

## Classic Challah

(two small loafs or one large or one double braided celebration loaf)

4 cups	(18 ounces)	unbleached bread <b>flour</b> (extra as needed)
2 TB.	(1 ounce)	granulated <b>sugar</b>
1 tp.	(0.25 ounce)	<b>salt</b>
1 1/3 tp.	(0.15 ounce)	instant <b>yeast</b>
2 TB.	(1 ounce)	vegetable <b>oil</b>
2 Large	(3.3 ounces)	<b>eggs</b> , slightly beaten
2 Large	(1.25 ounces)	<b>egg yolk</b> , slightly beaten (reserve whites for wash)
1 – 1 1/8 cups	(7-9 ounces)	<b>water</b> at room temperature

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- 2 egg whites whisked for washing/coating the challah
  - Sesame or poppy seeds applied after egg wash is a plus!
  - Spray oil, parchment paper, plastic wrap, aluminum baking sheet, two mixing bowls
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Dry ingredients: Whisk together *flour, salt, sugar, and yeast* in the main bowl

Wet ingredients: In another bowl whisk together eggs, yolks, oil and most of the water.

- Wash your hands thoroughly then lightly coat with oil. Repeat as necessary.
- Combine the wet and dry ingredients together until you can form a ball. Add the remaining water if needed. There should be no ingredients stuck to the bowl.
- Knead the ball in the bowl for about 10 minutes or until you see and feel the gluten silkiness begin to form. Add a little flour if it sticks to the sides of the bowl. It should feel soft silky and supple.
- Form a nice boule with the dough: Pulling the outsides out-down-and pressed into the bottom center until a smooth ball forms in your hands.
- Coat this boule lightly with oil and place back into the middle of the bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let ferment for 1 hour.
- Return to the bowl and degas the ball by kneading it again for 2 minutes.
- Divide the dough into equal parts (3 for a 3-braid, 4 for a 4-braid, etc.). Reshape each into a small boule. Cover them all with a lint free towel or oiled plastic. Let them rest for 10 minutes. This gives the gluten time to relax so it doesn't spring back on you when you start to form ropes.
- Between your hands- Roll out the boules into equal length strands for braiding. Taper the ends and braid. At the very beginning and end of the braid- fold the tip of the end over for a nice finished look. (\*If you wish to add raisins or chocolate into the challah now is the time to do it. Simply flatten your strands enough to wrap your additions into the strand widthwise)
- Place parchment paper onto your baking sheet and spray lightly with oil then place your challah in the middle of the sheet. Brush the challah with the egg wash. If you wish this is the time to garnish with poppy seeds or sesame seeds or kosher salt.
- Place an oiled sheet of plastic wrap loosely over challah as it enters its final rise.
- Let the challah rest in a warm area of the kitchen for one hour or until it is 1 ½ its original size. The time will vary due to temperature, humidity and yeast freshness. The challah can collapse if it is allowed to over develop.

- Preheat the oven to 350F degrees or 25 degrees less for convection ovens. If you use convection over then please make sure the convection fan is running. :-)
- Place the Proofed Challah in the middle of the oven. Turn the baking sheet around in about 25-35 minutes. The bread should be a rich golden brown and register 190F degree internally.
- Try to let the Challah cool for 1 hour before serving.