

CHALLAH

Easy Challah

2 1/3 cups warm water
2 pkg. yeast
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs

1 tbsp. salt
1/2 cup oil
7 cups flour

Pour yeast into warm water. Add sugar. Without mixing, let mixture sit for a few minutes until it bubbles. Mix in the rest of the ingredients besides flour. Slowly add flour, mixing as you go. Rise, covered, 1 hour. Punch down the dough and rise another 1/2 hour. Separate Challah Portion. Make Bracha. Braid or shape as desired, let rise 1/2 hour. Glaze with beaten egg and sprinkle seeds if desired. Bake at 350° for approx. 30-40 minutes depending on size.

Six Braided Challahs

On a lightly floured surface, divide dough into 6 even portions. Roll out into uniform strands. Or, for a "fuller" affect, taper ends so that the middle of each strand is thicker than the ends. Lay strands next to each other and pinch together at the top. Push the 3 strands on the left further to the left and push the 3 strands on the right further to the right. **First crossover:** With your right hand, take the strand on the extreme left and with your left hand take the strand on the extreme right. (Left hand is crossed over right hand.) Moving right and left hands simultaneously, bring the strand in the right hand over the strand in your left hand, laying it in the right middle. (It should be 4th from the right and 3rd from the left – the left side has 2 other strands and the right side has 3 other strands including the strand above the pinch on the right side.) (From now on, the right and left sides will have 2 or 3 strands alternately with 1 strand above the others.) **Left crossover:** In your right hand take the strand on the right above the pinch and in your left hand take the strand right below (the strand to the left of the one you took with your right hand). (Right hand is crossed over left hand.) Moving right and left hands simultaneously, bring your left hand over and up, across the pinch so that it is uppermost above on the left. Bring your right hand to the left middle. (It should be 4th from the left and 3rd from the right – the right side has 2 other strands and the left side has 3 other strands including the strand above the pinch on the left side.) **Right crossover:** In your left hand take the uppermost strand on the extreme right and in your right hand take the strand right below (the strand to the left of the one you took with your left hand). (Left hand is crossed over right hand.) Moving right and left hands simultaneously, bring your right hand over and up across the pinch so that it is above on the right. Bring your left hand down to the right middle. (It should be 4th from the right and 3rd from the left – the left side has 2 other strands and the right side has 3 other strands including the strand above the pinch on the right side). Repeat this process by alternating left and right sides until all the strands are finished. Tuck ends under to finish.

Baking Effects

For traditional challahs, place braided challahs on cookie sheets to bake. For challahs that look like bread with braided tops, place braided challahs in bread pans to bake. Or, for a special Yom Tov touch, twist braided challahs and place in round cake pans or fluted cake pans to bake.

Meditation While Preparing the Dough

Flour: As it says "If we have no flour - food, there can be no Torah"

Sugar: For the sweetness I hope to see in my family's life

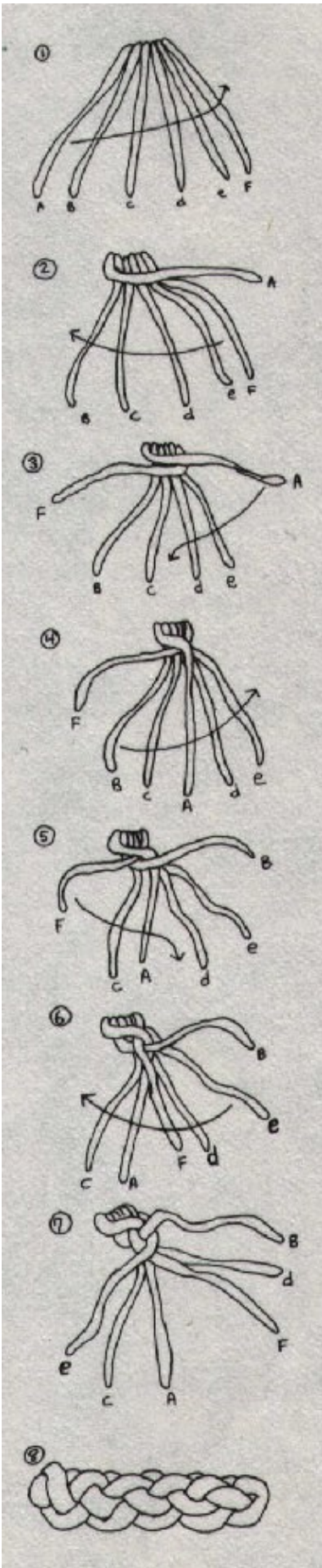
Yeast: So each member of my family should grow and expand

Water: Represents Torah

Salt: I measure then take some away, because we should always give less rebuke than we think we should

Oil: And as I slowly pour in the oil, I anoint each member of my family by name, praying for his or her specific needs

Kneading is the time to pray. Take turns with other females, each of you thinking of people by name.



About *Challah* and it's Blessings

The *Mitzvah* of *Hafrashat Challah*, separating *Challah*, is one of the three *Mitzvot* entrusted especially to the Jewish woman. This *Mitzvah* embodies the belief that all of our sustenance comes truly to us through G-d's Hand. Just as we may not use the dough unless we have separated *Challah*, so too a portion of our livelihood is always reserved for the giving of charity which is given freely — "of the first and the best." Our sages tell us that observing this *Mitzvah* "will cause a blessing to rest on your house."

Conditions for Taking *Challah*

1. Recipe has a minimum of 5 lbs. (equals 2268 grams) flour (2.5-5 lbs., *challah* is separated without a blessing). Note: If a few batches are put together to be made in one baking session, you calculate the total flour from all the batches.
 2. Your intention must be to "bake" the entire amount (not fry or boil it), and to do so in one baking session.
 3. The flour must be from either wheat, barley, spelt, rye or oats.
 4. The liquid used must be water. (If you add in a liquid other than water to the flour, *Challah* is taken without a blessing. If you use fruit juice instead of water, be sure to still add a few drops of water anyways.)
- Note: *Challah* is taken from all dough, including cakes, cookies or pastries that fit the above conditions.

What To Do

Challah is separated when the batter is ready, before the dough has been divided and shaped into loaves. Before the piece of dough is separated, the following blessing is said:

**BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NOI ELO-HAI-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM A-SHER
KIDI-SHA-NU B'MITZ-VOTAV V'TZI-VA-NU L'HAF-RISH CHAL-LAH**

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has commanded us to separate Challah.

Then remove a small piece, at least one ounce, from the dough. Wrap it in a piece of aluminum foil and place it alone in the oven, baking/burning it until it turns to ash. It can then be thrown into the trash. Once the dough is in the oven starting to burn, you may begin forming and baking the bread.

If for some reason, you couldn't/didn't separate the *Challah* before baking the batter (i.e. using a bread maker), you may separate *Challah* from the finished product (when doing so, place all of the finished product into one container or put everything under one cover - i.e. towel) and burn it alone in the oven, with the same blessing. You may not separate *Challah* after Shabbat candles have been lit. (On Yom Tov it's okay if you also made the batter on Yom Tov.) If you forgot to do so before Shabbat, separate a small piece and put it away for burning and disposal after Shabbat. You may then eat the rest of the bread.

Washing Hands for Bread

The ritual custom is to wash our hands before we eat bread. Once you are ready to eat the *Challah*, remove all rings, wash your hands three consecutive times on your right hand with a cup, the water should reach your wrist and cover your entire hand, and then do the same to the left hand. Hold some water in your hand, rub them together and recite:

**BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NOI ELO-HAI-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM A-SHER
KIDI-SHA-NU B'MITZ-VOTAV V'TZI-VA-NU AL NITILAT YUDOYIM**

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has commanded us to wash our hands.

Dry your hands completely. Do not speak until you have eaten the bread.

Now take the *Challah* in your hand, dip it three times in salt and say:

**BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NOI ELO-HAI-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM HA-MOTZEE
LECHEM MINN HA-ARETZ**

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the land.