Bagels

The bagel is a sweet bread associated now with the Jewish Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. It can be traced back in time to Krakow in Poland where, in the early 16th Century, it was used as a bread to celebrate Lent. Bagels are artisan food and there are a vast number of local recipes. The common form is that the bagels are always round with a hole in the middle and they are poached before baking. This par-bakes the surface and limits their expansion in the oven, giving them a soft but compact structure.



Ingredients:

- 500 g strong white flour
- 6g dried yeast
- Pinch of salt
- Tablespoon of clear honey
- 1 beaten egg
- 300 ml warm water
- Light vegetable oil for greasing trays

Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Mix the clear honey in 150ml of boiling water, then add to it 150ml of cold water. Beat the egg (I do this in a small glass).
Add the wet ingredients gradually to the bowl and mix into a stiff dough. Kneed and allow to rise for at least an hour.

Knock back the dough and kneed thoroughly. Shape into small flat rounds and place on a floured baking tray. Pierce a hole in the centre of each round and pull out the dough to make the hole larger. Allow to rise for about an hour.



Reshape the doughnut shapes if required and then poach in boiling water, 10 seconds on each side. Place on a well greased tray (*they can be baked at this point, which gives a larger hole and a more compact bread*) and leave to rise for about 20-30 minutes.
Bake in a pre-heated oven at 200° for 12-14 minutes. Cool on a tray for at least 30 minutes before eating.

Variations on the basic recipe can include sprinkling with sesame seeds or poppy seeds, adding cornmeal or malt extract, adding molasses instead of honey, using more egg or adding caster sugar. The choice is yours.