



CHALLAH

YIELDS: 2 LOAVES

The taste of challah is very similar to brioche — golden, rich and fluffy with a hint of sweetness. A staple of Jewish culture, it is a great, versatile bread to accompany any meal! This recipe was developed by our friend, Chef Matthew James Duffy. Thanks for sharing this delicacy with us, Matt!

If you have never made Challah before head on over to the guide on our website at anitasorganic.com/guides-main



Ingredients

FOR THE DOUGH

- 819g Anita's Organic All Purpose Flour
- 91g Anita's Organic Spelt or Whole Wheat Flour
- 410g water
- 12g yeast, active dry
- 107g ripe levain
- 15g salt
- 2 whole eggs
- 107g sugar
- 77g olive oil

FOR THE EGG WASH AND TOPPINGS

- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon water
- Pinch of fine salt
- Sesame seeds, poppy seeds, or other topping

Instructions

MAKE THE DOUGH

1. Pour the water into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the bread hook. Sprinkle the yeast into the water and use your fingers to rub and dissolve it. If using, add the levain and lightly mix it into the water. Add the flour, eggs, sugar, salt, and oil.
2. Mix the dough on low speed to combine the ingredients, stopping the mixer if the dough climbs up the hook or if you need to work in dry ingredients that have settled on the bottom of the bowl. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. It should take about 2 minutes for the dough to come together. If there are lots of dry bits in the bottom of the bowl that just aren't getting worked in, add a tablespoon or two of water.
3. [Note: Eventually you'll be able to feel the dough and know if you need to add water or flour; it's always better to adjust the ratios when the dough is first coming together at the beginning of mixing rather than wait until the end of the kneading process, since it takes longer for ingredient additions to get worked into the dough mass at this later point and you risk overworking the dough.]
4. Increase the speed to medium and knead until a smooth dough forms, about 4 minutes. You want the dough to be a bit firm.

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LET THE DOUGH RISE

1. Lightly oil a bowl, add the dough and cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Set the bowl aside at room temperature until the dough has risen by about 60%, about 60-90 minutes (this will depend on how warm your room is—when the dough proofs in a warmer room it will take less time than in a cooler room).
2. Note: It is best not to use any flour when dividing and shaping as the flour will make it harder to develop tension while shaping.

DIVIDE THE DOUGH

1. Use a plastic dough scraper to gently lift the dough out of the bowl and transfer it to a work surface (take care not to press out the trapped gas in the dough). Gently pull the dough into a rectangular shape. Using a bench scraper divide the dough in half. Set aside one half for the second challah (keep covered). Take the half that you are using for your first challah and divide each piece into 3 smaller equal parts.

PRE-SHAPE AND SHAPE THE CHALLAH DOUGH

1. Set a piece of dough lengthwise on your work surface. Use the palm of your hand to flatten the dough into a flat rectangle; then fold the top portion over and use your palm to press the edge into the flat part of the dough. Fold and press 3 more times—the dough will end up as a cylinder about 10-12cm long. Set this piece aside and repeat with the other 2 pieces.
2. Allow the dough to rest for 10-15 minutes covered.
3. Return to the first piece of dough and use both hands to roll the cylinder back and forth to form a long rope, pressing down lightly when you get to the ends of the rope so they are tapered. The rope should be about 55-60cm / 21-24 inches long with tapered ends. Repeat with the remaining 2 cylinders. Lightly flour the long ropes (this allows for the strands of the braid to stay somewhat separate during baking; otherwise, they'd fuse together).
4. Pinch the ends of the 3 ropes together at the top. Braid the dough, lifting each piece up and over so the braid is more stacked than it is long; you also want it to be fatter and taller in the middle, and more tapered at the ends. When you get to the end of the ropes and there is nothing left to braid, use your palm to press and seal the ends together.
5. Note: For a 3-braid challah: Number the positions 1,2,3. The POSITIONS and NOT the strands themselves. Place 1 over 2 then 3 over two. Repeat this process all the way down the dough.
6. Place the challah on parchment paper-lined rimmed sheet pan, cover with a kitchen towel (or place inside an unscented, reuseable plastic bag), and set aside in a warm, draft-free spot to rise until the loaves have doubled in volume, about 90-120 minutes (depending on how warm the room is).
7. Adjust the oven racks to the upper-middle and lower-middle positions and preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F.
8. Repeat this process with your second challah dough, and feel free to use the same braiding technique or explore different braid-types.



TEST THE DOUGH

1. Once the challah loaves have roughly doubled in size, do the press test: Press your finger lightly into the dough, remove it, and see if the depression fills in by half. If the depression fills back in quickly and completely, the dough needs more time to rise; if you press the dough and it slightly deflates, the dough has overproofed and will be heavier and less airy after baking.

BAKE THE LOAVES

1. Make the egg wash by mixing the egg, water, and salt together in a small bowl. Gently brush the entire surface of the loaf with egg wash, taking care not to let it pool in the creases of the braids. You want a nice thin coating. Generously sprinkle the loaf with the seeds if desired.
2. Bake for 30 minutes. Remove the loaf from the oven and set aside to cool completely on the sheet pan.
3. Note: If it is your first-time baking challah at home, make sure to check the loaf after 20 minutes. All ovens are different and temperatures/times may need some adjustment.