprinkle the flour over the top, stirring constantly until a thick paste forms, 10-20 seconds.

Slowly add the milk to the flour and butter paste in a steady stream, whisking constantly.

Continue cooking, whisking constantly until the mixture thickens and slightly simmers, about 2-5 minutes.

Turn off the heat and add the cheese, whisking constantly until it is melted.

Add the hot sauce and cayenne. Taste, then adjust the salt and cayenne pepper as needed.