

Christina in the Kitchen!

# 20 Minute Challah



Servings - 24

Prep Time - 4 hours

Cook Time - 45 minutes

## Dough Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups lukewarm water
- 1 packet active dry yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 large egg
- 3 large egg yolks
- ⅓ cup honey
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 2 tsp salt
- 4 ½ - 6 cups flour

## Egg Wash Ingredients

- 1 large egg
- 1 tbsp cold water
- ½ tsp salt

## Optional Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups of either raisins or chocolate chips

## Optional Toppings

- Sesame seeds, poppy seeds, kosher salt

## Baking tools

- 2 baking sheets/cookie sheets
- 1 Large & 1 small mixing bowl
- Clean kitchen towel
- Whisk and mixing spoon
- Parchment paper or silpats

Instructions on page 2

## **Instructions: Challah (p2)**

This recipe will make 1 very large challah, 2 regular challah loaves, or 24 mini challah rolls.

Pour ¼ cup of the lukewarm water (about 110 degrees) into a large mixing bowl. Add 1 packet of Active Dry Yeast and 1 tsp of sugar to the bowl, stir to dissolve. Wait 10 minutes. The yeast should have activated, meaning it will look expanded and foamy. If it doesn't, your yeast may have expired, which means your bread won't rise.

Once your yeast has activated, add remaining 1 ¼ cup lukewarm water to the bowl along with the egg, egg yolks, honey, canola oil, and salt. Use a whisk to thoroughly blend the ingredients.

Begin adding the flour to the bowl by half cupfuls, stirring with a large spoon each time flour is added. When the mixture becomes too thick to stir, use your hands to knead.

Continue to add flour and knead the dough until it's smooth, elastic, and not sticky. The amount of flour you will need to achieve this texture varies - only add flour until the dough feels pliable and "right". If you plan to add raisins or chocolate chips to the challah, incorporate into the dough as you knead.

Place a saucepan full of water on the stove to boil.

Meanwhile, remove the dough from your mixing bowl and wash out the bowl. Grease the bowl with canola oil. Push the dough back into the bottom of the bowl, then flip it over so that both sides are slightly moistened by the oil.

Cover the bowl with a clean, damp kitchen towel. Place the bowl of dough on the middle rack of your oven. Take the saucepan full of boiling water and place it below the rack where your dough sits. Close the oven, but do not turn it on. The pan of hot water will create a warm, moist environment for your dough to rise. Let the dough rest for 1 hour, or until the dough doubles in size. This may take longer depending on a number of things, including weather conditions...be patient! It's important to let the dough rise for best results.

Take the dough bowl out and punch it down several times to remove air pockets. Place it back inside the oven and let it rise for 1 hour longer, or until the dough doubles in size.

Take the dough out of the oven. Flour a smooth surface like a cutting board. Punch the dough down into the bowl a few times, then turn the dough out onto the floured surface. Knead for a few minutes, adding flour as needed to keep the dough from feeling sticky.

Now your dough is ready to braid.

1. To make two challah cut the dough in half. Each half should be cut into three equal pieces.
2. One your baking sheet/parchment paper, roll each third into about 16 inch lengths and carefully connect the top of the three pieces, while keeping the three lengths separated from each other.
3. Carefully begin crossing from right to left over the center piece to make a single simple braid. There should not be that much tension to allow for a shorter loaf. When you get to the end of the braid, tuck the ends under the loaf to finish the braid.

After you've braided your challah, place it on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper (this will catch and spills from your egg wash and keep your challah from sticking to the cookie sheet). I usually only put a single challah braid on a cookie sheet, since they tend to expand when baking.

Prepare your egg wash by beating the egg, salt and water till smooth. Use a pastry brush to brush a thin layer of the mixture onto the visible surface of your challah. Reserve the leftover egg wash.

Let the braid rise for 30-45 minutes longer. You'll know the dough is ready to bake when you press your finger into the dough and the indentation stays, rather than bouncing back.

Heat the oven to 350 degrees F. The challah needs to bake for about 40 minutes total, but to get the best result the baking should be done in stages. First, set your timer to 20 minutes and put your challah in the oven.

After 20 minutes, take the challah out of the oven and coat the center of the braid with another thin layer of egg wash. This area tends to expand during baking, exposing areas that will turn white unless they are coated with egg wash.

Turn the tray around, so the opposite side is facing front, and put the tray back into the oven. Turning the tray helps your challah brown evenly - the back of the oven is usually hotter than the front.

The challah will need to bake for about 20 minutes longer. For this last part of the baking process, keep an eye on your challah - it may be browning faster than it's baking, Once the challah is browned to your liking, take the tray out and tent it with foil, then place it back in the oven. Remove the foil for the last 2 minutes of baking time.

Take the challah out of the oven. At this point your house should smell delicious. You can test the bread for doneness by turning it over and tapping on the bottom of the loaf - if it makes a hollow sound, it's done. Let challah cool on the baking sheet or a wire cooling rack before serving.