

## Carol Dochen's (Amazing) Challah

Note: this recipe makes 2 large loaves. I have made 3-4 medium loaves with it as well, or small/individual rolls, etc. You can make the full recipe and bake them both/all, eat one and freeze the others for the following weeks! or of course, you can gift a challah. Freshly baked bread is an amazing way to say hi, thinking of you, feel better, etc. Carol says you can cut the recipe in half for one loaf, but I haven't ever done it (because you know - carbs are yummy).

Don't be intimidated! Yeast always scared me but don't worry. And, even if your first challot aren't that pretty – they will still taste amazing (just don't forget the salt – yuck!)

### **Ingredients:**

2 cups very warm water – hot enough to keep your hand in it  
1/2 cup sugar – you can use 1 scant cup if you like a sweeter challah  
4.5 tsp active yeast, or 2 pkts active yeast (regular/standard – Carol says you can use quick rise but I never have tried)  
1 tbsp kosher salt  
7-9 cups bread flour (King Arthur preferred)  
3-4 eggs (2 for bread, 1-2 for egg wash)  
1/2 cup vegetable/neutral oil  
raisins if you like – 1 cup  
other toppings if you like (everything bagel seasoning, sesame seeds, etc.)

### **Materials:**

Stand mixer with mixing bowl and paddle attachment (or you can mix by hand, but it is a workout!)  
Measuring cups (liquid and dry) and measuring spoons  
Spoon or spatula  
2 baking sheets with parchment paper (or aluminum, I just prefer parchment)  
Aluminum foil for covering the loaves (otherwise they get too brown)  
Large bowl  
Plastic wrap  
Spray oil (i.e., Pam)  
Dish towel for rising  
Small bowl for egg wash  
Pastry brush  
Cooling racks (1 large or 2 regular)  
Food scale if you want (for weighing the dough and dividing equally – but not necessary)

### **Recipe:**

- Preheat the oven to the lowest possible setting (on my oven it's 175, but if you can do 100 that's better)
- In a glass bowl (or use your measuring cup as the bowl) add 2 cups very warm water.
- Add the sugar and stir until dissolved
- Add the yeast and stir slightly – yeast will remain lumpy.
- Let mixture sit covered until ½-1" of foam forms on top (about 10-15 minutes) The yeast should froth if it is active. If it does not react this way, discard and purchase new yeast. (Unfortunately, you'll have to wait to make challah.)
- Pour the yeast-sugar-water mixture into a stand mixer fitted with a large paddle (or into a large bowl if you want to make it by hand)
- Add 2 cups of flour and the salt – blend well
- Add 2 eggs – blend well
- Add oil – blend well
- Add additional flour, approximately 1 cup at a time, mixing well each time
  - Stand mixer – add only enough flour until the dough pulls away from the sides as the dough grows
  - Hand mixing – continue adding flour until the dough is too stiff to stir

- Dump dough onto the counter and begin adding 2 tbsp of flour at a time, kneading the dough after each addition of flour. If you want to add raisins, now is the time – add ¼ cup at a time while you knead.
- Continue kneading and adding flour until the dough is barely sticky and be formed into a ball with ease.
- Pour a tiny bit of oil into the bottom of a large bowl – add the dough, turning it over to barely coat the dough on both sides.
- Cover with oil-sprayed plastic wrap and top with a damp towel.
- **Turn OFF the oven if couldn't get 100 as the lowest setting. If yours does 100, keep it on.**
- Put the dough in the warmed oven for 1 hour, or in a refrigerator overnight to rise (I haven't done the overnight rise but Carol's instructions say "I often make the dough at night and store in the fridge overnight to bake the next day")
- Push the air out of the dough with your hands while in the bowl and let rise again for 20 minutes or up to several hours.
- **Never let the dough remain uncooked for more than 24 hours – it will ferment and be terrible.**

### To Braid:

- **PREHEAT THE OVEN NOW – 350.**
- For 2 loaves - Divide the dough in half and cover the half that you're not using with the damp cloth (If you want to make 3 or 4 medium loaves instead, take 1/3 or 1/4 of the dough and you'll do this 3 or 4 times instead of 2)
- Divide the dough you're using into 4 strands for a large round challah, or 6 strands for a large regular challah
- BRAID (see attached and watch live demo 😊) - but here are some written guidelines –
  - For a round challah – you'll need 4 strands, see attached PDF
  - For a 6-strand braid –
    - Line up the 6 strands next to each other and join at the top by pinching them together
    - The braiding goes like this –
      - Left to the center
      - Second to the right over
      - Right to the center
      - Second to the left over
    - Repeat this pattern until the ends are too small to braid. Tuck the ends under and arrange.
    - (if you need a visual, just google 6 strand challah – there are a bunch of videos and resources)
- Place braided loaves on parchment paper lined baking sheets (I use 2 sheets total, with 1 lg or 2 medium challot on each sheet)
  - I usually braid one large or 2 medium challah and egg wash/add toppings and get in the oven while I work on the other loave(s). Then I wait for the first batch to be completely done before putting the other one(s) in – I don't like having one sheet at the top and one at the bottom, my oven doesn't bake that evenly. Your second braided batch can rest and rise while it waits for its oven time.
- Brush loaves with egg wash and sprinkle with toppings if desired
- Bake for 35-40 minutes at 350 but -- CHECK after about 15 minutes or they might/will probably overbrown! Can cover lightly with foil (see below for more details)
- Tap the loaves which should sound hollow to check for doneness. They should be a light golden brown (see notes below)
- Take out of the oven, cool on racks, and enjoy!

### Helpful notes that work for my oven:

- Rotate at 10 minutes (front to back)– otherwise it might “pull” to much one direction or the other – and apply more egg wash if desired
- Check at 15-17 total minutes (so 5-7 minutes after the first check) – typically this is when I lightly cover it with foil to avoid overbrowning
- Bake an additional 17-20 minutes covered. Usually 38 minutes total works for me. Yes, this is anal, but I know y'all like details!