

Challah Recipe

Experience Jewish culinary culture while baking something yummy! A loaf of homemade challah bread turns an ordinary breakfast into something special. Deceptively simple to make, it's great for a hands-on lesson in the science of baking! Your fledgling baker will enjoy the tactile experience of mixing, kneading, and braiding the dough, and the end result is a golden, mouthwatering loaf that looks almost—but not quite!—too pretty to eat.



What You Need:

- 1 ¼ cups warm water
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 package active dry yeast
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon water
- Poppy seeds or sesame seeds, if desired

What You Do:

1. First, put warm water in a large bowl and add the sugar and yeast. Stir gently to dissolve. Let stand for 5-10 minutes, until the yeast is bubbly.
2. Next, add oil, salt, and eggs.
3. Slowly stir in the flour. The dough should be moist enough to knead, but not too sticky. If the dough is too sticky, gradually add more flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the consistency allows you to knead it. Be careful not to add too much flour, though, as it will dry out the dough.
4. Place the dough on a clean surface and knead it for 5–10 minutes, until it feels smooth and satiny.
5. Next, form the dough into a ball and place it into a clean, oiled bowl, making sure it has room to rise. Cover the bowl with plastic and let it sit in a warm location until the dough has doubled in size, about an hour.
6. Gently knead the dough for 1–2 minutes, then divide into six equal portions.
7. With your hands, roll each portion into a rope shape, about 18 inches long.
8. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Lay the six ropes side by side vertically on the baking sheet. Press the top ends together and carefully start weaving the six pieces together to form a braid. The pattern of the braid is not particularly important; just keep pulling alternating pieces across one another. Although the dough braid may look lumpy and uneven, the bread will bake into an attractive loaf.
9. Allow the challah to rise again until doubled. While you're waiting, preheat the oven to 350° F.
10. To make the egg wash, mix the egg yolk with a tablespoon of water. Brush the egg wash over the surface of the braided dough, making sure to cover the sides and crevices.
11. If desired, sprinkle the braid with sesame or poppy seeds.
12. Bake the challah until golden brown, or until it sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom, approximately 35 minutes.
13. Remove from the baking sheet and let it cool before eating.

For a slightly sweeter version, try adding a touch of honey or some raisins to your challah dough.

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