

Ima's (Mom's) Challah Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups warm water, divided
- 1/4 cup plus 2 teaspoons sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons instant (powdered) yeast
- 6 cups flour – either all white or half white whole wheat
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 cup mild honey, plus an extra tablespoon for eggwash, if desired
- 2/3 cup flavorless vegetable or canola oil
- 4 eggs, plus one yolk for eggwash, if desired

Directions

1. Put 1 cup warm water in a small bowl. Add 2 teaspoons of sugar, sprinkle the yeast over top, swirl the bowl just to combine, and leave it to proof for five minutes.
2. While yeast is proofing, mix flour, salt and 1/4 cup of sugar, in a large bowl (or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment.) Stir to incorporate or blend on low speed.
3. In a medium bowl, mix remaining water, honey, oil, and eggs.
4. When yeast has finished proofing, add it to the flour, immediately followed by wet ingredients. Mix with a large wooden spoon or on medium-low speed in the mixer, just until combined, about 30 seconds.
5. Switch to dough hook and begin to knead on low speed, making sure to incorporate what's at the bottom of the bowl if the dough hook misses it. If kneading by hand, stir using spoon until dough becomes too thick to stir. Empty dough onto well-floured surface and knead by hand. Knead dough until smooth and no longer sticky, adding flour with a light hand as needed, 7-10 minutes.
6. Split the dough into two equal pieces. Set each in a large oiled bowl, cover both bowls with plastic wrap or a damp towel, and let rise at room temperature until doubled in size. If using white flour, this should take about 2-2.5 hours. If using white whole wheat, it will take closer to 3.5 or 4. Feel free to let the dough rise in the refrigerator overnight instead; if you do this, be sure to set out the dough in plenty of time before shaping, so it can come to room temperature.
7. Preheat oven to 375.
8. After the rise, the dough should be soft and pliable. Separate each mound of dough into three equal balls, for a total of six. Roll each ball into a log almost 1-foot long. Braid the logs together to create your loaf. For the nicest-looking braid, do not pinch the top edges of your logs together before braiding; simply place one log over the next and braid until you reach the bottom, then pinch those edges together. Then, flip the unfinished loaf the long way, so that the unfinished edge is now at the bottom and the loaf has been flipped over and upside down. Finish braiding and pinch these edges together. This way, both ends look identical. Tuck the very tips beneath the loaf when braiding is finished. Repeat with second loaf.

9. Put each loaf on its own parchment-lined baking sheet. If using eggwash, mix yolk with a 1 tablespoon water and 1 tablespoon honey. Brush over loaves.
10. Bake at 375 degrees for 20-22 minutes, until challot are golden and baked through.

Recipe adapted from Food52.com

