

how to make elephant ears

How to make elephant ears is a delightful culinary journey that takes you from basic ingredients to a crispy, sweet, and indulgent treat. Often found at fairs and carnivals, elephant ears are a type of fried dough pastry that is easily made at home. They're named for their large, ear-like shape and are typically dusted with cinnamon sugar, making them an irresistible dessert. In this article, we'll explore the ingredients, steps to make elephant ears, variations, and tips for perfecting this delicious treat.

Ingredients Needed for Elephant Ears

To create the perfect elephant ears, you'll need a selection of simple ingredients. Here's what you'll need:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (plus more for frying)
- Cinnamon sugar (1/2 cup granulated sugar mixed with 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon)

Equipment Required

Before you start, ensure you have the following kitchen tools ready:

- Mixing bowl
- Rolling pin
- Frying pan or deep fryer
- Slotted spoon or spider
- Paper towels
- Plate for serving

Step-by-Step Guide to Making Elephant Ears

Now that you have your ingredients and equipment, let's dive into the process of making elephant ears.

Step 1: Prepare the Dough

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the all-purpose flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder. Whisk these dry ingredients together until they are evenly mixed.

2. Next, create a well in the center of the dry mixture and pour in the milk and vegetable oil.
3. Stir the mixture with a spoon or your hands until it forms a rough dough. Don't over-mix; it's okay if it's a little sticky.

Step 2: Knead the Dough

1. Lightly flour a clean surface and turn the dough out onto it.
 2. Knead the dough for about 2-3 minutes until it becomes smooth and elastic.
 3. Once kneaded, cover the dough with a clean kitchen towel and let it rest for about 10-15 minutes.
- This helps relax the gluten and makes it easier to roll out.

Step 3: Roll Out the Dough

1. After resting, divide the dough into two or four equal portions, depending on how large you want your elephant ears.
2. Take one portion and roll it out on a floured surface until it is about 1/4 inch thick. Aim for an irregular shape, as this will help mimic the look of an elephant ear.
3. Repeat this process with the remaining portions of dough.

Step 4: Heat the Oil

1. In a frying pan or deep fryer, heat about 2 inches of vegetable oil over medium-high heat. To test if the oil is ready, drop a small piece of dough into the oil; if it sizzles and rises to the surface, it's ready for frying.

Step 5: Fry the Elephant Ears

1. Carefully place one rolled-out dough piece into the hot oil. Fry for about 1-2 minutes on each side or until the dough is golden brown.
2. Use a slotted spoon to flip the elephant ear, ensuring both sides are cooked evenly.
3. Once done, remove it from the oil and place it on a plate lined with paper towels to absorb excess oil.

Step 6: Coat with Cinnamon Sugar

1. While the elephant ear is still warm, generously sprinkle it with the cinnamon sugar mixture on both sides.
2. Repeat the frying and coating process with the remaining dough pieces.

Serving Suggestions for Elephant Ears

Elephant ears are best enjoyed fresh and warm. Here are some serving suggestions to elevate your experience:

- Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top for a delightful dessert.
- Drizzle with chocolate syrup or caramel sauce for an added flavor twist.
- Add fruit toppings like strawberries or bananas for a refreshing contrast.
- Pair with whipped cream for a decadent treat.

Variations of Elephant Ears

While the classic cinnamon sugar version is a favorite, you can experiment with several variations to suit your taste:

Chocolate Elephant Ears

- Before frying, spread a thin layer of chocolate hazelnut spread on the dough before folding and rolling it out again.

Savory Elephant Ears

- Instead of sugar, sprinkle the dough with garlic powder, cheese, or herbs before frying for a savory twist.

Fruit Topped Elephant Ears

- Top your warm elephant ears with fresh fruits like blueberries, strawberries, or sliced apples before drizzling with icing.

Tips for Perfect Elephant Ears

To ensure your elephant ears turn out perfectly every time, consider the following tips:

- Don't overcrowd the frying pan; fry in batches to maintain the oil temperature.
- Adjust the thickness of the dough to your preference; thinner dough will be crispier.
- Experiment with different flavored sugars, such as vanilla or pumpkin spice, for unique variations.
- Keep an eye on the frying time to prevent burning; they can brown quickly.

Conclusion

Now that you know how to make elephant ears, you can enjoy this carnival favorite right in your kitchen. With simple ingredients and a little patience, you can create a deliciously crispy treat that everyone will love. Whether you stick to the classic cinnamon sugar or try out some fun variations, elephant ears are sure to impress. So gather your ingredients, fire up the frying pan, and indulge in this sweet delight today!

Frequently Asked Questions

What ingredients do I need to make elephant ears?

To make elephant ears, you will need flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, milk, butter, and optional toppings like cinnamon sugar or powdered sugar.

Is it necessary to use yeast in elephant ears?

No, traditional elephant ears do not require yeast. They are made with a simple dough that is rolled out and fried.

How do I achieve the perfect crispy texture for elephant ears?

To achieve a crispy texture, ensure that the oil is hot enough before frying the dough. Frying at 350°F (175°C) is ideal.

Can I make elephant ears in an air fryer?

Yes, you can make elephant ears in an air fryer. Preheat the air fryer, brush the dough with butter, and cook at 350°F (175°C) for about 8-10 minutes, flipping halfway through.

What are some popular toppings for elephant ears?

Popular toppings include cinnamon sugar, powdered sugar, chocolate sauce, and fruit preserves. You can also experiment with other sweet toppings.

How can I store leftover elephant ears?

Leftover elephant ears can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days. Reheat them in the oven for a few minutes to restore their crispiness.

What is the best way to roll out the dough for elephant ears?

The dough should be rolled out to about 1/4 inch thickness. Use flour on your work surface to prevent sticking, and try to create a round shape for even frying.

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