

# BASIC CHALLAH RECIPE (WATER CHALLAH)

Yields 2 Large Challot

## INGREDIENTS

1 Packet or 2 Teaspoons / Active Dry Yeast (Fleischman's, Argest, etc.)

1/2 Cup / Sugar

1 and 1/3 Cups / Warm Water (95 - 110 degrees)

3 Tablespoons / Vegetable Oil (or Sunflower, Olive, Grapeseed)

1 and 1/3 Teaspoon / Kosher Salt

4 Cups / Bread Flour (All Purpose Flour will do, but you will have to work harder to develop the gluten)

Cooking Spray or 2-3 Tablespoons Sunflower, Olive or Grapeseed Oil for proofing bowl

1 Egg for wash

Optional Toppings - Sesame Seeds, Poppy Seeds, Trader Joe's Everything Bagel Topping, or your choice



## DIRECTIONS

### MIXING

- In a large bowl mix yeast, sugar, and warm water. Stir once or twice until just dissolved.
- Let sit until yeast “blooms” and develops a foam across the top of the mixture – 10-15 minutes. (This tells you the yeast is alive.)
- Next, stir in your oil, 1 cup of flour, and then the salt into the mixture until absorbed. Wait 10-15 minutes.
- Gradually, add the rest of the flour 1 cup at a time. As mixture becomes tougher, it will be too difficult to stir. You'll move into the next stage: kneading by hand.

### KNEADING

- Sprinkle some flour on your fingers and on the counter and then pour the dough from the bowl onto the counter. Push, pull, knead, fold over on itself and repeat for 10 minutes.
- Once dough is smooth and elastic, not sticky, perform the windowpane test to assess whether your dough has been kneaded sufficiently (see 3<sup>rd</sup> page). Form fully kneaded dough into a ball.

**Tip:** If using an electric mixer, it is recommended to also hand knead 5 minutes to help develop the gluten strands for a smoother dough.

## 1ST RISE / PROOFING

- Lightly spray or oil a clean bowl. Place dough ball into the oiled bowl and allow the oil to lightly coat it. This will keep the dough from drying out during the rise.
- Cover dough bowl with a damp kitchen cloth or saran wrap and then a dry cloth. Let rise in a warm place for 45 – 60 minutes.

*Tip:* An oven pre-heated on low then turned off prior to putting the dough in can be used for proofing.

## SHAPING / 3 STRAND BRAIDED CHALLAH

After your challah has risen (45-60 minutes):

- Place dough on a floured or non-stick surface. Gently knead the dough just a few times to push the air bubbles out.
- Shape into a ball. Divide dough in half and shape each again into spheres. These will be your 2 individual challahs.
- Take one challah and divide it into 3 even pieces, like a “Peace sign” or a “Y”.
- Roll out each of these pieces into 3 equal medium length rope-like strand; approximately 12-18 inches each.
- Put the three strands on your lightly floured surface or parchment paper. Pinch the top of all the strands together. Then braid the strands until you have a braided challah (like you are braiding hair, but not too tightly). Tuck both pinched ends under to hide. Repeat with the second challah.
- Place both loaves, allowing room to expand around each, on a baking sheet, with or without parchment paper.

## 2ND RISE AND BAKE

- Cover with loose saran wrap or a slightly damp towel. Let rise for 1 hour in a warm place.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- After the 2nd rise, remove the covering, and brush with an egg wash. (Egg wash can be a whole egg beaten or just the white, or the white beaten with a teaspoon of water or oil.)
- Add toppings (optional).
- Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes. Time will vary based on size of challah and your oven. If the top begins to brown too quickly, protect it for the rest of the bake with a loose piece of aluminum foil placed atop.
- Remove from oven. It's ready if you tap the challah's base and it sounds hollow.
- Remove to rack and allow to cool.

<https://www.thekitchn.com/bakers-techniques-how-to-do-th-70784>

## BAKER'S TECHNIQUES: HOW TO DO THE WINDOWPANE TEST WHEN KNEADING BREAD

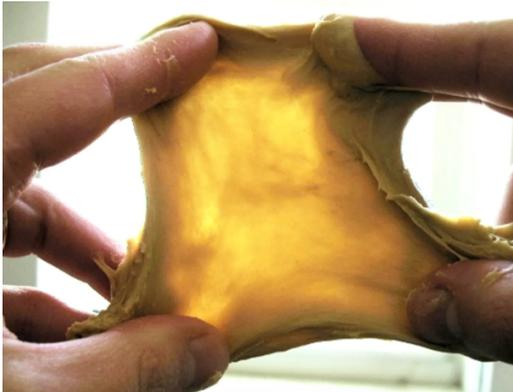
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The windowpane test is one of the best ways to tell if you've sufficiently kneaded your bread dough, though it can sound like a pretty bizarre instruction when you come across it in a recipe! Here's what you do...

First, cut off a small piece of the dough about the size of a golf ball. Hold it between your thumb and first two fingers.

Next, gently spread your fingers and thumbs apart, stretching the dough into a thin translucent membrane (ie, a windowpane).



Credit: Apartmenttherapy.com

If you can stretch the dough without it breaking, that means the gluten is well-developed and your dough is ready to rise. Pat the ball back into the larger batch and you're good to go!